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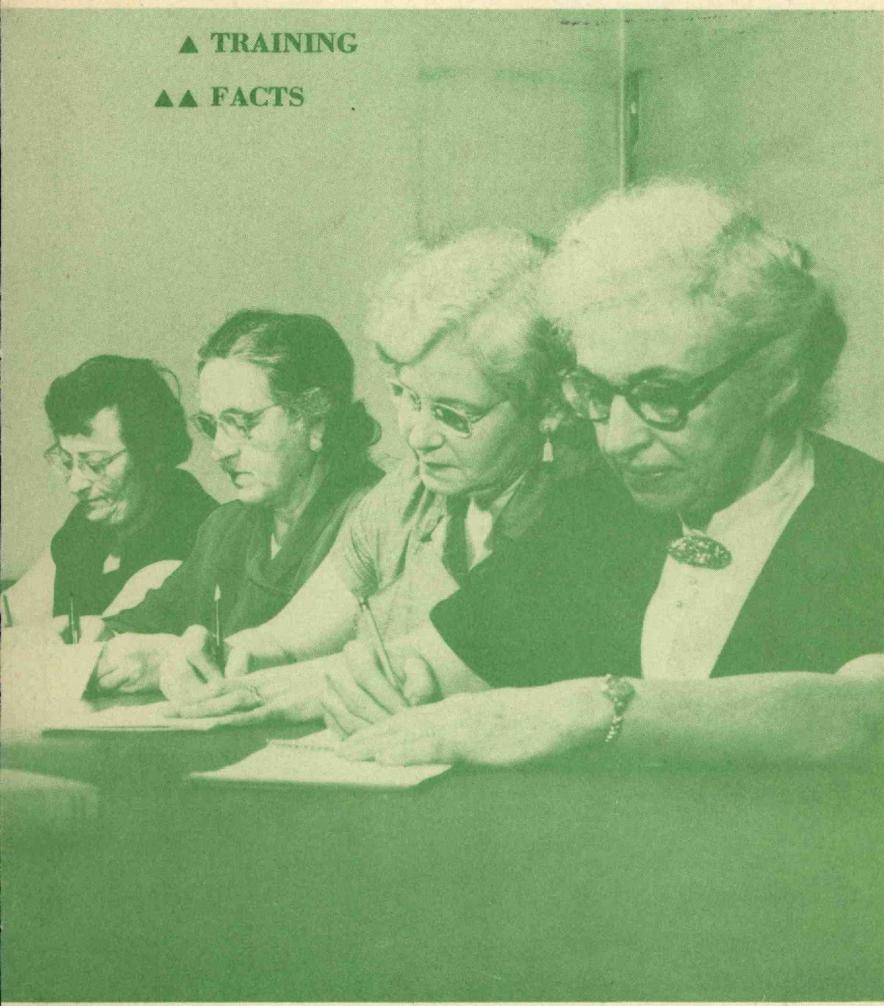
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# "Older" Women as Office Workers

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Martin P. Durkin, *Secretary*

WOMEN'S BUREAU

Frieda S. Miller, *Director*

# "Older" Women as Office Workers

- ▲ Training Programs in Four Cities
- ▲ ▲ Facts on "Older" Women in Relation  
to Office Work

*Bulletin of the Women's Bureau, No. 248*

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

MARTIN P. DURKIN, SECRETARY

WOMEN'S BUREAU

FRIEDA S. MILLER, DIRECTOR

WASHINGTON: 1953



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## Letter of Transmittal

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR,  
WOMEN'S BUREAU, *Washington, June 4, 1953.*

SIR: I have the honor to transmit a report on the training of mature and older women for office work. Current custom among many employers is to establish a maximum age beyond which a job applicant is not considered for employment. This report includes four specific examples which indicate that women in their middle years, or older, can be successfully prepared for employment even if there has been a considerable lapse of time since they last worked. The four programs described have been limited to office occupations in view of the existing shortage of clerical workers. It is hoped that this exploratory study will suggest to employers, schools, and other community agencies that mature women can become competent workers if given opportunities for both training and employment.

The report was prepared in the Research Division of the Women's Bureau, Mary N. Hilton, Chief. Direct responsibility for the study was that of Pearl C. Ravner. Annie Lefkowitz and Mildred S. Barber wrote some portions of the report.

Respectfully submitted.

FRIEDA S. MILLER, *Director.*

HON. MARTIN P. DURKIN,  
*Secretary of Labor.*

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Women's Bureau is greatly indebted to the organizations and individuals who supplied the data on the four training programs described in this bulletin. The cooperation of the U. S. Bureau of Employment Security, the employment security agencies of the States of Colorado and Ohio, the Cleveland Board of Education, and the Denver Public Schools was basic to the preparation of the report. We wish to thank especially Dorothy Warren of the New York House and School of Industry, Donald W. Keith of the Ohio State Employment Center, Ralph E. Crow of the Cleveland Board of Education, Howard Johnson of the Emily Griffith Opportunity School in Denver, B. B. Van Zandt of the Colorado Department of Employment Security, and Mary A. Ralston of the First Wisconsin National Bank.

## Foreword

Purchase a newspaper in almost any city, turn to the back pages, and you will see advertisement after advertisement in the "Help wanted" columns such as these:

CLERICAL POSITIONS, AGE 17 TO 23  
INTERVIEWER—CLERK, AGE 22 TO 30  
TYPISTS, EXPERIENCED, UNDER 30  
SECRETARY, LAW, ATTRACTIVE, UNDER 40

Then talk to personnel directors of large companies, to managers of employment services and placement agencies, and they will tell you of the many women over 35 whose applications for office work have remained in their files for month after month. These are the women who are most difficult to place. The same personnel directors and employment agency managers will tell you of the general shortage of competent young women and how employers are using every means they can think of to recruit the stenographers and typists they need.

There are several reasons for the difficulties encountered by women over 35 or 40 when seeking office work. A basic one is that of employer preference; business and industry prefer to hire young women. Another interrelated factor is that many mature women seeking office work have not been employed for some time and their formerly adequate skills have grown rusty through disuse. Such women are not able to perform competently the jobs they seek and this, in turn, contributes to the general prejudice. Sometimes it is the attitude of the woman herself toward her age and her fear of competing with younger workers which is the chief, and self-created, barrier to successful office employment.

Aware of the office worker shortage, the prevalence of age barriers, and the frequently unsuccessful attempts by women over 35 years to find office work, the Women's Bureau has explored the problem in an effort to find examples of affirmative action that might point toward possible solutions. This report describes, in part I, four different programs which have prepared women from 35 to 65 years for office work. Although the programs differ considerably, they each exemplify an approach by which middle-aged and older women were enabled to prepare for, and secure, office work.

Two programs for typists and stenographers, in Cleveland and Denver, resulted from community action stimulated chiefly by a local office worker shortage. In each city, the program consisted of intensive refresher training of women unable to meet required performance levels.

After the training, most of the women were able to secure office employment. Another program for typists and stenographers was established as a small experiment by a New York private welfare agency concerned with how best to help older women earn a living. The fourth program described in this report explains how a Milwaukee bank, faced with an acute labor shortage, developed a way to use women as business-machine operators on a part-time work schedule. The actual jobs were examined and redesigned, a training program was instituted, and several hundred women were employed.

The number of women affected by each of the programs is relatively few and the programs themselves are recent and generally exploratory. They are described in some detail in this report with the thought that these examples of action by public adult education facilities, a private welfare agency, and by a business enterprise may stimulate and encourage the development of programs with the same objectives elsewhere.

A general factual background is provided in part II as a supplement to the specific examples given in part I. Basic information on population age trends, women in the labor force, and developments in office employment are included.



# TOO OLD?

## TYPISTS

Ages 18-35

Come in and discuss a position with one of our personnel representatives.

Get out of practice you can regain speed on the job through our BRUSH-UP Plan.

Interesting Work  
Good Starting Salaries  
Liberal Employee Benefits  
5-Day Week

CLERK-TYPISTS (2); 36 HOURS  
18-22. Beginner accepted. Publishing etc. Opportunity. \$175 mo. start.

SECRETARY—TO 30 YEARS  
Interesting, diversified work; steno or dictaphone; good typist; 9 to 5, 5-day week; air conditioned office.

## Office Girl

Age 18-22; general office work and some light typing. No previous experience required. Opportunity for advancement.

## Typist-Ediphone Operator

21 to 35; experienced; general; salary; permanent; 5-day week; location convenient

## STENOGRAPHER

Age 18-30; shorthand and accurate typing required; interesting work; beginner acceptable; downtown location.

## Typist

Age 18 to 35; experienced; for interesting composing; salary plus bonus; permanent; 5 day week; many sick days.

## Clerk Typist

Age 20 to 25; 5 day, 40 hour week; paid vacation and sick leave, Blue Cross.

## STENOGRAPHER

PERSONNEL DEPT.

Experienced stenographer to assume full responsibility. Above average typing and good hand. Experience on dictaphone typewriter helpful; 25-30 years, 5-day week. Good starting salary. Attractive company benefits. Own transportation desirable.

## GENERAL OFFICE TYPIST

For order desk. Alertness, accuracy necessary. Good penman. Some filing. Age 22-25, preferably single. Denver resident. 5-day, 40-hr. wk. Exc. opportunity advancement. See office mgr.

BOOKKEEPER-Steno-Typist for small mfg. company. Attractive. Age 22-30. \$225 mo.;

1952

## High School Graduates

Excellent permanent clerical jobs available in modern insurance home office. Typing training not necessary.

## TYPIST

Permanent position for girl 20-35 years of age. Varied office duties. Good beginning salary and regular increases according to your ability and progress. Air conditioned office res. and 5 day — 40 hour week. Free hospital and surgical insurance.

## Typist-File

for permanent position surroundings; 37 1/2-hour week; reasonable typing

## CLERK-TYPISTS

We have openings for several clerk-typists, under 35 yrs. in our home office. Typing speed not important. Regular work 5 days a week from 8:30 a. m. to 4 p. m. Monday through Friday. Vacation and sick leave benefits, non-union, etc. If you would like to work with congenial people in a pleasant atmosphere, won't you come in and see us.

# **“OLDER” WOMEN AS OFFICE WORKERS**

## **Part I. Training Programs in Four Cities**

### **LOCAL COMMUNITY ACTION**

In the field of office work, a practical demonstration of what can be done by a community interested in retraining middle-aged and older persons was given in Cleveland and in Denver in 1952. Classes in office skills directed primarily toward meeting the needs of mature women were established in each case as part of a cooperative effort to solve existing shortages of typists and stenographers. Women's organizations, the State Employment Services, and public school authorities worked together in the development of the training programs as part of a 3-month test project, the clerical pilot project, which had as its basic objective to test methods for solving a labor shortage.

In Cleveland, the training classes were not in continuous operation following the 3-month test period but, after the lapse of a semester, were reinstated. The Denver refresher training courses were similarly established as part of the same general project and continued without interruption. In both cities, the training programs demonstrate not only how the public schools adapt their adult education programs to fill the needs of the community but also the effectiveness of joint action by local community groups.

### **The Clerical Pilot Project**

The shortage of competent office workers which had existed since World War II was intensified after June 1950. The lack of office workers acceptable to employers varied in acuteness from one community to another, and was of considerable concern to two agencies within the United States Department of Labor: the Women's Bureau and the Bureau of Employment Security. One of the programs instituted began in the fall of 1951, when the two Federal agencies invited representatives of a number of national women's organizations to cooperate in developing a program to deal with the problem. A series of meetings was held at which the decision was made to test, in a few communities, the actual operation of a program in which local women's organizations worked with the State Employment Services to help alleviate the shortage. The following 10 women's organizations agreed to participate in the pilot project and to suggest that their local groups cooperate in the test cities:

American Association of University Women  
 American Federation of Sroptimist Clubs  
 General Federation of Women's Clubs  
 Young Women's Christian Association of the U. S. A.  
 National Council of Catholic Women  
 National Council of Jewish Women  
 National Council of Negro Women  
 National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc.  
 Young Women's Hebrew Associations (National Jewish Welfare Board)  
 United Council of Church Women

Five cities agreed to act as test areas. The central organizational point in each of the cities was the local office of the State Employment Service. Although the project was conceived on a national level, each test city developed its own methods and programs to meet the needs of the local situation.

