Alice Blackwell’s diary reveals 19th C. Dorchester, Boston from a Pope’s Hill perspective

by Anthony Sammarco

Alice Blackwell (1858-1950) lived on Pope’s Hill when it was first developed into a residential neighborhood.

Alice Blackwell, who were among the most respected and forthright women in America. Her life in suburban Dorchester offered not only lasting friendships, but a nurturing aspect to her life, as her parents both travelled throughout the country lecturing on the women’s rights cause. Her education at the Chaucery Hall School in Copley Square, Boston, and later at Boston University, gave her not only the education, but the confidence to become a leader in the issue of women’s rights.

Assisting her mother in the publication of The Women’s Journal, Alice Blackwell later became editor of the newspaper upon her mother’s death in 1893. Her father continued to offer advice and direction to his daughter, but he was more involved in the development of Nipomo in the 1885-1905 period, laying out Bowman Street and Blackwell Street, which was named for him, in the great development of Dorchester. Upon his death in 1907, Alice offered her family’s home on Boutwell Street to Morgan Memorial for one dollar per year, so inner-city children might visit the "country," till the soil and breathe clean air. Alice Blackwell continued her quest for rights for women, and lived to see women attain the right to vote. Her efforts on behalf of the less fortunate were tremendous, and at one time, unable to give money, she sold the oriental rugs from her home on Pope’s Hill to benefit the Armenians, over a million of whom perished in a genocide at the hands of the Turks during World War I.

The Journal of Alice Stone Blackwell offers a glimpse into the youth of a girl who was destined to follow in the footsteps of her mother. Upon Lucy Stone’s death, she said to her daughter, “Make the world be a better place.” Not only did Alice follow her mother’s direction, but her personal journal makes the wonderful world of Victorian Boston and Dorchester come to life through the written word.

Anthony Sammarco’s award winning history columns appear regularly in Dorchester Community News. Join him for a historical tour of Savin Hill Monday, August 29 at 6pm outside the Savin Hill T Station. Fee $5 per person.