

Dora E. Schoonmaker’s Life of “Living Her Vision Gracefully”: Exhibit Opening at the Museum of the Grundy County Historical Society

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I. Introduction

An opening ceremony was held on June 29, 2024, at the Museum of the Grundy County Historical Society, Morris, Illinois, where Dora E. Schoonmaker (“Dora”), who founded the girls’ elementary school that started Aoyama Gakuin 150 years ago, determined and prepared for overseas missions. The process leading up to the opening was a series of unexpected encounters and connections, an experience that felt guided by forces beyond us. This exhibit, the only one of its kind in the world, traces the life of Dora and was realized through the collaborative efforts of the Rev. Keiko Tanamura (former lecturer at Aoyama Gakuin Women’s Junior College and former professor at Tokyo Women’s Christian University), the Museum, Aoyama Gakuin, and the Chicago branch of the Aoyama Gakuin Alumni Association. The background of the exhibition is described in detail in a separate article, which I hope you will read as well (“The Fruits of the ‘Seeds of Mission’ Planted by Schoonmaker 150 years later: The Story of How the Dora E. Schoonmaker Permanent Exhibit in the Museum of Grund County Historical Society Came into Being,” *Schoonmaker Memorial Center for Gender Studies at Aoyama Gakuin University Annual Report* No. 4, March 2025. Hereafter referred to as the “Annual Report”). This paper presents the contents of the exhibit (II).

As mentioned in the Annual Report, the process that led to the permanent exhibition was like a dialogue with Dora, and the permanent exhibition is the culmination of that dialogue, spreading like a ripple and involving many people. Why does Dora’s life have the power to move and connect us 150 years later in this way? What kind of “graceful” way of life creates such resonance? The permanent exhibition that explores Dora’s life will be the starting point for further dialogue with her, including deeper questions such as these. This paper is an attempt to do this dialog (III). It is also a way to examine the origins

of Aoyama Gakuin and what it should inherit from her and develop.

II. Contents of Permanent Exhibits

The exhibition consists of six stages and a corner introducing Aoyama Gakuin and Rev. Keiko Tanamura. The stages follow the chapters in Tanamura's biography of Dora, entitled "Living the Dream Gracefully: The Life of Dora E. Schoonmaker, Who Pioneered Aoyama Gakuin's History" (Aoyama Gakuin, 2004. Hereafter cited as "Tanamura, p. xx"), tracing Dora's life story spanning 83 years.

- Part I Dreaming Big: In the Small World of Illinois (1851-1869)
- Part II Chasing Dreams: To the Wide, Wide World (1870-1873)
- Part III From America to Japan (1874)
- Part IV Living the Dream (1874-1789)
- Part V Connecting Dreams: From Japan to America (1879-1907)
- Part VI Dream Memory: From Chicago to California (1907-1995)

Below is an introduction to the contents of the exhibit along with its flow.

1. Dreaming Big: In the Small World of Illinois (1851-1869)

The three items on the right side of Stage 1 are documents related to Harriet Newell, the starting point of Dora's dream; the cover of *The Life and Writings of Mrs. Harriet Newell* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1831), a portrait, and an introductory panel by the Museum (Harriet is introduced as "Missionary").

At the age of eight, Dora read the book and was so moved by it that she told her mother of her decision to become a missionary. Tanamura suggests that this precocious decision may have been prompted by the loss of her beloved sister Louisa, who died at the age of four, and the resulting "questions from life" (about the meaning of life and self-sacrifice). However, circumstances were challenging and the dream was later shaken and abandoned with the act of throwing the book into the river. The Museum explains, in the introduction panel Harriet's journey, Dora's encounter with the book and what happened afterward (See Tanamura, pp. 20-28).

The three sheets on the left are a broad area map of Wilmington and Channahon at the time



stage 1

(bottom left), a plat of Wilmington (where the Schoonmakers owned land) (bottom right), and a city map of Channahon (marked on the church and the school Dora attended) (top left).

The family moved from Wilmington to Channahon around 1864, shortly after the father Jacob died at the age of 38, leaving a wife and six children (Tanamura, p. 39). The Museum's description of the city map of Channahon reads, "Map of Channahon in 1873. Located just North of Wilmington along the I&M Canal and DuPage River where Dora and her family lived." Note that the area where we believe Dora's residence was located is now submerged under a manmade lake.

Above center is a picture of the Channahon Methodist Episcopal Church, which was built in 1854. It explains, "Channahon M. E. Church at Sage & Eames Sts. which the Schoonmakers attended until it burnt down in 1926." The Methodist church was later moved to another location, and a Lutheran church now stands on this site.

Below center is a photo of Channahon High School, which was located across the street from the church. Upon the death of her father, Jacob, her mother, Patience, had her oldest son, Moncena, quit school and take over the farm, but allowed Dora to continue her studies (Tanamura, p. 44). Without this decision by her mother, Dora's path to becoming a missionary would not have been open to her, both in terms of qualification and opportunities.

The Museum’s description reads, “Channahon School built in 1860. Attended by Dora and her siblings. Dora graduated in 1869. H.H.C.Miller was principal until 1870.” An elementary school now stands on this site.