The project began in the spring of 1952 in most of the five cities and lasted for approximately 3 months in each. The programs differed considerably among the participating cities. In some cities, emphasis was largely on recruitment of more office workers through publicity; in other cities, efforts were directed chiefly toward changing employer attitudes toward the employment of older women as office workers and the use of part-time workers. In Cleveland and Denver, one of the specific decisions reached by the groups participating was that training classes in typing and shorthand for mature women seeking office work be established since such women were the only major source of additional supply in these cities.

Not only did the program and emphasis vary among the five test cities, but the groups participating also varied. Not all of the 10 sponsoring women's groups had branches in each city and, in some cities, other women's organizations became interested. Since the clerical pilot project was basically directed at solving a labor supply problem and not toward training, the schools were not represented on the planning committees in some of the cities but in Cleveland and Denver the school authorities participated almost from the beginning.

At the termination of the experimental period the national offices of the participating women's organization, the Bureau of Employment Security, and the Women's Bureau were advised of each city's accomplishments. On the basis of this information, a general program was developed for use of the State Employment Services, when needed, to deal with shortages in occupations in which women predominate.

### **The Cleveland Program**

The decision to provide a special training program as part of the clerical pilot project was made because it was felt by the planning group established by the Ohio State Employment Service that the majority of

women who might respond to the recruitment publicity would need either initial or refresher training. The classes established by the Cleveland Board of Education were daytime classes and included both initial and refresher training. About two-thirds of the enrollees in these classes were beginners who were permitted to transfer to regular evening classes if they so desired and were otherwise qualified. The daytime classes were in typing only since an insufficient number of enrollees had requested training in stenography.

The sessions were held 2 hours a day, 5 days a week, for a term of 5 weeks. It was decided that the classes should meet daily in order to permit the women to progress as quickly as possible. The session of 2 hours was chosen as it was thought continuous instruction of that length would not prove tiresome. The 5-week term was selected as sufficient to prepare for employment those doing refresher work; beginners could be rescheduled into a new term to continue their training as needed.

Teachers appointed to instruct the classes were selected on the basis of teaching competence and sympathetic understanding. Teaching techniques had to be adapted to the variety of skill levels among the students. This meant that the classes were conducted largely on an individualized basis.

Three classes were held during the test period. With the completion of the project in Cleveland, these classes were discontinued. However, in April 1953, another day class in typing was started in which the average age of the women students was 40 years. As is true in most large cities, commercial classes for adults are regularly conducted in night schools by the Cleveland Board of Education for persons of all ages. Small fees are charged trainees in these courses to cover teacher salary costs. Similar fees were charged students attending the clerical pilot project training courses.

### Denver Plans a Program

The clerical pilot project began in Denver in June 1952 when representatives of the Colorado State Employment Service held several meetings with local representatives of several of the ten national women's organizations participating in the program and a number of other interested women's groups. A Recruitment Advisory Council was formed, consisting of one representative from each women's organization, to work with the Employment Service in developing the local pilot project. The following organizations which were not national participants cooperated in the Denver program:

Altrusa Club of Denver  
Desk and Derrick Club (Petroleum  
Industry)  
Pilot Club

National Secretaries' Association,  
Columbine and Evergreen Chapters  
Quota Club  
Zonta Club

Early in the planning, it was decided that the objective of the Denver pilot project would be to establish an organized recruitment program which would stimulate previously employed or trained office workers to return to work on a full- or part-time basis and thus aid in alleviating the local shortage of office personnel. The drive to recruit clerical workers from the ranks of such women was carried on during the summer of 1952 through various publicity channels by the members of the Recruitment Advisory Council. It soon became apparent that many more mature women would be recruited if their previous office skills were again made usable. It was therefore decided to establish refresher classes for women with office experience as part of the project.

Representatives of the Recruitment Advisory Council consulted a non-fee Denver vocational school, the Emily Griffith Opportunity School, which offers clerical courses to adults as part of its regular curriculum. The school immediately offered to provide special refresher courses in typing and stenography, and it was agreed that these courses should be short-term and intensive so as to enable the women to secure work as quickly as possible.

Classes were limited to refresher training since it was thought that initial training courses would require more time for students to acquire a reasonable degree of proficiency and since the city already had ample existing facilities for such training. Refresher training could, in a relatively short time, renew the skills and confidence of women with previous experience and restore them to the labor market.

The Recruitment Advisory Council undertook to make the new training opportunity known to the women of Denver. They publicized the refresher training program through personal contacts with neighbors, friends, and business associates; arranged for articles in the city newspapers, church bulletins, club publications and, in some instances, in their company house organs; and made speeches and radio broadcasts. Women who at one time had been employed as secretaries, stenographers, and clerical workers and who no longer had pressing home responsibilities were urged to take advantage of the refresher courses as a means of returning to the business world where office workers were needed.

The response to the publicity was satisfactory. From among those who inquired, the women's organizations drew recruits who were referred to the Employment Service which selected candidates for the training program.

#### *Administration of the Refresher Training Program*

The administration of the program is divided between the participating women's organizations, the Colorado State Employment Service, and the participating school which is part of the Denver public school system.

The women's organizations do the actual recruiting of applicants for the training program, are responsible for publicizing the training classes, for securing qualified women interested in signing up for the courses, and getting the women to appear at the Employment Service. The women engaged in these activities are provided by the Employment Service with special referral cards to be given to recruits. These cards identify the applicants when they call at the Employment Service office.

The Colorado State Employment Service interviews the candidates who have been referred to it by the women's groups; a special interviewer has been designated for this purpose. The Employment Service screens the candidates and occasionally, if necessary, tests them for proficiency. Women who are 35 years and over, have had previous experience and training in stenography and touch typing, have retained a knowledge of these skills, and whose appearance and attitudes are good are selected for training and instructed to call at the school. The Employment Service does not attempt to influence any women to take the training courses. It has found that those who are genuinely interested do not need urging and that those who are not potential office employees do not desire to take the courses. For each woman selected, the Employment Service fills in registration data on the school's form, forwards the completed form to the school, and retains a program identification card for its own statistical purposes. After a candidate begins her training, the Employment Service has no contact with her until she completes her course and returns to it for assistance in finding a job.

The school admits applicants sent by the Employment Service. It does not give any entrance tests, except in the case of some women who are uncertain of their skills. Usually, it accepts the statements of the candidates that they do have a knowledge of typing and shorthand. The school furnishes facilities and personnel and provides the specialized refresher training in typing, shorthand, and office techniques designed to develop the residual skills of the trainees to the level expected from a secretary or general office worker.

### *The Refresher Classes*

The first training class began in September of 1952 and ended in January of 1953. Twenty-five women enrolled in the course. At the close of this session there were enough candidates on the waiting list to form two new classes, and these were scheduled for the period January to June 1953. Although each class is planned for one 18-week semester, the trainees are not required to attend the entire scheduled term. A student may drop out at any time when the instructor agrees she has advanced to where she is ready for employment. The duration of the

course, therefore, depends upon the individual abilities of the students. However, most students attended for about one semester.

Classes are held Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 7:15 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. When the refresher classes were established, neither space nor instructors were available at the participating school for day classes. However, two rooms in a local high school were secured for use during the evening, when the participating school could provide its own teachers. From its past experiences, the school believed that the refresher training program could be operated satisfactorily in evening classes held two nights a week. The women students, too, seemed to prefer evening classes. Possibly, this was because evening classes did not interfere with regular household activities of most of the women or with the working time of some women who were employed otherwise during the day.

The two instructors selected for the classes were chosen because of their specialized skills, experience in actual office work, personality factors, and age. Since the women who were to be trained under the program were mature women, the school appointed instructors who were close to them in age, with the thought that they would be more sympathetic to the problems the students face because of their age.

Although no special time is set aside to reorient the trainees towards returning to office occupations or to assure them that their mature age will not be a handicap in getting clerical jobs, pertinent discussions take place when the opportunity presents itself. During the classroom teaching, a portion of the time is spent on modern office etiquette and the most effective ways to apply for a job. The instructors found that most of the women fear that they are too old to return to office jobs and that they think employers want younger workers. The experiences of other students in getting jobs are often related in the classes, and these are valuable in building up the morale of the more fearful women members. These accounts tend to reassure the trainees that their age is not an insurmountable obstacle.

### *The Women Trainees*

A total of 85 women have attended the refresher classes thus far. The ages of almost all the women ranged from 35 years to 60 years and almost half were 45 years of age or more. Although the minimum-age requirement for trainees is 35 years, three women who were under that age were admitted to the classes on the special recommendation of one of the sponsoring women's organizations.

All of the women had previous training in shorthand and typing. With the exception of two women who had never been employed, they had held jobs involving duties which ranged from light typing and clerical tasks to highly responsible secretarial work. About half of the 85 women had been working within the year preceding their admission

to the school. However, 12 had not worked for more than 20 years and 10 others held their last jobs over 10 years ago.

Most were high-school graduates or had completed a business course; a few had attended college. The majority were married and had families.

All the trainees were serious about returning to work. Some were not financially in need but wanted to be occupied in a useful and worthwhile activity. Many, however, had to work to supplement the family income. Some had serious financial responsibility for the support of children, parents, or invalid husbands. Others wished to help their sons and daughters through college. Several had been recently widowed and left without financial resources.

### *The Trainees Get Jobs*

Shortly after the first training class had been completed, and while the other two classes were still in progress, the Employment Service endeavored to measure the success of the clerical pilot project as indicated by the experiences of the initial refresher training group. The results of this review showed a high proportion of placements.

It was found that 16 of the original 25 trainees completed the full course and that all 16 were working. Some had been called back by former employers to take better positions than they had left; others had been referred to private industry and civil service jobs; and still others had found employment through their own efforts. Of the 9 women who had not completed their training, 2 secured jobs with the help of the Employment Service in the early part of the session; 2 obtained employment through their own efforts; 3 dropped out because of illness in their families; 1 left because the distance between the school and her home was too great; and 1 could not continue because the hours were inconvenient.

### *The Employment Service Comments on the Trainees*

In the opinion of the Colorado State Employment Service, the Denver project demonstrated that mature and older women can be returned to office jobs through refresher training. An evaluation of the project made in April 1953, 3 months after the completion of the first class, contains a number of general observations which are presented, in part, in this section.

Before their training at the school, the Employment Service believed, the women could not have been hired as typists or stenographers because their skills had deteriorated. Furthermore, it was not likely that they could secure employment as general office clerks since employers could hire young girls with similarly limited skills at lower salaries; older women might expect higher salaries because of their previous earnings and

experience. These women did not know how to return to the labor market. While they were personally alert and sincere in trying to improve themselves, their general attitude toward seeking employment in an office was timid and insecure, for they lacked confidence in their own ability. For these reasons they were receptive to the publicity about the project and grateful for the opportunity it provided. Their studies at the school not only developed their skills so that they could compete with younger and more recently employed workers, but markedly increased their assurance and self-confidence.

Women who complete the refresher training at the school, according to the Employment Service, can be considered superior applicants for office jobs. All of those who have thus far finished the classes obtained jobs. Some of the women have received salary increases and commendations from their employers. The employer of one wrote to the Employment Service praising her work. Several other employers have told the Employment Service that they were very "pleasantly surprised" at the performance of the women who had come to them from the training classes.

The Employment Service also pointed out that the psychological barrier of "over 35" can be very demoralizing to the mature woman who is looking for work and finds that most want ads read "under 35" or "under 30." This problem is of special concern to the women over 35 years who have not worked for a number of years. However, the publicity that has attended the clerical training program in Denver is considered to have encouraged relaxation of age restrictions in hiring by employers in the community.

The Colorado State Employment Service in commenting on the trainees who had completed the courses stated:

. . . they are now above the average level of ability and are superior applicants because they are permanent, dependable, and have a potential work life of from 10 to 20 years of uninterrupted service if they remain in good health. Before training they would not have been hired because they did not have a usable skill to offer.

### *The School Comments on the Trainees*

Many of the school's observations are similar to those made by the Colorado State Employment Service. The school also thinks that mature women, such as the trainees, are likely to feel too old to seek clerical employment because most "want ads" in newspapers specify an age range of 18 to 30 years for office workers. Part of the prejudice reflected by employer advertisements is the belief that middle-aged women should not be hired because their period of employment may be short. Actually, mature women may continue to work without interruption for many years since they are relatively free of home responsibilities.

