

# YWCA Hamilton and Working Women

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In a lengthy letter to the editor published in the Hamilton Herald on February 23, 1907, Miss E. A. Smith described the situation that faced many working women.

*“There are residences in Hamilton, some 5,000 wage-earning women engaged in shops, factories, offices, and as domestic servants either in hotels, boarding houses or private homes. The great majority of these are to be found in the large industries located here. They vary in age from the young girl just out of school to the adult woman.”*

Miss Smith divided these working women into three categories: those with only themselves to support, those earning small wage in order to contribute to the home, and those supporting not only themselves but a dependent relative.

*“Some of these girls are at their places of employment as early as 6:15 a.m., and with only one hour for dinner, continue their arduous work until 6:00 p.m. Others begin at 8:00 a.m. and continue until 6:00 p.m., while only a favoured few are credited with a day’s work on shorter hours than these.”*

These girls, according to Miss Smith become “old in body long before they are old in actual years.” One of the remedies she proposed to offset this “unhealthy” living was “healthy recreation and the opportunity for mental and physical development.” The letter closes with a request to the public to assist the YWCA in providing facilities in order “that young women may have a chance to live clean, decent lives.” By means of public education about the working conditions of women, the YWCA was actively doing something to address the current situation.