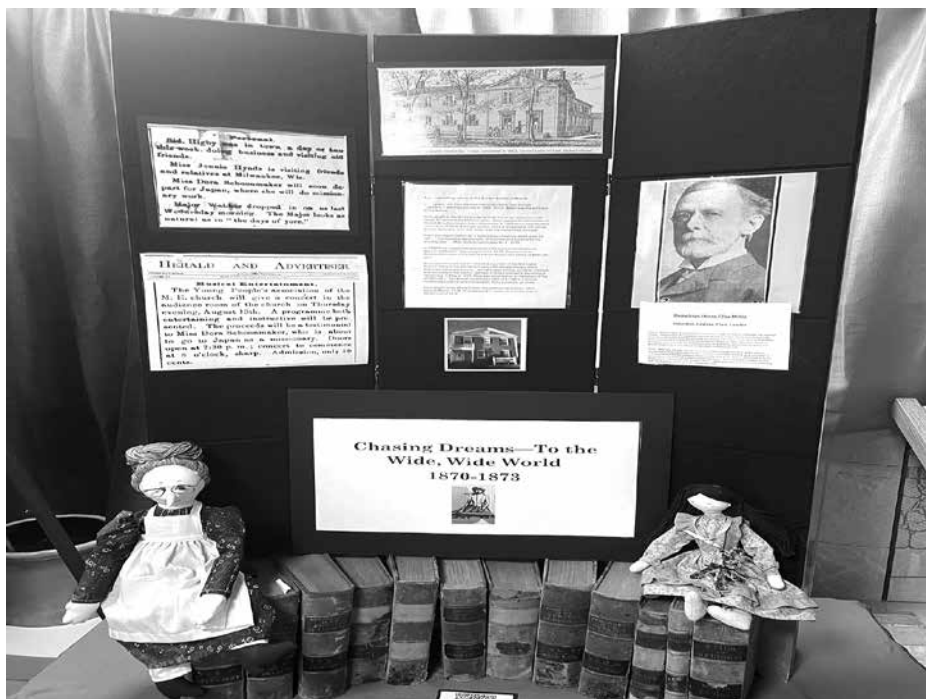
The chronology (English translation) of each period can be viewed through the QR codes provided for each part (see Annual Report II, 8).

2. Chasing Dreams: To the Wide, Wide World (1870-1873)

The second part consists of three sections; panels (Stage 2-1), a desk, and a blackboard and chairs (Stage 2-2).

<Stage 2-1>

To the right of the panel, a photo and description of Humphreys Miller is presented. The Museum’s description of Miller states, “Dora E. Schoonmaker graduated from Channahon High School in 1869 with the highest honors. The principal of Channahon schools at that time was Humphrys Henry Clay Miller, who saw Dora’s potential and was impressed by Dora’s work ethic and abilities. Miller became the principal of schools for Morris, Illinois in 1870 and hired Dora Schoonmaker as a teacher ...” At the time, having teaching experience was one of the requirements for work as a woman missionary in the Woman’s



stage 2-1

Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church (WFMS-MEC) (see Tanamura, pp. 48-49). Dora was able to fulfill this requirement immediately after graduating from high school, thanks to Humphrys (see Tanamura, pp. 48-49). The experience at Morris's school (where Dora probably also lived in Morris's boarding house) undoubtedly served as the foundation for Dora's educational efforts in Japan during the five years following the establishment of the girls' elementary school.

It was through an encounter with Mrs. Harriet Miller that the missionary path to Japan was opened for Dora. The Museum's description continues, "H. H. C. Miller and his wife, Harriet, were devout Methodists and Mrs. Miller was an acquaintance of Jennie Fowler Willing. Dora Schoonmaker worked as a volunteer in Willing's office of the Northwestern Branch of the W.F.M.S.- M.E.C. which led to Dora being offered a position as a teacher and missionary."

The description also describes Humphrys' life. "... While performing his duties as a school administrator, Miller studied law in his spare time and was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1875. He ... enter(ed) practice as a corporate attorney in 1881. Miller specialized in banking law and practiced his entire legal career in Chicago. H. H. C. Miller was elected as president of the village board of Evanston on three separate occasions...." Hence, Humphrys' descriptive title is "Educator, Lawyer, Civic Leader."

The center of the panel (top) is a picture of the Morris Center School, where Dora served. It was built in 1853 as the first school in the Morris First District. In the center of the panel is a written description of "Dora's teaching career at the Center School in Morris," which reads as follows:

Dora was assigned to the Center School Room No. 4 of nearly 50 co-ed students in her first year in September 1870. In 1872 Dora passed her examination for teacher candidates to secure certification. Beginning in June, 1873, Dora served as Assistant Principal of the Morris Center School at a salary of \$500 per year (the highest among her fellow female teachers. See Tanamura, p. 59). In 1873, Dora began volunteering in Willing's office. In May of 1873, Dora was accepted as a missionary of WFMS-MEC. The Northwest Branch received an offer of \$1,000 if a female missionary could be sent immediately. Dora agreed to go alone. (It should be noted that sending a single missionary abroad was unusual. Usually, missionaries are sent two at a time, but the amount of donation could only cover one missionary. See Tanamura, p. 83).

Part of the school building remains and is currently used as a dental clinic. The center of the panel (below) displays a photo of the current state of the school. According to the explanation of the photo of the other elementary school site on the desk on the right, the gable roof of the front entrance is also from that time. Following the permanent exhibition, the City of Morris erected a monument marking the “First Center School Site.”



A dental clinic using part of the Center School

<Stage 2-2>

Dora's autograph and photograph are displayed on the desk (same composition as on the back cover of Tanamura's book. The autograph is from the “Records of the Morris School Board, July 30, 1873”), along with a photograph and description of Jennie Willing under



stage 2-2

the title "Author, Social Reformer, Suffragist." The description is as follows.

.... Principal Humphrys Miller's wife, Harriet C. Miller, was an acquaintance of Jennie Fowler Willing as both women were members of the Northwestern Branch of WFMS-MEC. Mrs. Miller was aware of Dora's outstanding academics and abilities and recommended Dora to Mrs. Willing after which Dora worked for her, in 1873, as a secretary at the local Northwestern office in Joliet where Willing resided.

Jennie Willing was made aware of Dora's interest in becoming a missionary and as fate would have it, a lady from Indiana, Mrs. Frances DePauw(1841-1913), was willing to sponsor a missionary to Japan with the stipulation the worker be sent immediately. Frances DePauw was married to Washington C. DePauw, a wealthy individual from Indiana who DePauw University named in honor of. Jennie Willing asked Dora if she would be willing to go to Japan alone even though the custom was to send out women missionaries in pairs. The \$1,000 sponsorship was only available if used immediately. Dora accepted the challenge.