The general impression of the school is that women beyond the age of 35 or 40 years learn a little more slowly than do younger students in the field of business education though, of course, there are exceptions. The necessity to learn and earn, however, often provides the stimulus an older student needs. While the mature trainee may be slower in mastering techniques and skills than the school-age student, she is apt to be very thorough. After training in the refresher courses, the school found that the level of the students' ability was usually at least equal to that of a business school graduate and much higher than that of a high-school graduate.

In the school's opinion, the refresher program is most valuable to those who have at some previous time completed the study of a standard shorthand manual, and have received at least one full year's training in typing. If any candidate has had less preparation than this, it is preferable that she start again in a beginner's course. Stenographic signs and symbols and typing techniques come back readily to women who originally had good training. The fact that they may have a low per-minute performance in these skills when they enter the school is of secondary importance to their having had a good background of preparation which allowed their skills to be retrained in a relatively short time.

The women in these courses apparently derived considerable benefit from being among others of similar age, abilities, goals, and problems. A spirit of camaraderie developed, according to the school, which made them feel comfortable and encouraged them toward accomplishing their objective. According to the report of the Employment Service, many of the trainees during their initial interview expressed reluctance at attending classes with young girls. On the other hand, previous experience in some of the school's regular classes has at times indicated that middle-aged and older women gain in confidence by taking their training with younger students when they realize they can compete successfully.

After they completed their training and applied for work, many women found that their age was not the problem they had anticipated, but that knowledge, efficiency, and stability were of greater importance. Their maturity made them more responsible, their training renewed their competence, and on the whole they expected and usually received a better salary than the average office worker.

### AN EXPERIMENT IN NEW YORK

A small experiment is being conducted in New York City—the focus of which is to help women over 35 years of age, who have the potential capacity to work as typists and stenographers, to get and hold such jobs. Given a combination of two factors existing in New York City, namely, a number of potentially capable mature women who would like to do

clerical work and a shortage of office workers, the experiment is essentially a realistic one. Operated with limited finances and facilities, not too many women can be admitted to the program at any one time.



*Paul Parker photo*

**FIGURE 2.**—As competent now as in her youth, this woman needed only refresher training to recover her typing skill.

Even though the program is recent, having begun in the spring of 1952, the experiment has shown that the trainees must have a certain degree of residual ability in typing and stenography. Short, intensive

training courses in these subjects can then restore to them the proficiency necessary to get jobs as typists and stenographers. However, the women need not only technical dexterity, but also sufficient confidence in themselves to believe that, if they can prove their ability, their age will not bar them from office occupations.

### **Background of the Program**

The physical setting, building and facilities, as well as the finances for the experiment, are provided by a private welfare agency started in 1850 by a group of prominent women. For more than a century this agency has helped older women to earn their livelihood. Money was raised originally to build a house in which to carry out a program of providing paid needlework and instructions in sewing and fine embroidery to needy older women. The passage of years, however, reduced the effectiveness of the needlecraft project. It was realized then that the program would have to be altered to suit the present-day needs of older women.

In 1951, a director was appointed and given the responsibility of selecting an appropriate area of operation, acceptable to the welfare agency, which she was to administer. In her efforts to set up a meaningful and rewarding program, the director consulted with various outstanding persons in the fields of gerontology, community problems, education, psychology, employment, and industry. On the basis of these preliminary explorations, the tentative decision was made to establish a refresher training program in typing and stenography for mature women. Office occupations were selected because the shortage of competent typists and stenographers had made many New York City employers willing to hire older women if their skills were acceptable. Also, it was felt that such a program would not duplicate an already existing service. The public schools in New York City do not have daytime programs for adults. They have regular evening courses in typing and shorthand, which do not provide the same type of intensive individual training contemplated by the director. In addition, such a program could be carried on with existing physical and financial resources and, though limited in scope, could shed light on the training and employment of older women in general.

The program, which began in May 1952, established refresher courses for women who had had previous training and experience in shorthand and typing, but whose levels of performance were low because they had not used their skills over a period of time. These women were considered to be capable of recovering their former skills if given a reasonable amount of refresher training. In addition to this basic program, a small experimental project was begun, as a result of considerable demand, for retraining women with a much lower degree of residual skill in typing.

No fees were to be charged, and there was to be no racial or religious discrimination in the selection of students.

### Laying the Groundwork

It was decided, as a matter of policy, that the primary objective of the project should be the successful training of mature women in shorthand and typing, and that the criteria of success would be the securing, and holding, of jobs by the women trained. As a secondary and parallel objective, studies were to be made to determine the qualifications required for acceptance in the classes, the best training methods for this age group, and the degree of success of each trainee on the job.

Both the advisers and the staff felt that the value of this training would lie in the ability of the trainees to obtain jobs in the open labor market. Therefore, it was important to accept for training only those who appeared likely to achieve the required standard of proficiency within the limited training period. To accomplish this, an arrangement was worked out by the school and three employment agencies. One of the three agencies is the public employment service, and the other two are sponsored, as part of their social-work functions, by two religious denominations. All are non-fee charging and non-sectarian in clientele. The employment agencies felt that the training at the school would complement their own work of securing employment for middle-aged and older women, and they agreed that the selection of prospective trainees should be their function. With this in mind, the three agencies and the school laid down certain well-defined areas of responsibility to be assumed by each of them in the administration of the project. Briefly, the highlights of the agreement between the agencies and the school are as follows:

1. The employment agencies are to refer qualified applicants to the school.
2. The school is to select suitable applicants from those referred by the employment agencies, with the option of returning to the initiating agency within 3 days after the start of training any applicant deemed unable to benefit sufficiently from the program.
3. Applicants reaching a requisite standard of performance at the school are to be transferred back to the initiating employment service for placement.

As for the records to be kept on the women who were trained at the school, responsibility was divided between the school and the employment agencies. It was contemplated that all the records and statistics compiled by the school and the three employment agencies, in addition to being used primarily as control devices for the training project, would be made available to any agencies and individuals interested in the program.

The staff, in addition to the director, consists of a secretary and one instructor. The functions of the director include—in addition to the direct administration of the training program—acting in a liaison capacity, consulting with members of the various advisory committees, and establishing and maintaining close working relationships with other organizations and individuals interested in the training and employment of older workers. The director is also responsible for the needlecraft project. The instructor at the school, too, performs a variety of duties. She is responsible for the initial testing of applicants and evaluates their residual skills. She schedules all classes, determines the content of the courses, determines teaching plans and methods, conducts all typing and shorthand classes, and, in addition, cooperates with the director in all research and statistical duties.

### **The Women Come to the School**

No trainee is admitted to the school unless she has been referred to it by one of the three employment services. However, the school received considerable newspaper publicity. Many women first learned about the school from reading the newspaper, came directly to the school, and asked to be admitted to the classes. In such cases, they were advised of the requirement that they must be referred by one of the three cooperating employment agencies and were informed that they could apply to the agency with which they were most familiar. Many of the women chose to register at the public employment service, since this is generally better known than the other two agencies. In any event, most of the referrals to the school were made by the public employment agency.

Generally, mature women who are out of practice are hesitant about applying for typing and stenographic jobs. Because of their age and inadequate knowledge, they are afraid that they cannot find such work. They do not know, possibly do not believe, that they can get back into the swing of office-work routine. Many of them, therefore, come to the agencies seeking other kinds of jobs. It is chiefly from the ranks of these women that the placement agencies draw trainees for the school's program.

The three placement agencies have established, as part of this experimental program, a procedure by which a special interview is given any older woman who has had training or experience in typing and stenography, but who has lost her efficiency in these skills either because she has been out of the labor market for a period of time or because she has not used them in previous positions. The appearance, attitude, education and other personal attributes of the applicant are reviewed by the interviewer. Then, if the interviewer believes the applicant could be employed in an office if her residual skills were brought up to a reasonable standard, she is considered a likely candidate for the school.

The interviewer tells the applicant about the training classes, why the applicant could probably profit from the amount and kind of training the school provides, and how the applicant may be able to develop or regain proficiency in typing and shorthand so that she may be able to secure that kind of work. If the applicant agrees to take the courses, she is given a card of referral to the school.

Arriving at the school, the women are registered and interviewed. In an informal and friendly manner, the teacher tests the typing and shorthand of the applicants. If the candidate appears to have the qualifications that will permit her to attain within the limits of the training program the required standards, she is accepted. If, however, her residual skills are below the necessary level, or if she has personal deficiencies that cannot be overcome by the school's program, she is rejected. The referring agency is then informed about the acceptance or rejection of the candidate. If there are no vacancies, the women who are accepted are placed on a waiting list. Usually, they wait no more than a week or two before being called by the school to start their training.

### The Courses Given

Assignment of an applicant to a course is made after the personal interview with the applicant. Her previous work experience, the proficiency she demonstrates on entrance tests, as well as her need for both typing and shorthand or typing only are the determining factors.

The capacity of the school is such that 10 students can be trained at one time in each course, making a total of 20 trainees for the two refresher courses. However, the school population is not static since total training time is adjusted to meet individual needs.

The class schedules were worked out in such a way as to make maximum use of the available staff and facilities. In the morning, the refresher typing-only group had full use of the typewriters in one room while the refresher shorthand and typing group attended shorthand class in the other room. The one teacher and a staff member alternated between the two groups. In the afternoons, the refresher typing-only group went home and the refresher shorthand and typing group moved from the dictation room into the room with the typewriters. After that group completed two periods of typing in the early afternoon, the retraining typing group, when that course was given, came to the school for two periods of typing instruction.

The two refresher courses are designed for 8 weeks of training, 5 days a week. The first class was started in May of 1952, and five groups had completed refresher training courses by the middle of May 1953. However, total training time depends entirely on the individual women. Some applicants, with more residual skills than others, do not require the entire 8 weeks of training. They may come in when the group is well

advanced and need no more than 3 or 4 weeks of training. Others may leave before they complete the course because they must have paid employment or for various other reasons. As students leave, they are replaced by new trainees. While the school prefers that all students complete their course time or attain the required standards, it recognizes that as a practical procedure this cannot always be done. The extent and amount of refresher training, therefore, is flexible, an arrangement which grew out of the individual needs of the students.

The schedule of courses given at the school is shown below:

SCHEDULE OF COURSES OFFERED BY THE NEW YORK EXPERIMENT

<i>Hour</i>	<i>Refresher Typing</i>	<i>Refresher Typing and Shorthand</i>	<i>Retraining Typing</i>
10:00	Typing	Shorthand	
10:50	Typing	Shorthand	
11:40		Lunch	
12:30		Typing	
1:15		Typing	
2:00			Typing
2:45			Typing

The retraining course in typing only was designed as a 12-week experiment and was given for 5 days a week. This course was not continued after the 14 women in the first experimental group left the school.

It is planned to continue the New York experiment and to expand present facilities. The school expects to acquire additional typewriters to accommodate a larger group of students. Consideration is also being given to including in the schedule of courses subjects which are closely related to typing and shorthand, and which would provide the student with a broader secretarial background. Among the more likely subjects would be spelling, grammar, and the use of business forms. Another area which may be explored is a course on the operation of office machines.

### **Refresher: Typing Only**

The women who take this course meet daily from 10:00 a.m. until 11:40 a.m. This time is divided into two 50-minute periods. During the first month of the course, instruction is given in keyboard review to improve accuracy and speed. In the second month, instruction is mainly in the direct application of typing skill. This includes, for example, learning to set up letters and other forms used in business. The student who finishes the entire 8-week course receives eighty 50-minute periods of refresher classroom training in typing.

### **Refresher: Typing and Shorthand**

During the first period in the morning, dictation is given. At the beginning of this period, the dictation is usually based upon material with which the students are familiar, very often the homework which was prepared the previous evening. The speed at which the dictation is given is increased as skill and accuracy improve. Toward the end of the first period, the students receive dictation from material with which they are not familiar. This is usually the next day's homework, and is always dictated at a slower speed than the rate for previously assigned homework.

In the second period of shorthand, the teacher divides the class into two groups, since some of the students use the Pitman system of shorthand and others use the Gregg system. During the first half of the period each student in one group studies independently, while the teacher works with the other group. In the last half, the positions of the two groups are reversed.

The students of the refresher typing and shorthand group usually eat lunch in the school's lunchroom and discuss with each other the class progress and difficulties, as well as personal problems. Sometimes they are joined at lunch by the director or the teacher.