The WFMS-MEC's haste in sending missionaries to Japan was due to the fact that the Methodists had lagged behind the Dutch Reformed Church in evangelizing Japan, and that interest and information about Japan was spreading ("*Heathen Woman's Friend*," the official journal of the WFMS-MEC, published an article in the April 1873, shortly after the removal of the ban of Christian faith in Japan, stating that, despite the removal, "religious freedom in Japan is not as good as expected and that Japanese girls are obedient, polite, and teachable.") (Tanamura, p. 80).

On the wall of this second section is a blackboard, and in front of it are several desks and chairs from an elementary school, recreating a classroom of that era. On the blackboard are the rules of the day (for students and teachers).

Rules of the School:

- 1) Be Prompt
- 2) Sit Down Quietly
- 3) No Speaking Out of Turn
- 4) No Whispering
- 5) No Pulling Pranks
- 6) No Carving on Benches

Rules for Teacher 1872:

1. Fill Lamps clean chimneys.
2. See to clean bucket of water & coal.
3. Make pens carefully.
4. Men teachers may take one evening a week for courting or two if they go to church.
5. After ten hours in school, they may read the Bible or other good books.
6. Women teachers who marry will be dismissed.
7. Any teacher who smokes, uses liquor, frequents pool or pulic halls or gets shaved in a barber shop will have to give good reason to suspect his worth, integrity and honesty.

Finally, on the left of the panel of stage 2-2 that continues to Stage 3, there are two articles announcing Dora's imminent departure for Japan as a missionary and inviting people to a summer evening concert at a church, to raise funds for Dora's work (both articles were published on *Morris Herald and Advertiser*, August 8, 1874).

3. From America to Japan (1874)

The third part consists of a desk exhibition (to be called Stage 3-1) and a travel corner (to be called Stage 3-2).

<Stage 3-1>

On the center of the desk are articles from the ceremony that was held at the First Methodist Church of Evanston on September 20, 1874, for the dispatch of women missionaries overseas. Following praise and prayer by Rev. Jutkins, the address by Jennie Willing, Dora and Miss L. Mason, M. D. gave speeches. Mason was sent to China. Another missionary, Miss Sigourney Trask, M. D., was absent that day, (*Chicago Tribune*, September 20, 1874).

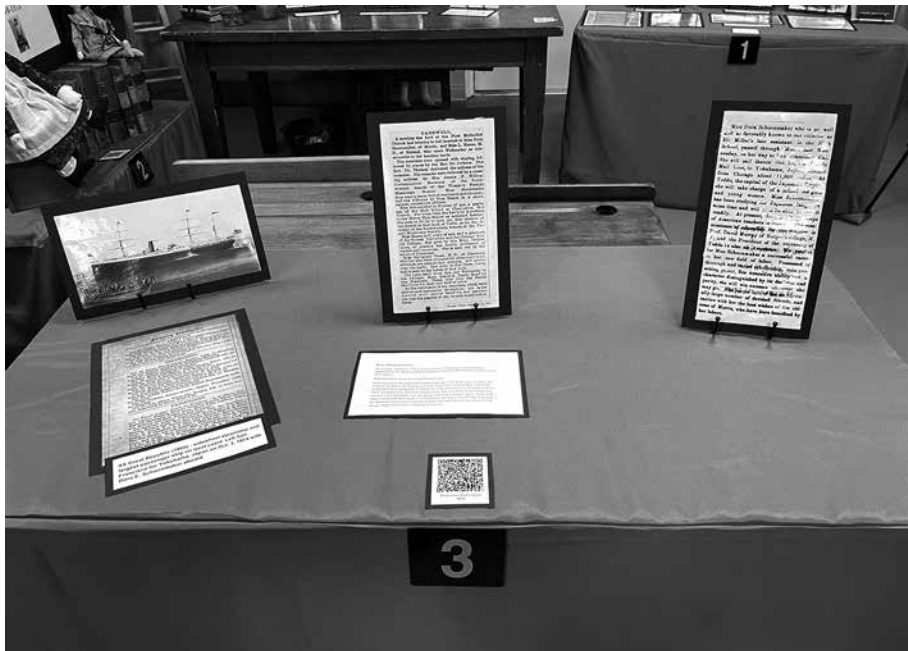
The content of Dora's speech appears in another article (*The Evanston Index*, vol. 3, no. 17, September 26, 1874, p. 1). A typed version of her speech is presented by the Museum in the center of the desk (below). The translation of it is available in Tanamura's book (p. 91):

I am about to go to Japan, and some of my family and friends asked me why I didn't

stay at home and do the work I should be doing here. I replied, I'm sure there are a lot of people here too. There are many jobs, and many people work. But over there, there endless jobs, but only a few ministers. I am not going there with a martyr's spirit. There were many conflicts before I came to this decision, but that is now a thing of the past. I am ashamed I allowed such doubts to enter my heart. No life can be truly lived except where God wants it. Please pray for me.

Tanamura writes, "Dora didn't say like Mason, 'I give it my all.' No, she couldn't. But her mind was set. The audience would not have known what Dora's speech really meant. Her thoughts were contained in subtle expressions that only she could understand." Dora's intention to return to the U.S. after five years, a condition not seen in other missionaries, was, as we will see later, a characteristic of her "graceful" way of life.