In the two afternoon periods, the users of both the Gregg and Pitman systems work together again on typing. During the first two weeks, in both the first and second periods of typing, the students concentrate on keyboard review drill work and exercises. In most cases, they are able to review four to five standard lessons a day, and within the 2-week period complete the entire keyboard review. After the second week, the students start to take speed tests in typing. They begin with 1-minute tests, progress to 5-minute tests, and toward the latter part of the course take 7- and 10-minute speed tests. At the same time, part of the time in the typing class is devoted to book work, exercises, and letter forms. After the first month, the students start transcribing the notes, which they took in the morning shorthand class, on the typewriter. Timed tests on such transcription are also given, as well as instruction in tabulation work.

*Paul Parker photo*

**FIGURE 3.**—Each trainee progresses at her own rate.

### Retraining

The retraining typing course was started at the school on an experimental basis, at the request of the public employment service, to retrain women whose skills were so slight that they were unable to meet the minimum requirements for enrollment in the refresher typing-only course. Mature women with a low residual skill in typing continually apply to the public employment service for office jobs, and the agency hoped that the school would be able to retrain these women within a relatively short time to a point where they could be placed in typing jobs. The public employment agency, therefore, was responsible for the referrals of most of the 14 women who were accepted by the school for the retraining typing class, though 3 were referred by one of the private agencies.

Although the school felt that retraining, in comparison with refresher courses, would require considerably more time than was practical, one experimental retraining group was established for the purpose of testing the effects of an intensive 12-week program. At the end of the 3 months it was found that, although the women had made considerable progress, their typing skill had not yet reached acceptable standards. Subsequently, the course was eliminated since it was felt that the amount of the school's time was disproportionate to the results secured, that the women with such low skills had to be treated as beginning students, and that retraining of this nature would require a long-range program that was not of the type contemplated.

### Special Talks, Lectures, and Films

In addition to the regular periods of drill and instruction in typing and shorthand, a number of planned talks are given during the course either by the director, the teacher, or an outside expert. An integral part of the entire program is the effort to build up the morale and confidence of the women. Especially important is overcoming the psychological barrier they face because of their age, long absence from the work force, and their general feeling of inability to return to the kind of work for which they think employers prefer younger workers.

The director attempts, in the first week if possible, to talk with each new student in order to establish a friendly and cooperative relationship. In this conversation, much is learned about the student's educational background and family situation, as well as any individual problems the student may have in adjusting to the school's schedule.

Somewhere towards the middle of the training course, the director gives a group talk. She advises and suggests how the students can get jobs. She stresses the importance of their approach toward the job interview. Some of her advice includes suggestions on appropriate clothing to wear for an interview, and how the women should behave. The students are advised not to be too talkative, not to divulge their personal problems, and not to tell what kind of a job they want, but instead to show in what ways they meet the job requirements. Proper office attitudes and practices are also stressed. All these points may not be covered in one group talk. However, they are introduced whenever appropriate during the entire course by both the director and the teacher.

From time to time, outside speakers are invited to come to the school. A talk, lasting 1 or 2 hours, on social security provisions which would benefit the women is given by a staff member of the social security office in New York City. In almost every instance, some of the women present should have done something to protect their future security, but had not known what to do. For the future, similar lectures have been planned on health and nutrition to be given by a representative of the health

department. A typing film, showing proper posture, position of wrists, rhythm, and other typing essentials is shown to the students.

**Who Are the Trainees?**

By early spring of 1953, four refresher training courses had been completed and a fifth was in progress. This section discusses the students who participated in the program from the beginning until December 31, 1952. In addition to the data collected about them during their attendance at the school, a follow-up questionnaire prepared by the school yielded information about their experiences after leaving.

A total of 110 women applied for admission to the school during 1952. Of these, 37 women never entered training. Some of these women possessed the skills required for admission but had pressing home problems or had to get a job immediately. Others could not be admitted because they had too little prior training and experience to be able to benefit from the program. A total of 73 women, therefore, were accepted and trained during 1952. Of these, 59 women took refresher courses in both typing and stenography or typing only. The remaining 14, because of their very limited skills, were assigned to the retraining course.

Of the 59 students, 45 were referred to the school by the public employment service, 13 by one of the private employment services, and one student by the other private employment service. It should be remembered that many of the women first heard of the school through the newspaper publicity. When they contacted the director and were informed that referrals must come through the cooperating agencies, many chose the public employment service because they were most familiar with it.

Most of the women students attending the refresher courses were middle-aged or older. Almost three-quarters of the 59 women enrolled were over 45 years of age. Approximately one-third of all the women attending the refresher courses were in the 50 to 55 year age group. This, of course, is what was expected since, beginning at 45 years, women are apt to have free time due to grown children leaving home, or they are more likely to be widowed or have incapacitated husbands so that they must look for jobs.

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of women</i>
Total.....	59
Under 35.....	2
35-39.....	2
40-44.....	12
45-49.....	14
50-54.....	19
55-59.....	8
60 and over.....	2

By far the largest number, almost two-thirds, were married. There were 36 women in this group. The other third comprised 14 widows, 6 single women, and 3 who were divorced. Proportionately more of the widows were in the oldest group; 5 of the 14 widows enrolled were over 55 years of age.

A very high proportion of these women, almost three-fourths, had children. However, a considerable number had children over 18 years of age only.

	<i>Number of women</i>
Total.....	59
With no children.....	16
With children over 18 years only.....	25
With children under 18 years only.....	8
With children both under and over 18 years.....	10

### Prior Experience and Education

All of the 59 students in the refresher courses had previous work experience and most had been employed in jobs which involved using both typing and shorthand. Some 10 women had work experience as typists only; 13 had general clerical and other types of experience including bookkeeping, teaching, and sales work. In general, those students with both previous shorthand and typing work experience were the youngest group.

This work experience, however, was usually not recent. Many of the trainees had not worked for a very long time. Only 19 women had worked in offices within the 10 years prior to enrollment in the school. Fifteen women had held office jobs from 10 to 20 years previously, and 22 women had been away from office work for 20 years or more. Information on 3 women is not available.

The average student enrolled in the refresher training course was a high-school graduate; 27 of the women had been graduated from a high school. Of the 32 other women, 7 had completed grammar school, 15 had attended high school but had not finished, 7 had attended college but had not completed their college course and 3 had been graduated from college. In addition, many of the women had gone on to business school after leaving either grammar school or high school. There were 31 women who had attended a business school in the past.

### Progress of the Trainees

The training courses were completed by 24 of the 59 women enrolled. Thirty-five students left before completion, 3 of these at the very beginning of the courses and the others at various times after training started. Many of those who left during training did so in order to get paid jobs.

From the information presented in Table A, there appears to have been a slightly greater tendency for the women under 50 years of age to leave before completing the refresher course than for the women past 50 years.

TABLE A.—EXPERIENCE RELATED TO REFRESHER TRAINING

Age	Number of women	Previous experience			Courses taken under program		Completed training	
		Typing and shorthand	Typing only	Other	Typing and shorthand	Typing	Yes	No
Total	59	36	10	13	45	14	24	35
Under 35	2	2			2		1	1
35-39	2	2			2			2
40-44	12	8	2	2	10	2	3	9
45-49	14	11	1	2	11	3	4	10
50-54	19	10	4	5	14	5	11	8
55-59	8	3	3	2	5	3	4	4
60 and over	2			2	1	1	1	1

Performance ratings were made by the school only for those 24 students who completed training. Three of these completed the typing course and 21 completed the typing and shorthand course. Of these 24 students, 13 were rated above average, 7 met the required standards, and 4 did not come up to the standard level of performance.

The applicants, in the initial tests, are not expected to turn out a given number of words per minute in typing and shorthand. To complete her training, however, a student must take dictation at 80 words per minute, and type at a speed of 40 words per minute. These standards of proficiency are required by the school, since they were set up by the employment agencies which are familiar with what employers expect from office workers.

The required levels of skill are in line with those of commercial high schools and business schools in New York City. The high schools' standards for a 2-year course consist of 35 words per minute for a 10-minute typing test, and 80 words per minute for a 5-minute dictation test in business letters. In business school, the standards required range from 50 to 60 words per minute for a 10-minute typing test, with a maximum of five errors. In shorthand, the standards required range from 100 to 120 words per minute, for 5 minutes of straight matter, transcribed with an accuracy of 90 percent or better. Therefore, when a trainee at the school completes her studies, she is able to match her skills with those of young high-school graduates who have been recently prepared for office work.

## Securing a Job

Shortly before the training course is over, each student is asked to prepare a one-page summary of her past experience, education and training, and other personal data which she will be able to present to a prospective employer when she applies for a job. In the last week or two of the course, the director interviews each woman individually. She reviews her work and progress during the session and, if necessary, discusses any personal problems the student may have. She urges the student to come back and sit in on any of the classes if she feels the need for further brush-up.

To secure specific information on the subsequent employment of women who had left the school, the director early in 1953 prepared a questionnaire which she sent to all of the 73 pioneer students. She received 46 replies, 35 of which came from women who had studied in the refresher groups and 11 from the retraining group students.

Almost all the women refresher trainees who reported were successful in securing work after leaving the school. Of the 35 respondents who had studied with the refresher groups, 31 had secured jobs—6 women with the help of the employment services and 25 women through their own efforts. In four instances the public employment agency, and in two instances one of the private agencies were of help to the women in getting employment. Of the 25 women who secured jobs on their own, 2 women used the services of paid agencies.

Among the 31 women who had secured jobs, 17 had completed their training, but 14 had not. Perhaps some of those who did not complete the training were better students and were able to qualify for a job without spending the entire 8 weeks in the school. Again, it is possible that after only a few weeks in the school courage and morale were so improved that some women were able to apply for and secure a job. Still another possibility is that the economic pressures were so great that they had to drop out and find work of any type.

Of the four women who replied that they had not yet secured work, three had been sick and, therefore, unable to look for employment. The fourth was a woman who had been dropped from training after only 18 hours of study, during which she had demonstrated a considerable lack of responsibility.

Twenty-eight of the 31 women who found employment went to work in offices. Three of them took typing jobs; 5 secured jobs requiring both typing and shorthand; 8 became private secretaries; and 12 took positions which generally called for a combination of typing and other duties such as bookkeeping, operation of office machines, and general clerical tasks. Of the three women who did not take office work, the first was employed as a dress designer, the second entered social welfare work,

and the third took a position in a library. Table B shows, by age groups, how the 31 women who reported getting work secured their jobs, and the types of jobs they secured.

TABLE B.—HOW JOBS SECURED AND TYPES OF JOBS

Age	Number of women	How job secured		Type of job secured				
		Employment services	Own efforts	Office work				Other
				Typing	Typing and short-hand	Private secretary	Miscellaneous	
Total	31	6	25	3	5	8	12	3
Under 35	2		2		1	1		
35-39								
40-44	4		4		2		1	1
45-49	9	2	7	1	1	3	4	
50-54	9	1	8	1		3	4	1
55-59	5	1	4		1	1	2	1
60-65	2	2		1			1	

Information on their wages was given by all except two of the respondents. Wages for full-time workers range from \$37 to \$79 a week, the latter amount being paid to the dress designer. Excluding from the 31 respondents the three non-clerical workers, four part-time workers, and one clerical worker whose wages are not known, the remaining 23 office workers earned an average of \$55.43 per week. The lowest paid woman received \$37 and the highest paid received \$66 weekly. The average weekly rate does not reflect bonuses paid to two women in addition to their basic salaries.

The 31 refresher group trainees who replied to the questionnaire had been working for periods varying from about 1 week to 9 months. The length of their working time, of course, depended on when they terminated their training at the school, which might have been at any time from late spring until the end of 1952. Even though they were on their jobs for a comparatively short time, the work of about a third of the women proved so satisfactory that they received raises from their employers.

### The Retraining Group

On the whole the 14 women in the retraining group were older than those in the refresher groups. Their ages ranged from 40 years to 70 years; 8 of them were between 55 and 59 years. During the course, 5 students left, leaving 9 students who can be considered as actual participants in the retraining program. Six women completed the training;

3 did not. Of those who completed the course, 5 were rated as having met the required standards, but 1 did not come up to standard.

In reply to the questionnaire concerning employment after leaving the retraining course, 11 of the 14 women originally enrolled in the retraining group responded. Only 3 reported securing a paid job after leaving school—1 through the employment agencies and 2 through their own efforts. None of these 3 had completed their training. A fourth woman, who also had not finished the course, went into volunteer work. Seven women remained unemployed, 3 due to illness and 4 because their skills continued to be below standard.