On display to the right of the desk is a local newspaper article about Dora's departure. To quote the description: "Miss Dora Schoonmaker ... passed through Morris on her way to San Francisco and will sail to Yokohama, 11,000 miles from Chicago; At Yeddo, the capital of the Japanese Empire, she will take charge of a school for girls and young women; Dora has been studying the Japanese Language; Commissioner of education for the Empire is Prof. David Murray of Rutgers's College, N. J.; We predict for Miss Schoonmaker

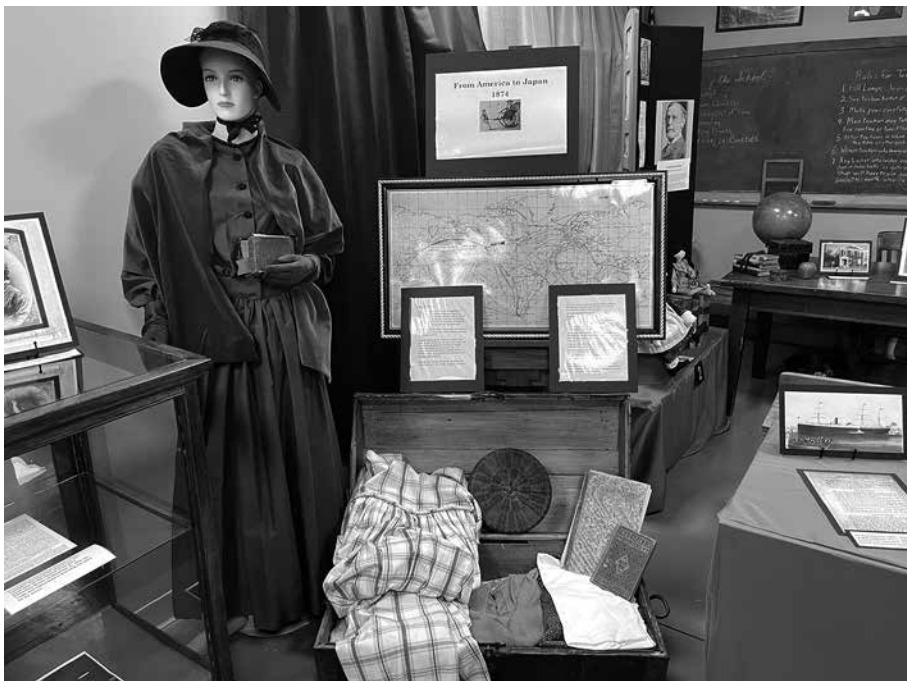


stage 3-1

a successful career in her new field of labor... she carries with her the best wishes of the citizens of Morris.” (*Morris Herald & Advertiser*, Sep. 26, 1874).

<Stage 3-2>

In front of the world map that stands in the Travel Corner are explanatory panels by the Museum about the “Dispatch Decision” and “Dora’s Journey”. The “Dispatch Decision” panel outlines the following: At the Fifth Annual General Executive Committee meeting in May 1874, the Committee made the decision to send new missionaries to Bulgaria, Africa, and Japan; The Northwestern Branch provided \$1,500 (including the \$1,000 donation from Mrs. DePauw); The missionaries’ salaries and expenses for the second half of 1874 were \$375, after deducting \$500 for the ship’s fare, there remained \$625 (corresponded to the preparation and six months’ activities); The New York branch donated \$100 for missionary expenses, the Western branch donated \$120, and the Baltimore branch planned to pay \$200 for the “private tutor” (private Japanese instruction); A total of \$1,920, including Dora’s travel expenses, was the budget for starting work in Japan; Dora was to depart in the fall, giving her about six months to prepare for her travel; She had no idea what would be needed in Japan, which has a different climate and natural features. (See Tanamura, pp. 85-86, 89.)



stage 3-2

Tanamura states, "The budget for establishing a new school and starting evangelism may have been too small in real terms." She speculates that this may have been due to the economic crisis of the time, as well as the fact that the budget was only just barely enough to cover the costs at a stage when the possibility of evangelism in Japan was not yet clear (Tanamura, p. 86). Such a low budget and the fact that Dora was dispatched alone may have been one of the reasons why Dora's work was so difficult after her arrival in Japan.

On September 23, on the way from Channahon to Chicago, Dora stopped in Morris, where she met with former students, colleagues, and church members, and from there she took a train to San Francisco, amazed that the United States was such a big country.

Returning to <Stage 3-1>, to the left of the desk is presented a picture of the Great Republic, the largest steamboat on the West Coast at the time, from San Francisco, on which Dora boarded, and information on arrival and departure at the port of Yokohama (see Tanamura 96, p. 106). Dora left San Francisco on October 3 and arrived in Yokohama on October 28. The arrival/departure information clearly lists her name.

4. Living the Dream (1874-1879)

Stage 4, which exhibits Dora's work in Japan, is composed largely of photographs and other materials provided by the Aoyama Gakuin Reference Center. Stage 4 begins with a profile photo of Dora, right on the case. Next to it is a book on the history of the WFMS-MEC (Mary Sparkes Wheeler, *First Decade of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, Phillips & Hunt, 1881. 346 p.).

In the center of the showcase is a postcard created by Aoyama Jogakuin for its 40th anniversary (see Tanamura, p. 282), titled "Founders of Aoyama Jogakuin: Sen Tsuda, Dora Schoonmaker, Ella Blackstock."

On the left side of the showcase are a photo of Sen Tsuda and an explanatory panel. He is introduced as a "Politician, Educator, Writer." The following is a brief description of his work.

After arriving in Japan, Dora wanted to start a school, rather than staying in the Tsukiji Settlement. Foreigners were restricted to certain portions of Tokyo and missionaries were not allowed to found schools outside this foreign settlement unless they were employed by the government or by a Japanese family. The support of Mr. Tsuda helped Dora lay the foundation for the school that would later be known as

Aoyama Gakuin. He developed a strong interest in women's education and volunteered his daughter, Umeko, as an exchange student with the Iwakura mission overseas. Sen Tsuda received a lesson on Western agricultural techniques and opened the Gakunosha School of Agriculture in Azabu, Tokyo in 1875. Tsuda introduced and promoted Western vegetables, particularly corn, and fruits to Japan. Mr. Tsuda was a supporter of agrarian rights. Sen Tsuda also played an important role in establishing Christian Schools, such as Aoyama Gakuin, Doshisha University, Friends Girls' School, and Tokyo School for the Blind and Deaf. (For more information, see Tanamura, pp. 105-118.)

To show Tsuda Sen's connection to contemporary Japan, the panel also includes a description of Umeko Tsuda, the founder of Tsuda College in 1900, and her portrait on the new Japanese banknote.