### The Stories of Three Trainees

What the program has done for some of the trainees can best be illustrated by a few of the case histories of the women themselves. Two women still at the school were interviewed, and information was secured concerning a third who had completed training and recently started to work in an office.

#### *Mrs. A*

Mrs. A had not worked in 33 years. She had been graduated from grammar school and completed a business course. After her marriage, she stayed at home and raised two children, a son now in his thirties and a 15-year-old daughter in high school who hopes to go to college. Mrs. A had thought of returning to work, and from time to time had casually glanced at the "want ads" but all the ads she read had age limits of 35 years. Using this as an excuse, she never actually looked for a job.

Over a year ago, her husband, aged 60, lost his job. Unable to find another position in his specialized field, the family lived on savings which had been intended for the daughter's college education. With these urgent economic pressures, Mrs. A knew she must find work. She went to the public employment service to take a test for a Federal job. She was able to pass the typing test since she had been doing her husband's typing for many years, but failed the shorthand test. The employment counsellor told her about the refresher training program at the school and she was immediately interested. After completing the necessary formalities, she entered the school.

#### *Mrs. B*

Mrs. B, an attractively groomed woman of 42 years of age, had read about the school in a newspaper some time before coming to the school and thought that she would look into its program. For the past few years, particularly since her daughter married and moved to another town, she had considered returning to work since she had too much free time. She, too, had looked at the "want ads" and was discouraged by the age restrictions. Since she had not worked in 22 years, she knew that her typing and shorthand needed brushing up before she could even start looking for a job.

Mrs. B had been graduated from high school and had taken college-level courses in literature and psychology. She had held secretarial jobs, the last one in 1930.

Mrs. B's husband was living and able to support the family. However, her son, a sophomore in a public college, was anxious to transfer to a private college in which he could study engineering. This would involve more tuition fees than the family budget could stand. Remembering the article she had read, Mrs. B pulled out the newspaper clipping which described the school's activities, and went down to see the public employment agency.

She was accepted in the refresher typing and shorthand group. Mrs. B enjoyed her course at the school. She stated that she was very timid and frightened when she first started, and could easily have been discouraged. However, the efforts of the director and teacher had changed her perspective.

*Mrs. C*

Mrs. C was a very nervous person and appeared to be older than her 52 years. Her husband had had several heart attacks and could no longer work. Since their savings were inadequate, it became necessary for Mrs. C to become the chief means of support for both herself and her husband. There were no children.

Mrs. C had been graduated from high school where she had studied shorthand and typing. She had held responsible secretarial jobs in the past. However, she had not worked in over 17 years, except for an occasional part-time job.

The public employment service referred Mrs. C to the school. She was a good student but her lack of patience and nervousness affected her speed and accuracy. It was thought that the pressures of her economic situation made her so tense and nervous that it took her longer to acquire a satisfactory degree of proficiency than it would have if she had been able to maintain a calmer attitude.

Mrs. C completed the course, and within a short time secured a job. At first she thought the job was very difficult but was determined to stick it out. She felt that when she would become accustomed to the work and her surroundings it would become easier for her. Her employer informed the school that he was quite satisfied with Mrs. C.

The case histories given, though few in number, are representative of the type of women who participate in the New York experiment. Their desire to return to clerical occupations is motivated by economic pressures, or by a need to use free time in a satisfactory manner. They might easily have been deterred, because of their mature years and lack of competence, from even exploring the possibilities of securing office jobs. Their experiences at the school showed that what they needed were short periods of intensive training to restore the skills they once had, and that this training be given in a friendly and encouraging atmosphere.

### Acquiring Self-Confidence

The problems of the mature women who entered the school were an incidence of their age, their family status and economic situation. To most of them the prospect of returning to an occupation for which they no longer had the requisite skills was alarming. They had to earn money, supplement an inadequate family income, pay medical bills, see their children through college, support aged relatives, or substitute as chief wage-earner because husbands were out of work. These women would have accepted lower paid and less pleasant occupations because they had lost their confidence in their ability to get and hold office jobs. That confidence had to be restored, so that psychologically they would have a positive attitude in the approach they were to take towards acquiring office positions.

The director and the instructor were instrumental in building up the morale of the women attending the school. This was deliberate, and was accomplished through planned talks and lectures. There was another form of psychological activity which was not included in the schedules of courses and special talks but which also had been anticipated. The trainees themselves, unintentionally, helped each other to

break down psychological barriers. Their close contacts with each other made them realize that the difficulties they had, whether personal or with their studies, were common to all. Discussing their problems with each other as, for example, during their lunch periods, constituted an informal method of group therapy from which each derived encouragement. Every time a former student was hired as a typist or stenographer, the trainees had another concrete example that age was not a deterrent to employment, if the mature woman brought competence to a job.

### What the School Thinks of the Trainees

After two refresher training sessions had been completed, the school staff was able to draw several conclusions about training and teaching techniques and the reactions of the students to the training they received. Accordingly, when asked to do so by some of the members of the advisory committee, the director put her evaluation in writing.

One matter touched upon by the director was the technical aspect of the training. She pointed out that the training methods and material used at the school did not vary in any important respect from those which would be used with a younger group of women. However she did find that all of her students needed thorough retraining in the presentation of material to suit the needs of modern offices, and that they had to be taught to develop the lighter touch required for present-day typewriters. Another matter mentioned by the director was that of the teaching factor. She felt that the instructor's age should be close to that of the students, so that she could have a better understanding of those problems which were the result of their mature years. Furthermore, because the trainees came and left at different times, had residual skills which varied, and might have used either of two systems of stenography—in short, required individualized attention—the instructor had to have considerably above average experience and flexibility to be successful in her teaching.

Her comments on the students are quoted below:

It would appear that the rate of learning of these older students, their adjustment and success, is conditioned not by their age group, education or original source of training, but rather by their individual abilities and personality characteristics. While the other factors may play a contributing or mitigating role they do not appear to be the determining factor. Where there was a problem of individual-group or student-teacher relationships it appeared, insofar as classroom observation permitted, to be a question of personality and social maladjustment, not necessarily attributable to age.

Equal to, and in most cases exceeding, the problem of brushing up rusty skills is the problem of overcoming the trainees' own attitude toward age and its supposed handicaps. The varying degree of fear, uncertainty, defeatism and alibi-consciousness, conditioned by the individual personality and the family economic and social situation, must be dealt with on an individual basis patiently, firmly, unemotionally and with the utmost tact. An approach of friendly interest and understanding on personal, specific grounds is needed.

The other, and only slightly less exacting problem lies in the adjustment of attitudes formed in social relationships and home life to the situations of office life and business relationships . . .

Their concentration, endurance and purposefulness were far superior to that of the usual younger group and their cooperation and appreciation were notable. In many ways the teaching situation proved far more satisfactory than with a younger group. Individually, and as a group, they were more aware of the factors of insecurity, but the spur of economic necessity frequently caused a nervous and muscular tension detrimental to progress. . . .

The group as a whole evidenced a spirit of cooperation and mutual interest, sympathy and encouragement rather than a spirit of competition. They were job-conscious, rather than career-minded, and anxious to do good work. They wanted no special consideration or privilege, merely a chance to prove themselves useful.

### A MILWAUKEE BANK PIONEERS

An interesting and successful application of some of the mass-production techniques of industry to office work has been undertaken by a Milwaukee bank, enabling it to draw upon the few sizable groups of available workers—middle-aged and older women and young housewives. By means of job analysis, job simplification, and a short training course the bank has successfully taught large numbers of women how to operate either a proof (check-sorting) machine or a bookkeeping machine, both of which are vital to the bank's daily processing of receipts and payments.

Like most employers of large numbers of clerical workers, this bank has been affected since World War II by the shortage of young women workers. Before the war, the bank customarily hired young, unmarried women high-school graduates as beginners in office work, and, over a period of years, advanced them through the ranks from pages or messengers through typists, office-machine operators, and tellers to secretaries, bookkeepers, and supervisors. Recruitment, therefore, was directed almost exclusively toward high-school seniors who were interested in career opportunities with the bank, and most employees became familiar, through the years, with all phases of the bank's operations. However, beginning with World War II, the supply of available young women gradually grew more limited as, simultaneously, the bank's business expanded. As a result, it became necessary to find some additional source of labor supply.

In 1947, when the bank's personnel situation first became critical, the only considerable supply of workers available seemed to be college students and housewives, most of whom could not work full time. Since, in addition, most of these new recruits were not interested in a "career" with the bank, it did not seem advisable to give them the same extensive training followed for young career recruits. Furthermore, in 1947 and to an even greater degree in 1950, the bank's need for check-processing personnel, largely sorting-machine and bookkeeping-machine operators,

became so acute that a "short-cut" training and utilization program had to be devised.

The system developed is the product of the collective effort of certain of the bank's key personnel whose imaginative planning has helped solve the shortage. Selected bank jobs have been adapted to the available resources—largely middle-aged and older women. The result has been success beyond original expectations, and the bank plans to continue and expand the program.

### How the Bank Operates

The bank is one of the largest in the United States, and operates as a central bank for numerous smaller banks. In this respect, it is a great deal like a clearing house since it processes an unusually large number of checks. Every day, a steady stream of money transactions—the cashing and depositing of large numbers of checks plus a substantial number of deposits and withdrawals of cash—crosses the counters of this bank and the banks for which it serves as a central bank. Each of these transactions must be processed by the bank.

On the average, approximately one-half million items, most of them checks, are processed every day. "Processing" consists of sorting, checking, proving totals, and recording each item. Cash deposits and withdrawals must be verified and recorded on the proper accounts. Checks must be sorted according to the bank and account upon which they have been drawn, then recorded and paid or collected. Almost all of this work is carried on beyond, as well as during, regular banking hours.

The check-processing operations of a bank of this type and size represent a very vital and substantial portion of its work-load; vital, because the bank's receipts and payments must be recorded and "in balance" before the beginning of the next business day; substantial, because in one day approximately one-half million pieces of bank paper are involved. It is in these check-processing activities that middle-aged and older women have been so successfully trained and utilized.

The processing activities are largely carried on by two departments—distribution and bookkeeping. Deposits and checks are first processed by the distribution department, where a series of sorting operations takes place. Each check is sorted a number of times so that it can be identified, for example, as being from a bank within or outside of the State or city, or for an account handled by the bank or one of its customers. Finally, all checks are assembled by bank and by account. Most of these sorting operations are performed on proof machines.

After the sorting and a number of checking and proving, or verifying, operations have been completed by the distribution department, the checks and other necessary records are ready for the bookkeeping depart-

ment. Here, after further checking, entries are made on customer accounts by bookkeeping-machine operators. After all entries have been made, account balances are checked against records of the distribution and other departments.

### A Forerunner in 1947

Any unusual and substantial increase in the workload of the processing departments of the bank usually necessitates an increased staff, overtime work, or—perhaps—both. Just such an increase in the work-load occurred in 1947 and again in 1950. Although the 1950 developments had a greater effect on the bank's work-load and were more directly related to the program of training and utilizing older women, many of the decisions made in 1947 are basic to the present program since the bank was able to draw upon its 1947 experience in developing the present program.

Until 1947, banks in the State of Wisconsin had been open to the public from Monday through part of Saturday. Since the processing departments worked a full schedule of hours Monday through Saturday, whereas public banking hours were shorter than the full schedule, regular full-time bank employees were able to process daily the normal receipts of the bank. However, in 1947 banks in the city agreed not to be open to the public on Saturdays. The Saturday closing meant that, until another solution to the problem was discovered, regular bank employees would have to work overtime on Fridays to process the late and customarily heavy receipts of that day. Because the bank's daily business must be recorded and "in balance" before the beginning of the next business day, a carry-over from one day to another, such as from Friday to Monday, was not possible.

Although the bank was willing to hire additional regular full-time help and, with relatively little success, had been continuously attempting to do so, this would not entirely solve the Friday workload problem. Obviously, some special arrangements had to be made, and it seemed that Saturday work was the only possibility. It was thought, and correctly so, that a number of people in the city—particularly college students and housewives—might be anxious to work all day Saturday only, even though they were not able or willing to work a full week. Therefore, the bank decided to inaugurate a Saturday-only shift of new employees who would have to be trained. In addition, since it was not expected that new employees working only on Saturdays could in any reasonable length of time learn the work ordinarily performed by regular employees 5 days a week, the whole processing operation had to be revised. Distribution and bookkeeping jobs had to be analyzed and simplified so that they could be easily learned by inexperienced employees. The Saturday-

only shift, consisting of about 100 college students and housewives, was thus the forerunner of the present large-scale program which was started in 1950.