The lower section of the showcase displays photographs of the Yakushi-do Hall of Tohoku-ji Temple in Azabu, which was used as a classroom for the Girls' Elementary School, and the Daisho-in Temple in Mita, where the Salvation School was opened (November 1, 1875).



stage 4

The fact that classes were held in a tatami room in a Buddhist temple well illustrates the reality of Dora's struggle for going "into Japan" in the absence of adequate support. These photographs will be especially surprising to people of Morris and Grundy County who visit this permanent exhibit.

On the left side of the upper row in the showcase, a chart from 1873 (showing the location of Yakushi-do and the houses of Okada Heizo and Tsuda Sen) is presented, followed by a photograph of Kaigan Girl's School (January 1877), which opened in the settlement, showing the development of Dora's school. However, as the explanation states, Kaigan School for Girls experienced the tragedy of "burning down on December 26, 1879," immediately after Dora's return to the United States.

Heathen Woman's Friend (Vol. VII no. 2, Aug. 1875.) is displayed on the far right of the top row in the showcase. Here is the first report from Dora to the U.S. (Dora was disappointed to know that her first letter, which had been submitted long ago, was not received. It was published in this August issue the following year [Tanamura, p. 132]).

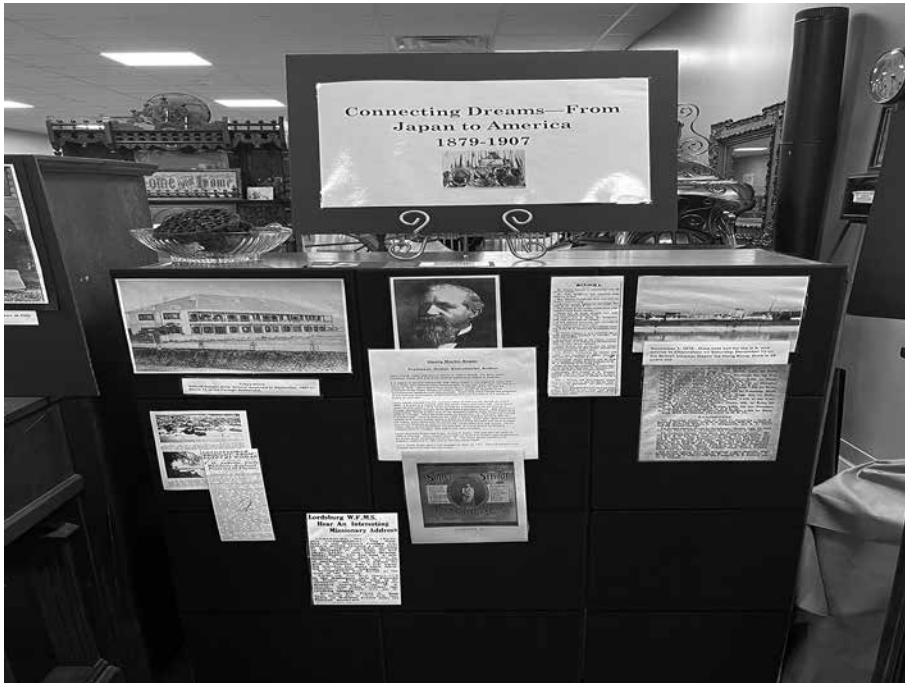
In the upper row, center right, is a list of the founders of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Japan. The picture shows Rev. Rovert Samuel Maclay, Rev. John C. Davidson, Dr. Jurius Soper, Rev. Irvin Henry Correll, Rev. Colbert Harris. Dora is shown at the top.

5. Connecting Dreams: From Japan to the U.S. (1879-1907)

Stage 5 begins with a photo of the British steamer Gaelic on Dora's return trip (upper right) and a record of those on board (lower right) (see Tanamura, p. 210). She left Yokohama on November 1, 1879, and arrived in Channahon on December 13. "Miss Dora Schoonmaker arrived home from Japan Saturday of last week. Her many friends were rejoiced to see her after an absence of five years." (*Morris Daily Herald*, December 19, 1879) (right center).

In the upper left corner, a photo of the 1881 Kaigan Girls' School that was rebuilt is presented. Shortly after her return, she was appointed by the WFMS-MEC to lead a campaign for rebuilding Kaigan Girls' School, which had been destroyed by fire. The efforts of this difficult mission paid off, with large donations coming in faster than expected, and the school was rebuilt in September 1881.

The article about lotus flower is presented in the lower left corner (*Morris Daily Herald*, Aug. 5, 1922). Rev. Tanamura requested me to verify the authenticity of this 1922 article



stage 5

there was sent to her by Deborah Steffes, the Museum Curator, asking whether lotus flowers still bloom on the canal 100 years later. This contact was “a seed” to open the connection between Japan, the Museum and the city of Morris, which bore great fruit in the form of this permanent exhibition. The article is as follows:

LOTUS FLOWER BROUGHT FROM EGYPT (sic.) BY WOMAN

J. O. LeRette, Early Resident, Explains Presence of Flower.

Explanation of the lotus flower flourishing in the Illinois canal and river is given by J. O. LeRette, one of the pioneers of this section. Mr. LeRette says that about 45 years ago, Miss Doris Schoonmaker, daughter of Jacob Schoonmaker, lived in Grundy county on the line between Kankakee. She was a prominent woman of that period and was sent as a Sunday school missionary to Egypt. While there, she gathered some seeds of the ancient lotus flower and brought them back with her. This seed she scattered in the DuPage river where it crosses the canal above the locks at Cahnnahon. That seed came into the Illinois river and canal and is now flourishing. While the flower has been growing and blooming from year to year, its identity was not known until recently....

The fact that she is said to be a Sunday school missionary in Egypt is surprising, but the basic point of the article is quite plausible. If Dora brought back lotus seeds, it is more likely that Tsuda Sen, the founder of modern agronomy in Japan, who kindly helped Dora establish the school, had them brought to her, rather than that she collected them herself. If so, as Rev. Tanamura says, this is a great discovery.

When did Dora plant the "lotus seed"? Immediately after returning to the U.S. or after Kaigan Girl's School was destroyed by fire? One can only imagine. In any case, if the article is true, Dora must have sown the "lotus seed" in the Dupage River, praying that the "missionary seed" she had been sowing for five years would flourish in Japan. If it had been after the fire, she would have prayed even more earnestly that the "missionary seed" would not be burnt up and extinguished. This prayer might have been the driving force that made Dora deliver a powerful message as she had just returned from Japan. She brought about the success of the campaign to support the rebuilding of Kaigan Girl's School mentioned above.

However, in addition to this article, documentation of the extinction of the lotus in the 1970s is also displayed here.

For years a large bed of famous Lotus (yellow) lilies grew in Norten's Channel in the DuPage River, and people came from miles around to pick them from boats. They no longer grow, probably polluted water killed them. Some say the dam went out once the river went dry and they never grew back. (History of Channahon: From Past to Present, Channahon - Aux Sable Heritage Society, 1972)

According to this explanation, the lotus may have once been extinct. However, large colonies of them can now be seen in the rivers and canals. During the tour after the opening ceremony on June 29 (see below II 9), we stopped at a natural park (Four Rivers at the Confluence), where lotuses were in full bloom. The guide at the environmental education center there told us that the lotuses were probably of American origin. Where did Dora plant the seeds? Where and how did they grow? Is there a possibility of hybridization? Are the lotus plants that grow flourishingly today from the 19th century? Further research is necessary to find out the truth concerning questions of whether Dora brought the seeds back from Japan, and whether they were given to her by Tsuda Sen.

Now, in the center of Stage 5 is a photograph (top) and description (middle) of Henry Marlin Soper, whom Dora married, and the seal of the Soper School of Eloquence (bottom). (See Tanamura, pp. 225, 239.) The following is a brief description of Henry, titled “Professor, Orator, Elocutionist, Author.”:

Henry Marlin Soper was born in March of 1850 in Illinois.... Henry Soper is not related to Julius and Mary Soper who allowed Dora Schoonmaker to live with them upon her arrival in Japan in 1874. Henry spent most of his life in Chicago where he was the president of the Soper School of Oratory which taught its students to be accomplished speakers and elocutionists. Soper was twice named the president of the National Association of Elocutionists and was the author of a series of books on elocution.

Henry Soper married Dora E. Schoonmaker at Will County, Illinois on July 6, 1880. It is a bit of a mystery how and when Henry and Dora met. Dora was in Japan for five years (1874-1879) serving as a missionary for the WFMS-MEC. She returned to Channahon, Illinois to take care of her widowed mother while Henry Soper lived north in Chicago. Dora returned home on December 13, 1879 and was married 7 months later.... Soon after Dora returned to the states, a fire destroyed the school that Dora had founded and Dora traveled around the Midwest to raise funds for the construction of a new school. Henry Soper was a devout Methodist and perhaps, at one of Dora’s fundraising engagements in Chicago, their paths may have crossed.... Henry Marlin Soper died in Los Angeles on April 12, 1911. Dora remained in Los Angeles and lived with her son Duane.

Soper’s School of Eloquence was a success in Chicago, and Dora’s active cooperation was instrumental in its success. According to Rev. Tanamura, “Dora was more adept at the establishment and management of the school.” The experience of Kaigan Girl’s School would be put to good use here. Dora was co-editor of Henry’s Eloquence Series Nos. 13 and 14. Henry used as a model the Philadelphia School of Eloquence, from which he graduated, when he ran “a coeducational school co-owned by a married couple.” The Soper School of Eloquence was a place that taught “not only how to give speeches and recite, but also how to debate, the study of physical expression, drama, and music,” and was “a stimulating place for women from different backgrounds, including those interested in the arts and entertainment, progressive feminists, and those interested in movements

centered on women at home, like overseas missionary work and the temperance movement. It provided a stimulating venue for a variety of women." Thus, the Soper School "was not an outlandish task for a former missionary, but instead a necessary school for a new era, and it was by no means unrelated to Dora's dream of overseas evangelization." (Tanamura, pp. 240-241.)

In the newspaper article on the lower left, it is reported that Dora gave an intriguing lecture on missionary work in Japan at the monthly meeting of WFMS-MEC in the town of Lordsburg, New Mexico, at the home of Mrs. Oscar Adams, with interesting stories including her failures while learning Japanese.

6. Dream Memories: From Chicago to California (1907-1995)

Stage 6 deals with Dora in her later years. The introduction (right) begins with the presentation of photographs of former students who attended Dora's girls' elementary school in 1874, taken probably around the 25th anniversary of the school's opening.

The second exhibit from the right is an obituary of her husband Henry (*Los Angeles Times*, April 13, 1911). Dora was saddened by his death (in a letter to Spencer at Aoyama Jogakuin, she asked to pray for her in her "darkest life"), but Dora was greatly comforted and rewarded by the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Soper, fellow Tsukiji workers, in Glendale, near Los Angeles, and by the rapid increase of Japanese immigrants in Los Angeles at that time,



stage 6

including several graduates of Aoyama Jogakuin. (Tanamura, pp. 267-274.)

The third exhibit from the right is a photograph of a group surrounding Dora (July 16, 1928, Los Angeles). It is a commemorative photo of the “Aoyama-kai” (Aoyama Gakuin Association) with a group of Christians who visited the area to attend the World Sunday School Convention in Los Angeles and Japanese immigrants who had connection to Aoyama Gakuin.

Next to it, fourth from the right, is a photo of Dora, when she was living with her son Duane in California. This photo appears to show Dora in her 50s or 60s (see Tanamura, p. 265).

Fifth from the right is Dora’s obituary on the front page of *Woman’s Missionary Friend*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (February 1935).

Mrs. Dora Schoonmaker Soper, our pioneer missionary to Japan, died in Los Angeles early in December. Mrs. Parmelee, who sent the word, writes: “I wonder that she had physical strength to write her ‘Message to the Friend,’ which was published in November, for she had been so frail for years.”