### The Present Program Is Developed

In 1950 the activities of the bank increased to such an extent that it was necessary to find some means for handling the greatly augmented processing workload. One solution, suggested by the success of the Saturday-only shift which was now a permanent part of the bank's operations, was to use part-time employees more extensively. It was decided to experiment with this type of program.

Realizing that, at this time, the major source of new employees would be housewives with some degree of home responsibilities, the bank decided to develop a program which would permit the new recruits to work on a part-time basis. In addition, since most of the new employees would be without previous experience in work of the type required, the bank recognized the need for establishing a program to train the women for the job. However, even before the training program could be instituted, the bank personnel planning the program found that it would be necessary to analyze and simplify the jobs on which the new recruits could be employed.

The organization of the part-time program, the necessary job dilution, and the development of the training program were the result of the cooperative efforts of key personnel on the regular staff of the bank. The work areas of the three departments most concerned may be briefly described as personnel, training, and processing. The personnel office, which recruits, interviews, hires, and places all employees, consists of a personnel director, two assistant personnel directors, a number of interviewers, and a secretarial staff. The training department consists of a training director and three or more instructors, and the processing departments have a sizable staff who perform all of the operations required for distribution and bookkeeping.

Except for the specific assignment of instructors and the gradual transfer of full-time employees to other work, the part-time program was carried out without any disruption of regular bank operations or facilities. Regular staff members worked on the program as part of their usual duties, and already-existing facilities were expanded and adapted to accommodate the new trainees.

Almost one complete floor of the large modern building occupied by the bank is devoted to the bank's processing operations of distribution and bookkeeping. The personnel and training departments each occupy three rooms on lower floors. One of the three training rooms is used as an office for the training director and instructors; the second is the bookkeeping training room containing 3 to 5 bookkeeping machines; and the

third is the distribution training room containing 6 to 10 proof machines and a few adding machines.

### Changing the Work to Fit the Workers

Before the short-term training program for part-time workers could be instituted, the jobs in the distribution and bookkeeping departments had to be analyzed and simplified so that they could be performed by inexperienced part-time employees. The full-time machine operators were responsible for recognizing errors in the many items, such as checks, deposits, and cash slips which they processed. They also were responsible for checking their own work, tracing and finding errors, making the necessary corrections, and determining which items might need special attention. The full-time bookkeeping-machine operators were responsible for recognizing signatures and other common characteristics of their own accounts, correcting errors, securing appropriate balances, verifying their accounts, and making the final sort of items.

The simplification of the machine operator's job was such that the part-time worker now receives only items which have already been corrected, either by her "checker" or supervisor. Items requiring special handling have been removed and, therefore, the operator need only process approved items. In addition, she is not required to check or verify her entries; this is done by the checker. The part-time bookkeeping-machine operator, also, needs no experience in recognizing signatures, correcting errors, verifying accounts or balances, or making the final sort. This is all done for her either by the checker or in another department of the bank. She need only enter on her ledgers the items which she has been given. Thus, she is in fact required to do only the posting operation.

To meet the needs of the mature housewives with household responsibilities, who constitute the chief supply of new recruits, the bank established four regular part-time shifts to work 5 days per week. Daily shifts were set up for the following hours:

7 a.m.-12 noon  
12 noon- 5 p.m.  
5 p.m.- 9 p.m.  
6 p.m.-11 p.m.

### Recruiting, Interviewing, and Hiring

Applicants for the part-time program are secured through advertisements in local newspapers, addressed to housewives interested in "permanent, part-time, all-year-round" work in a downtown bank. The advertisement further states, "We train you."

No previous experience is required; however, the bank prefers people who have had at least some kind of work experience. When an applicant

comes to the personnel office, she is assigned to an interviewer. The first question asked by the interviewer is "Are you a housewife?"; the second, "Do you have any children?" If the woman has any children, she is questioned about the care of the children while she is at work. If a satisfactory arrangement for the children has been made, the applicant is given a short-form application for employment which she fills out immediately. This form provides for routine personal information as to family, education, and past employment.

The applicant is closely questioned about her husband's hours of work, how long he has been on the same shift, and whether there is any possibility of his shift being changed. The reason for these questions is that one of the chief causes of turnover among the part-time workers has been changes in the husband's work hours.

The interviewer tries to determine whether the applicant might be free to work full time. If the applicant can work full time but does not have any skills which the bank can use, the interviewer tries to encourage her to look for full-time work elsewhere. The reason for this is that some applicants, hired for part-time work even though they were free to work full time, quit after a short period of time to take full-time work elsewhere.

If the applicant is acceptable to the bank, she is offered a job at this time. The major reasons for rejecting an applicant after this initial interview are as follows:

- Poor physical appearance—untidy, obese
- Apparent mental sluggishness
- Availability for full-time work, but no skills usable by the bank
- Long absence from any type of employment or schooling
- Unsatisfactory arrangements for care of children
- Apparent negative attitude
- Agedness which would obviously affect work ability
- Noticeable nervous disorder
- Availability for temporary work only

However, one of these factors alone would not necessarily be cause for rejection; some unfavorable factors may be overlooked if the applicant could otherwise fill the job.

After informing the applicant that the bank is willing to hire her, the interviewer then tells her about the bank and its operation, employee facilities and social activities, hours of work and working conditions, and wages. The applicant is shown pictures of the machine she will learn to operate and is told that she will be working constantly with figures, that there will be little variety on the job, and that the operating departments are rather noisy. Emphasis is placed on the permanency of the job and the fact that the bank does not wish to hire people who are interested only in temporary positions.

If the applicant accepts the job, she is hired on the spot, subject to later medical examination and a check of her references. The reason for "spot" hiring is that the time consumed in checking the references might prompt the applicant to take another job before she is called by the bank. The interviewer then has the applicant fill out and sign the necessary papers immediately. The applicant is given a form to be taken to a physician, designated and paid by the bank, who will give her a medical examination. In addition, the applicant is given a detailed application form which she is instructed to fill out at home and return to the bank. This form provides for information about the applicant's health, home, family, education, work experience, and references. Interestingly enough, the bank has found that since it has started the practice of having new workers sign necessary papers at the time of the interview rather than the day they report for work, a much higher percentage of them actually show up for work on the designated day. Personnel officers of the bank feel that this may be due, in part, to the psychological effect of signing their names on withholding-tax cards and other documents and, in part, to more experience by the interviewers in weeding out the less conscientious applicants.

If the new employee is hired to work on one of the evening shifts, she is told when to report to work and is given written instructions on how to find the department and the department supervisor. If she is to work on a day shift, she is instructed to report to the personnel department on the appointed day, and on that day she is escorted to the department and introduced to the department supervisor.

### **Training for Proof-Machine Operators**

After meeting the supervisor of the department and observing experienced operators at work for a brief period, the proof-machine trainee, with 4 to 6 other part-time employees who have been hired for the same jobs and shift, is escorted to the training department where she is introduced to the training director or one of the instructors. The instructor is usually a person who has had at least 4 or 5 years of experience as an operator and has been chosen for this work because she possesses such characteristics as patience, tolerance, understanding, and enthusiasm for the work. The size of the training class—5 to 7 trainees—is due largely to limitations of space and cost of the machines. The machine used is quite large and, in addition, is vital to the regular work of the bank; therefore, only a limited number of them can be allocated to training.

The trainee attends training school during the same hours as her designated future shift and is paid the regular starting rate for the job. This starting rate is the hourly equivalent of the monthly starting rate formerly paid to full-time employees for approximately the same work.

The trainee is first shown the proof machine and its parts and how it operates. This machine is an adaptation of the 10-key adding machine combined with a coding, or sorting, system. It has two sets of keys and a slot opening on the operating board. One set of 24 keys is for coding and the other set is a standard 10-key adding-machine keyboard. The check is placed in the slot, the proper code key punched, and the amount



*Fred R. Stanger photo*

**FIGURE 4.**—A housewife learns to operate a proof machine in a bank.

of the check punched on the adding-machine keyboard. The amount of the check is automatically recorded on the tape for that code as well as on a master tape, and the check is deposited in the depository for that code. The individual code tapes and the master tape provide a check, or proof, of the entries.

After this brief orientation to the machine, the trainee spends from 3 to 5 days (15 to 25 hours) in hand-sorting and practicing on the adding

machine. The instructor explains why and how checks and other items are sorted, and the trainee learns to identify various checks, deposit slips, and cash items by reading numbers and symbols on the items, names of banks, account names, and amounts. The trainee learns to sort items by hand at a table by reading from the check or other item the name of the bank or account and then putting the item in the proper place according to the coding system. Along with this hand-sorting practice, the trainee practices entering amounts from the items on a 10-key adding machine. Practice sets of items which have already been processed are used in this training, and the instructor is able to check for errors and repeat any necessary instructions. Errors usually consist of placing the item in the wrong pile or entering the wrong amount in the adding machine.

Next, the trainee spends from 7 to 10 days (35 to 50 hours) practicing the job which she will be required to do on completion of training. Regular, or "live," work is used at this stage of training, and the trainee's work is checked by the instructor for speed and accuracy. Necessary corrections in the work are made by the instructor and explained to the trainee.

After completion of her training, the trainee usually has acquired some skill in the operation of the machine and sufficient speed and accuracy to be placed on the job. The department manager is advised concerning each trainee's ability and, if necessary, the trainee is given further assistance and instruction on the job by one of the supervisors.

### **Training for Bookkeeping-Machine Operators**

Like the proof-machine trainee, the bookkeeping-machine trainee meets the department supervisor and then, if there is room for her in the training school, reports there. Since the bookkeeping department for which these employees are trained is much smaller than the distribution department, many of the bookkeeping-machine operators are individually trained. However, 3 or 4 may be in training at the same time though at different stages of training.

Unlike the proof-machine trainee, if there is not space in the bookkeeping training room for a new trainee, she usually spends a few weeks in the bookkeeping department becoming oriented to the job. She is instructed in the use of an adding machine on which she does odd jobs for the department, and she familiarizes herself with the various items processed by the department and the ledgers in which records are posted.

The machine on which the trainee will learn the "posting" operation is a standard bookkeeping machine. The keys on the front of this machine are set up to record, by debit or credit, checks, deposits, and other transactions for each account. In "posting," the individual account ledger is placed in the machine and the appropriate keys for

the entry to be made punched on the keyboard. This automatically records the entry on the ledger. Each entry for that ledger is made in the same manner until all entries for that account have been made. This procedure is followed for all accounts maintained by the bank.

Frequently, by the time the bookkeeping-machine trainee comes to the training school she is familiar with the machine she will learn to operate. With two or three other bookkeeping trainees, some of whom have already been in the training school for a short time, she learns how to do "posting." Her instructor, like the proof-machine instructor, is an experienced operator who has been specifically chosen for this job. Her machine, also, is a very expensive piece of equipment and vital to the processing departments. She attends training school during the same hours as her work-shift hours and receives an hourly wage equivalent to the rate for the job.

The bookkeeping trainee spends about 65 hours in the training school, during which time she is taught the posting operation only. She learns this operation by means of practice sets made up of checks and deposits which have already been processed. She inserts the proper account ledger in the machine, observes from the check or deposit slip the amount to be entered and whether it is a debit or a credit to the account, and punches the proper keys. As the trainee completes each account, the instructor goes over the entries and, if corrections are necessary, explains them to the trainee. After completion of her training, the newly hired employee returns to the bookkeeping department and begins work, receiving assistance from her supervisor when necessary.

### The Trainees and Their Work

Since the start of the part-time program late in 1950, several hundred persons have been hired, trained, and placed on a job. Almost all of these employees are women, and a majority are over the age of 35. Many are over 50 years of age, and a few are more than 60 years of age. For many of these women this is the first job they have ever had. The work has, in many cases, given them a new outlook and interest, as well as permitted them to add to the family income.

Some brief information about two of the part-time employees may be of interest. One woman employed for some time as a part-time worker is a widow over the age of 60 with an adequate income of her own. She chose to work in the bank on the 7 a.m. to 12 noon shift, not primarily for financial reasons, but in order to keep active and have outside interests. She prefers the early shift because it gets her "up and out" in the morning and still leaves her free for lunch and the afternoon social activities she enjoys.