As if in her last will and testament, Dora contributed a long essay entitled “A Message Out of the Past to the Woman’s Missionary Friend” to *Woman’s Missionary Friend*, Vol. 67, No. 10 (November 1934). However, the Missionary Society’s official treatment of Dora’s death is rather small (Tanamura, p. 300, note 31).

The sixth from the right is a certificate of commendation (November 10, 1960) presented to Dora by the Association for Japan-United States Amity and Trade Centennial in recognition of her contributions to US-Japan friendship. Aoyama Gakuin received the certificate instead of Dora.

Finally, you can see two photos. One is that of the Gravestone of Henry and Dora at the Odd Fellows Cemetery in Los Angeles, which was newly erected in 1990 with funds raised by Aoyama Gakuin and its associates. The other is that of the statue (relief) erected in front of the headquarters, Berry Hall, in 1995 in honor of Dora’s contribution to Aoyama



Overall view of the exhibition

Gakuin for commemorating its 120th anniversary.(As mentioned in Annual Report II, 13, the congratulatory video message by Aoyama Gakuin Chancellor Yoshiharu Yamamoto was recorded in front of the relief.)

7. Introduction Corner of Aoyama Gakuin and Rev. Keiko Tanamura

Another table is set up with materials from Aoyama Gakuin, Aoyama Gakuin University, and Aoyama Gakuin Women's Junior College (closed in 2022), as well as Tanamura's book and photographs. The exhibition concludes with a panel of the collaborators. The names of the collaborators are the Grundy County Historical Society and Museum, Aoyama Gakuin Archives, Aoyama Gakuin Historical Research Institute, Aoyama Gakuin School Corporation, Aoyama Gakuin Alumni Association Chicago Chapter, and Rev. Keiko Tanamura, who is listed as a co-creator. An explanation reads, "The concepts and explanations about the Schoonmaker exhibition here are based on advice from Rev. Keiko Tanamura and her renowned work., *Dora E. Schoonmaker: A Life Truly Lived by God's Grace* (2004).

8. “Dora’s Life Story” Booklet

The above is an introduction to the Museum’s exhibit, with some additional information. The Museum has also prepared a compact booklet on Dora’s life, helping visitors to better understand the flow of the exhibit.

9. Excursion

After the opening ceremony, there was an excursion in Dora’s footsteps. Here is a list of the places we visited.

-The site of the Morris Center School (see photo above): On June 29, we were allowed to go inside the dental clinic.

-From Morris to Channahon via a road that was then a carriage route: Dora could not have commuted daily but would have tracked this road when returning to Channahon.

-Illinois-Michigan Canal Aux Sable Entrance: This was a transit point where the water flow was regulated to go up and down.

-The donkey hut that moved the boats: The boats on the canal were pulled along the shore by donkeys. The donkey hut remains today. The hut was also used as a hideout for black people (slaves) fleeing from the South and escaping to the North (Canada). It is a canal version of the so-called Underground Railroad movement. The Museum of Underground Railroad is located in Cincinnati. According to the exhibit of the Museum, the church and especially women were active in this movement in the mid-19th century. This was another preparation in the development of the WFMS-MEC movement by women in the church.

-Site of the Wilmington residence of the Schoonmakers: Although now submerged, lotus flowers are currently growing in clusters here as well.

-Site of Channahon High School and the former Channahon Methodist Episcopal Church: now an elementary school and a Lutheran church, respectively.

-Four Rivers at the Confluence: The natural park where the spectacular lotus plantation mentioned in 5 above was found.

-Wilmington Oakwood Cemetery: In this cemetery, many of the graves of the Schoonmaker family are located. As mentioned in Annual Report II, 9, the Museum staff, in cooperation with the Wilmington Historical Society, has created a “cemetery tour” to identify the history of the Schoonmaker family and a guidebook for the tour. This tour brings Dora’s life alive through her connections to her relatives.

III. Learning from Dora: How to live "your vision gracefully"

Rev. Tanamura's English translation of her book title is "Dora E. Schoonmaker: A Life Truly Lived by God's Grace" and does not directly include the Japanese word "Yume" (which generally corresponds to "dream") in the English title. I have taken a deeper meaning of "dream" as a vision, and have decided to use the expression "living her vision gracefully" in the English title of this article as my personal translation. This interpretation was also born through my involvement with the permanent exhibition. With that as a premise, in this final chapter, following Tanamura's analysis of the times, let us summarize Dora's way of life and its place in those times, what way of life "living her vision gracefully" is and what we can learn from her life.

The 19th century, in which Dora lived, is said to be the "century of faith revival." However, it was not limited to the conversion of individuals but also gave birth to organized volunteer activities for "social purification" aimed at the "salvation of society as a whole." The 19th century is also known as the "century of women." Active women began to take an initiative within churches; they developed large-scale and energetic organizational activities such as The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church (WFMS-MEC), which sent Dora to Japan, and The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) (which, along with the WFMS-MEC, women from Evanston and the other Methodist Episcopal Churches were deeply involved in). Churches and organizations such as these offered women "a public sphere outside the 'woman's sphere' at home." The societies like the WFMS-MEC were "run by such powerful women with the slogan of 'women's work for women.'" The missionaries were paid, not volunteers, and "unpaid housewives" covered the costs of the missions. The foreign missionary work was a joint effort by women. (Tanamura, pp. 62-64.)

One of the few paid jobs for women at that time was a teacher. However, the basic path for women was to devote themselves to domestic life after marriage. The female missionaries were expected to be "single women" who were determined to devote their lives to missions. The missionaries were expected to go out with a determination to devote their lives to missionary work. A life work that women could pursue for the rest of their lives was born here, and capable and active women were recognized as role models of the times. (It should be noted, however, that the movement did not flourish overnight, as it had been built up through the Underground Railroad and other active works of women for social justice during the Civil War.)

However, Dora did not say that she would “devote her whole life” to missionary work. Although it was common practice for missionaries at that time to devote their entire lives to missions, Dora set a condition of five years for the mission to Japan. If Mrs. DePauw’s donation had no one-year time limit for departure, if it was larger than the amount needed to support just one person, and if the timing of the mission to Japan fit the WFMS-MEC’s plan (Tanamura, pp. 84-87), perhaps Dora would not have been sent to Japan. She was not necessarily a “heroine” that the Woman’s Society would desire, nor the figure that many women of the time, including herself, would aspire to be.