Another woman, over the age of 45 and with no children at home, has developed a new interest in life as a result of this job. Her husband's

work provided them with a very modest income with practically no margin for luxuries, and her work at home left her with much idle time and few interests. This job has given her the opportunity to meet other women of similar age and interests, provide for a few small luxuries at home, and still keep up with her housekeeping. She has taken more interest in and care for her appearance and has a healthier and more pleasant attitude toward her life.

The bank is pleased with the work of these older women. It has been their experience that the women do an excellent job and are very anxious to do whatever is required of them. In general, however, the supervisors find that the older women, particularly those without any former work experience, are somewhat slower to learn and slower on the job than the young high-school graduates formerly used on these jobs. Nevertheless, they believe that the older women compensate for this by being more accurate, more conscientious, and easier to supervise. They willingly accept whatever assignments are given them and do exactly as they are instructed.

In addition, although the older women seldom attain the speed of young women, they are usually more careful and steadier in their performance with the result that they complete about as much work in the same number of hours. Thus, their steady and regular performance is about equal to the "spurts" and "slumps" in the production of young workers.

An indication of the success of this program is found in the fact that the bank has decided to make the program a permanent part of its operations. No new full-time workers have been hired for the distribution and bookkeeping departments since the start of the program, and those full-time workers already employed have gradually been transferred to other jobs. The program has eliminated most overtime work and irregularity of hours for the bank's full-time staff, and the housewives have provided a constant source of labor in comparison with the high-school graduates formerly recruited.

Present plans call for completely staffing the distribution and bookkeeping-machine processing departments with part-time employees. As the employees now working on these jobs acquire the necessary experience, skills, and abilities, they will be promoted to jobs as checkers, supervisors, and instructors on the part-time shifts. Of course, these developments can only come about over a period of time; however, there are already a few part-time employees who have taken over such jobs. The age of the women hired has been no barrier to their success on the job.

## Part II. Facts on "Older" Women Workers in Relation to Office Work

Today, in our thinking and attitudes, the concept of middle-age usually applies to men and women between 45 and 65 years. The word "older" is generally reserved for those over 65, and then it is used with considerable circumspection. For many of the most vital national and international responsibilities are held by persons well beyond that age who cannot be considered, in the usual sense, as "elderly."

### An Older Worker at Thirty-Five?

In contrast with this widely held concept, the term "older worker" is frequently applied to women of 35 and men of 45 years. The reason is simple. It is at these ages that men or women seeking work often find they are "too old" even to be considered or interviewed for a job opening. A definition developed during the National Conference on Aging held in August 1950 under the sponsorship of the Federal Security Agency states this clearly: <sup>1</sup>

An older worker is an adult who meets with resistance to employment, continued employment, or reemployment solely because of his age.

The actual chronological age at which a person may be considered an "older worker" differs widely. It may vary with the type of work, the sex of the worker, the customs of a particular town or industry, and the need for more workers with that particular skill.

A study made in 1950 by the United States Employment Service <sup>2</sup> in cooperation with four affiliated State agencies brought to light some pertinent information on this problem. The study consisted of an analysis of age requirements specified by employers in job orders or openings listed at State employment service offices in Columbus, Ohio; Houston, Tex.; Lancaster, Pa.; and New York City. The findings of this survey show that, in general:

1. A considerable number of openings for women have age restrictions.
2. Job openings for women are more likely to have an age ceiling than those for men.
3. Employment problems connected with age arise earlier for women than for men.

<sup>1</sup> "Man and His Years." An account of the First National Conference on Aging sponsored by the Federal Security Agency. Health Publications Institute, Inc., Raleigh, N. C., 1951. P. 72.

<sup>2</sup> "Workers Are Young Longer," U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Security. Washington, D. C., 1952. Appendix table V.

4. Age restrictions on women seeking office work are more prevalent than age ceilings for women workers in general.

That age restrictions are prevalent in filling women's jobs was clearly shown in all of the four cities surveyed. In Columbus, more than 80 percent of requests for women workers filed at the employment service office placed age restrictions on those they would be willing to hire. Although the proportion of job openings with age limitations was lower in the other cities, it still amounted to considerably more than half in Houston and Lancaster and one-fourth in New York City. These figures apply to age ceilings placed on any job opening for women, not only on office jobs.

An age limit is applied to women job seekers more frequently than to men.<sup>3</sup> In Columbus, 81 percent of the requests for women workers contained age limitations while only 64 percent of the requests for men workers had such restrictions. Although the difference was less pronounced in Houston, 58 percent for women compared to 50 percent for men, it was still considerable. Special circumstances in the other two cities led to different results but these do not invalidate the general conclusion that employers are more apt to place age ceilings on jobs for women than for men.

Women must face such age barriers to employment earlier than men.<sup>4</sup> In Columbus, the opinion of employment service personnel was that women of 35 and over meet difficulties equivalent to those of men at 45 or 50 years of age. In that city, also, employers seeking women office workers are more apt to place an age limit on job applicants than are employers looking for women for most other kinds of work. In three of the cities included in the report, Columbus, Houston, and Lancaster, more than 80 percent of jobs for women clerical and sales personnel<sup>5</sup> had age restrictions. A comparison of age restrictions for all women's jobs with the percent of clerical and sales openings with age ceilings shows the extent to which age is a greater obstacle to employment for the office worker:

*Job orders and openings with age ceilings*

	<i>All women's jobs (Percent)</i>	<i>Clerical and sales (Percent)</i>
Columbus.....	81	82
Houston.....	58	83
Lancaster.....	55	82
New York.....	24	53

<sup>3</sup> "Older Workers Seek Jobs," U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Security, Washington, D. C., August 1951. P. 8.

<sup>4</sup> "Workers Are Young Longer," U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Security, Washington, D. C., 1952. P. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Because of the method of record keeping used by the employment services, it is impossible to separate statistics for clerical and sales personnel. However, it is generally agreed that age ceilings are not imposed as frequently for saleswomen as for office workers.

The general impression secured from scanning the "want ads" for office help is reinforced by the findings of this report—women office workers are "older workers" at 35.

### A Country of Aging Women? <sup>6</sup>

Much attention in recent years has been focused on two changes which have been taking place in the population of this country: first, the increase in the proportion of women and, second, the increase in the proportion of the aging, both men and women. To see these developments in proper perspective, it is important to view them against a background of long-term population increase. In the 50 years from 1900 to 1950, the number of people in the United States almost doubled, growing from 76 million to 151.2 million. (See appendix table I.)

Much of this growth in the size of our population was due to the excess of births over deaths even though the birth rate declined during most of this period. Some of the increase is also attributable to the considerable immigration which took place in the early part of these same 50 years and added large numbers. Another aspect of the picture is the declining death rate, especially the considerable decrease in infant mortality which took place during these years. More babies who were born survived their early years and were counted by the Census taker. Simultaneously, advances in the medical sciences and the general improvement in living and working conditions enabled more people to live longer.

This increase did not take place equally for both sexes. While the number of females more than doubled between 1900 and 1950, increasing by 104 percent, the number of males did not quite double, increasing by only 94 percent.

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
1900.....	38,816,000	37,178,000
1950.....	75,228,000	75,951,000
Percent increase.....	94	104

This trend leading toward a preponderance of women in the population did not begin in 1900. It was not until 1930 that the number of females began to increase at a greater rate than the number of males. As a result of this greater rate of increase for the last 20 years, women in the population outnumbered men for the first time in 1950, by three-quarters of a million.

The change in the proportion of the sexes did not result from the birth of more girls than boys. In fact, the contrary is true, the male birth rate continues higher. The factors which have played a part in bringing

<sup>6</sup> The statistics in this and the following sections are based upon data of the U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, unless otherwise specified.

about a steady increase in the proportion of women in the population are chiefly the decline in immigration and a higher death rate for men than for women. In the early years of the century large-scale immigration, consisting overwhelmingly of men, helped maintain the balance of the sexes. The considerable decline in immigration, beginning in the first quarter of the century, has removed this source of supply of men. Equally significant has been the decline in maternal mortality; just as more babies survived birth, more mothers survived childbirth. In addition, and perhaps of even more importance, is the fact that—at every age and for reasons that are not yet fully determined—the male death rate is higher than the female death rate.

The trend toward a growing population which has existed since the founding of this country and the trend, developing since 1930, toward an increasing proportion of females has been accompanied by a basic change in the age composition of our population. Since 1900 there has been a constant increase in the number and proportion of the middle-aged and aged. While the total population doubled during the past half century, the number of middle-aged tripled, and the number of aged quadrupled.

Although, of course, the actual numbers of persons in every age group increased during these 50 years, those in the younger age groups increased at a much slower rate reflecting, in general, the declining birth rate.

	<i>Millions of persons</i>		<i>Percent increase</i>
	<i>1900</i>	<i>1950</i>	
All ages.....	76.0	151.2	99
Under 10.....	18.1	29.4	62
10-19.....	15.7	21.8	39
20-34.....	19.5	35.5	82
35-44.....	9.2	21.5	134
45-64.....	10.4	30.7	195
65 and over.....	3.1	12.3	297

The reasons for this drastic change in the age composition of our population consist, in part, of some of the same factors which brought about the increase in numbers: the sharp decrease in infant and maternal mortality, and increased longevity resulting from advances in medical sciences and improved living and working conditions. However, this was accompanied by a long-term decline in the birth rate which accounts, in large measure, for the increased proportion the aged form in the population. The decline in immigration since World War I has also played a part since most immigrants are among the younger age groups.

The obvious outcome of the three trends which have developed since 1900—the increased number, the greater proportion of females, and the

aging of the population—has been the phenomenal increase in the number of women 65 years and over. Between 1900 and 1950, the number of women 65 and over rose from 1.5 million to 6.5 million, an increase of 333 percent. For the younger age groups the increase was considerably lower.

During this time the number of men 65 years and over grew from 1.6 million to 5.8 million, an increase of 263 percent. When this is compared with the overall increase of 94 percent in number of men and 104 percent in number of women, the proportionate increase of the older group can be seen. That is, while the population as a whole doubled, the number of men 65 and over more than tripled and the number of women of this age more than quadrupled:

	<i>Percent increase from 1900 to 1950</i>	
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
All ages.....	104	94
Under 10.....	60	65
10-19.....	38	39
20-34.....	89	76
35-44.....	153	116
45-54.....	190	156
55-64.....	230	235
65 and over.....	333	263

The numbers of the middle-aged and elderly have increased beyond what was to be expected from the general increase in the size of our population. Many of the factors which have operated since 1900 to bring about this development are still in operation today. Others, such as the decline in the birth rate, have been reversed since 1940 and may bring about an increase in the proportion of the population formed by the very young. For the next few decades, however, it is expected that there will continue to be an ever-increasing proportion of middle-aged and aged men and women.

There are now more than 30½ million men and women between 45 and 64 years of age, and 12.3 million are 65 years and over. According to estimates made by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor,<sup>7</sup> there will be 43 million persons between 45 and 64 years and almost 21 million 65 and over in 1975. Of the older group, there will be 12 million women and approximately 9 million men. Women aged 65 and over may, therefore, exceed men of the same ages by 3¼ million.

Estimated future development, then, will only serve to augment one of the problems existing today: the disproportion of the sexes which

<sup>7</sup> "Employment and Economic Status of Older Men and Women." U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Bulletin No. 1092. Washington, D. C. May 1952. P. 13.

increases with age, resulting in 1950 in 112 women 65 years and over for every 100 men in that age group.

*Number of females to 100 males in population*

	1900	1950
All ages.....	95.8	101.0
Under 10.....	97.9	96.4
10-19.....	99.5	97.6
20-34.....	97.0	103.7
35-44.....	88.9	102.3
45-54.....	87.9	100.2
55-64.....	94.0	99.3
65 and over.....	97.9	111.6

Inevitably, the proportion of widows among middle-aged and older women must be high. From the age of 55 on, at least one-fourth of all women are widows. The proportion of widows rises sharply with age so that by the time a woman reaches 65 years there is one chance out of two that she will be widowed:

Age	Percent widowed
45-54.....	12.2
55-64.....	25.3
65-74.....	47.1
75 and over.....	71.9

While the numbers of both men and women 65 and over are expected to grow, the increase will be greatest among women. Though not a country of aging women—only 9 percent of all women are 65 years or over—the United States is a country where older women are a greater proportion of the whole citizenry than they have ever been before, and, in the future, will constitute an even greater proportion.