Why did she give the condition? It was for her mother’s sake. Dora offered, “After five years, if my mother needs me, please let me return home. If that is agreed upon, I will come immediately” (Tanamura 84, p. 92).

Dora’s childhood and youth were marked by a series of deaths in her family. The death of her sister (4-year-old sister Louisa passed away in 1851 when Dora was 8 years old), the death of her father (he died in 1864 at age 38, shortly after they moved to Channahon, when Dora was 13. Her mother Patience became a widow with six children). Besides, after her father’s death, her youngest sister Harriet died just before her second birthday in October 1865. (In addition, her aunt Mary died in 1866 at the age of 31 after giving birth, and her newborn baby died a month later. Her uncle George was killed in the Civil War in 1865.) Dora, the eldest daughter, was keenly aware of her mother’s suffering and hardship in this situation. She must have thought that living with her mother, who struggled with many deaths and suffering, while accepting the importance and transience of the lives of those close to her (as the name “patience” suggests), was the way she should live her life of love and service. (Tanamura, pp. 20, 40, 42, 43)

When the decision was made to send her to Japan, her mother’s words were, “Dora is dear, loving daughter, but I give her cheerfully to the work to which her Heavenly Father has call her, feeling that it is the highest honor He could have conferred upon her. Oh, how glad I am that He has counted me worthy to make this sacrifice for Him.” Tanamura explains that it was because of such a mother that she offered the condition of five years, and that “the mother was ready to offer her daughter as a sacrifice, and the daughter was ready to make the sacrifice of interrupting her dreams for such a mother,” explaining the bond of love that is expressed in this consideration and respect (Tanamura, p. 92; Franc Baker, *Historical Sketches of the North Western Branch*, 1887, Jameson & Morse Co., p. 85).

“The Missionary Society’s requirement for missionaries is a minimum of five years of service, but no one other missionary, other than Dora, literally retired from missionary

service after five years....” By the 19th century standards, once missionaries went abroad, it was most praiseworthy for them to die in the foreign lands to which they were sent. Harriet Newell's story became a best seller in this atmosphere of the times. In the 19th century when it was considered a 'failure' if one returned home early or quit the missionary work itself for any reason, Dora's case could have belonged to the category of 'failure'" (Tanamura, pp. 193-4).

However, this is where the uniqueness of Dora's "graceful" way of life and her message to us resonates. In other words, Dora's life raises questions about the gender stereotypes of traditional society (women at home) as well as the stereotypes of social change (the heroine who gives everything for the sake of justice). For Dora, oversea mission was undoubtedly a mission that she had to undertake and wanted to do. Throughout her life, Dora kept this sense of mission burning. However, it seems that love for her mother was also a mission that she had to and wanted to carry out. She never abandoned her dream to live a life of serving and loving people far away (Japan). Likewise, she never gave up the way of life of serving and loving those closest to her. I believe that she was torn between the dream and the reality of her life, but she was prepared to make the unpopular choice of "choosing both". When you think about this, life is not something that can be divided into two choices. One of the fundamental criticism of a gender-conscious perspective is that such dualism (which can be called the logic of modern male society) should also be overcome. Already in the nineteenth century when the first wave of feminist movement (which led to women's suffrage) was launched, Dora embodied an "alternative," a truly "graceful way of life" that was distinctly different from the dualism. Such a life beyond dualism could be possible by vision (bigger or wider dream) as the perspective beyond both dream and reality.

This "graceful life" is, however, a life of worry, trial, and error. It might not be pleasing for many people, and it may not always be valued by society. It is not heroic, but it is a graceful life in which one prays and asks for specific things to be done, based on the standard of "love." In this life, one sincerely asks such questions as "what am I to serve," "who needs me," and "who do I love." In this way, rather than using social norms (whether conservative or reformist) as criteria for judgment, one courageously modifies what she/he has decided or what has been determined. This is a flexible way of life. This is the charm of Dora's way of life. This is why the people of Grundy County, who had never heard of Dora before, have grown to sympathize with her, and this is why she is now on permanent display in the Museum.

Dora successfully laid the “foundation stone” in a “short battle” over a five-year period (Tanamura, p. 89). She did not allow the seeds she had sown to blossom by her own effort but left them to the next leaders. It was a life of sowing the seeds of mission, symbolized by the lotus seeds (she perhaps brought back from Japan and planted in the DuPage River in Channahon) (Tanamura, p. 195). It requires the “courage” to set the time limit and to pass the baton to others. It is also a sign of trust in her collaborators and God. There is not necessarily just one thing to do in our lives. The prerequisite for living in “shoulds” (justice) is to live in love. Dora lived her life in the “now” without losing sight of her love both for those far away and for those close to her, and her life was truly a life of “living her vision gracefully.” To my understanding, this is the essence of women’s education of Aoyama Gakuin. Those who are connected to Aoyama Gakuin, the roots of which was the Girls’ Elementary School that Dora established 150 years ago, should be dedicated to sowing seeds and passing on the baton, inheriting Dora’s “graceful” way of life of living in love, instead of becoming “heroines” and “heroes” themselves.

This time, together with the Chicago Branch of the Aoyama Gakuin Alumni Association, led by Branch Director Yasuhiko Ito, we have been working on a project related to Dora under the title of “Schoonmaker Seeds of Mission Project” (Annual Report II, 7). The project consists of (1) a museum exhibition, (2) a lotus seed survey, and (3) a missionary seed tour for people related to Aoyama Gakuin. This paper is a report on (1). The seed sown by Dora has blossomed into a permanent exhibit in 150 years. This will become another seed, which will blossom in (2), (3), and in new themes in the years to come. We hope and have “vision” that this will happen, and we will continue the “Seeds of Mission” project with Grundy County as its axis, “gracefully” in the years to come.