### More Older Women Are Working

The same half of the twentieth century that saw these population changes also saw the rapid development of the trend for women to work outside the home until, today, women are a considerable part of the work force of this country. This increase in the number of women workers is much greater than would be caused by the greater number of women in the population for, while the female population doubled between 1900 and 1950, the number of women workers tripled. In March 1953 there were 19 million women in the labor force. Approximately three out of every ten workers were women and one out of every three women of working age was in the labor force.

<sup>8</sup> "Fact Book on Aging," Federal Security Agency Committee on Aging and Geriatrics. Washington, D.C., 1952. P. 48.

The increase in the age of women who work has been gradual and, until 1940, took place rather slowly. In 1900, the median age of women workers was 26 years, and in 1940 it was 32 years. From the beginning of World War II there was a marked acceleration, the increase in age between 1940 and 1952 almost equaling that of the preceding 40 years. Now, half of all women who work are over 37 years.

*Median age of women workers*

	<i>Years</i>
1940.....	31.9
1942.....	32.7
1944.....	32.9
1946.....	34.3
1948.....	35.5
1950.....	36.8
1952.....	37.2

The increased age of women workers is not simply due to time's inexorable march. Of course, the young woman worker of 20 years ago who stayed in the labor force is now in the middle-aged group. Part of the increased age of the female labor force results from this factor. But a considerable cause of the aging of the female labor force is the phenomenal increase in the participation of women 35 years and over. The sudden jump in the average age of women workers which took place during World War II reflected the large-scale entry of the middle-aged woman into the labor force—where she has since remained.

As a result of the increased tendency for mature women to work, the proportion young women constitute of the total female labor force has declined drastically. In 1900, almost three-quarters of all women who worked were under 35 years; in 1950, less than half were in this age group. This change reflects not only the entrance of the mature woman into work outside the home but also the almost complete elimination of child labor from industrial production and the greater tendency for young persons to remain in school.

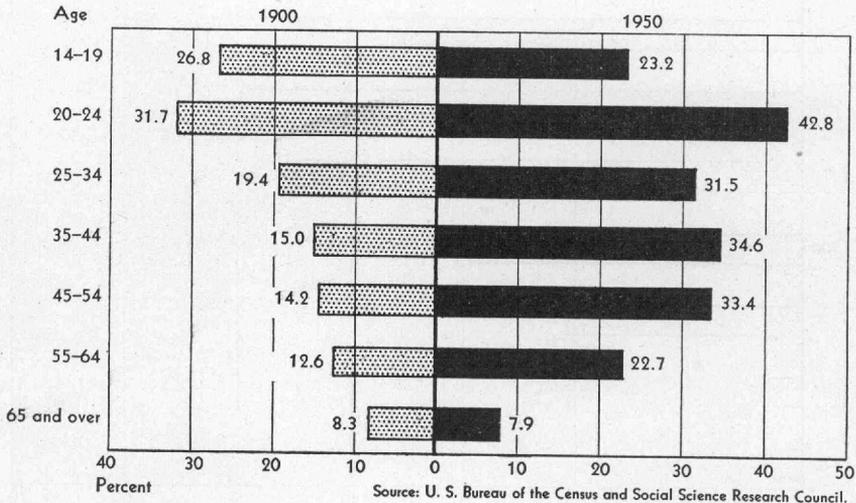
*Percent Distribution of Women in the Labor Force, by Age*

	<i>1900</i>	<i>1950</i>
Total, 14 years and over.....	100.0	100.0
14-34.....	71.0	47.4
35-44.....	13.0	22.8
45-64.....	13.4	26.7
65 and over.....	2.5	3.1

Out of every 100 women of working age, only 20 worked in 1900, but 29 worked in 1950. This increased labor force participation of women is reflected in all age groups except the two extremes: the girls under 20 years and the women 65 years and over. In these age groups there

was a decline in the proportion of women of that age who were either employed or actively seeking employment. The greatest increase has come in the participation of women between 35 and 54 years. Out of every 100 women in these age groups today, over 33 are in the labor force as compared with fewer than 15 in 1900. While, for the entire group of working women, 9 more out of each 100 are at work, for women between 35 and 55, there are almost 20 more in the labor force today than 50 years ago (see chart 1 and appendix table IV.)

CHART 1.—Percent of Women in Each Age Group Who Were Workers, 1900 and 1950. *More women out of every 100 over 14 years of age are working, except among the young and old.*



The outstanding developments of the last few decades have been the large-scale increase in the number of working women and the increased age of women who do work. Today, although young women between 20 and 24 years of age are still the age group most apt to be employed, half of all women workers are over 37 years of age. Both the growth in numbers of women workers and the aging of the female labor force reflect trends which have occurred in the female population as a whole but go far beyond the changes that would be caused by these population trends. Mature and middle-aged women have entered employment outside the home to a far greater extent than ever before in the history of the country.

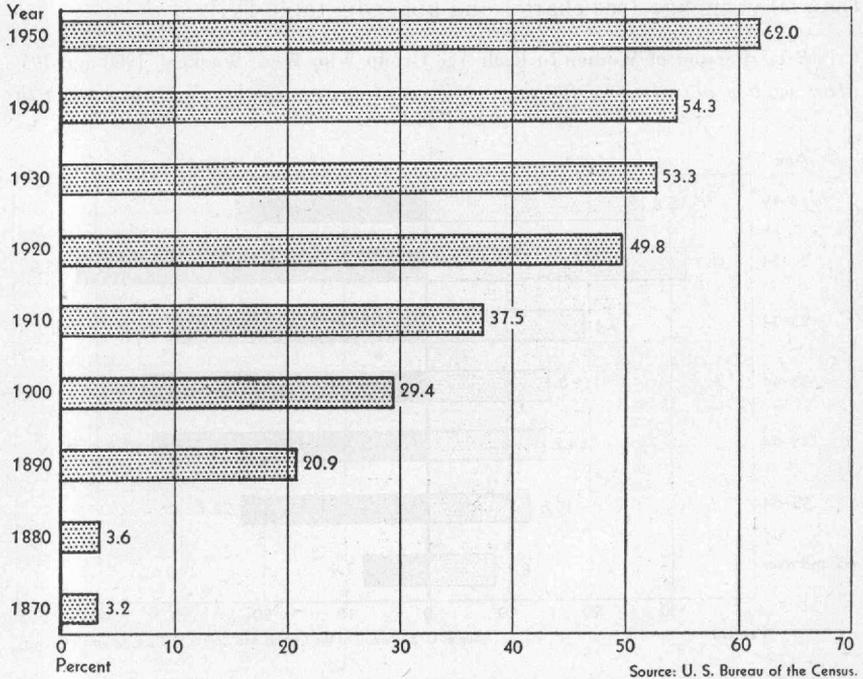
### More Women Are Office Workers

One of the characteristics of our developing economy has been the phenomenal increase in "paper work." One staid clerk with green eye-shade, pen balanced behind his ear, has given place to hundreds of

young women behind clicking typewriters and computing machines. From an occupation which was almost completely filled by men, office work has become an activity in which women predominate and which employs an ever-increasing proportion of women workers.

CHART 2.—Women as a Percent of All Office Workers, 1870–1950.

*The importance of women in office work has steadily increased.*



Although the terms "clerical worker," "office worker," and "white-collar worker" are often used interchangeably, Bureau of the Census data consistently refer to such workers as "clerical and kindred workers." Data provided in these sections are based upon two census sources: one source is the decennial censuses which provide an actual count of population; the other source is the monthly sampling reports, available only since 1940, which provide estimates of the labor force. For technical reasons, figures on the number of clerical workers from these two sources differ.

When the first decennial Census yielding such information was published over 80 years ago, in 1870, women were only 3 percent of all office workers. Only 932 women throughout the United States were employed in office jobs. With each decade, the importance of women in this type of work increased until, in 1950, women constituted approximately 60 percent of all office workers.

	<i>Women as a percent of all office workers<sup>1</sup></i>
1950.....	62.0
1940.....	54.3
1930.....	53.3
1920.....	49.8
1910.....	37.5
1900.....	29.4
1890.....	20.9
1880.....	3.6
1870.....	3.2

<sup>1</sup> For purposes of comparability, this tabulation is based on statistics for stenographers, typists, and secretaries; office-machine operators; shipping and receiving clerks; and clerical and kindred workers (not elsewhere classified).

In April 1952, the latest date for which occupational estimates are available, there were 5¼ million women clerical workers. These 5¼ million women constituted almost two-thirds of all clerical workers. Not only has office and clerical work become more and more "women's work" but an ever-growing proportion of working women are employed in this occupation. From an occupation which, originally, employed less than one percent of all working women, it has now become the occupation in which more women are employed than in any other field of work. The 5¼ million women clerical workers in April 1952 constituted approximately 30 percent of all working women.

The greatest numerical growth of women office workers took place during two wartime periods characterized by a general and rapid expansion in the employment of women, 1910 to 1920 and 1940 to 1950.

During World War II the number of women clerical workers almost doubled—from 2½ million in 1940 to almost 5 million in 1945. After the war, in April 1950, the number had decreased to about 4½ million, still 2 million more than in 1940. With the advent of the Korean crisis the number once more began to rise so that, in 1952, there were more women employed in clerical work than at the height of World War II—slightly more than 5¼ million as compared with slightly less than 5 million. Although accelerated by such wartime expansion, the increased number of women clerical workers represents a long-term trend which has developed steadily during peace as well as war.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Women clerical workers as percent of, all women workers</i>
1952.....	5,284,000	29
1950.....	4,539,000	26
1945.....	4,900,000	25
1940.....	2,530,000	21

Another trend in the employment of women in offices has been the measurable, but slight, increase in the number of Negro women clerical workers since the beginning of World War II. Preliminary reports of

the 1950 Census of the Population show 74,000 nonwhite women clerical workers. Since Negroes constitute 96 percent of the nonwhite population, it can be assumed that most of these women are Negroes. This 74,000 constitutes an increase of almost 60,000 since 1940. In 1940, only 1 percent of all nonwhite women workers were employed in clerical work. This rose to 4 percent in 1950. The proportion nonwhite women formed of all women clerical workers doubled between 1940 and 1950, though it is still very small. In 1950, 2 percent of all women clerical workers were nonwhite whereas, in 1940, only 1 percent of this occupational group was nonwhite. Undoubtedly, this increased employment of nonwhite women in clerical work is in part attributable to the extreme shortage of office workers which developed during World War II.

### Office Workers Are Young Women

Some jobs are thought of as "young women's jobs," others are mentally classified as "old ladies' work." Usually, these concepts are based upon personal experience—on whether the corner drug store or favorite restaurant employs a young, middle-aged, or elderly cashier—and upon casually collected bits of information and reading. The concept then goes from step one: "this kind of job is almost always filled by young women" to step two: "since young women fill this kind of job it must take a young person to do it."

A glance at some of the information regularly collected by the Bureau of the Census on the ages of women in different occupational groups sheds light on step one. Step two, however, does not and should not follow. The fact that certain types of jobs are apt to be filled by women of certain age groups does not mean that it is only these age groups that can perform the work efficiently.

From the information that is available it would seem that there are certain occupations which tend to be filled by young women while others have a high proportion of middle-aged or older women. Still other types of work are performed by women of all ages. The largest group of employed women, and the youngest, are the clerical workers.

In April 1951, the latest date for which figures of this type are available, there were approximately 18 million women at work. More of these women, almost 5 million, were in "clerical and kindred work" than in any other occupational group. Next to this were "operatives and kindred workers" with  $3\frac{3}{4}$  million women, and "service workers, except private household" with slightly more than 2 million women. Over 60 percent, therefore, of all employed women are in these three broad occupational groups, principally as office workers, semiskilled factory workers, or service workers such as beauticians and waitresses.

Half of the 5 million women employed as clerical workers in April 1951 were under 31 years of age. The median age for every other occupational group was not only higher, but considerably higher with the single exception of women laborers. Half of the women in most occupations were over 38 or 40 years. In two occupational groups—"managers, officials, and proprietors, except farm" and "farmers and farm managers"—more than half the women were 45 and over.

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Median age</i>
Total employed women.....	17,890,000	37
Clerical and kindred workers.....	4,931,000	31
Laborers, except farm and mine.....	97,000	33
Craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers.....	211,000	37
Operatives and kindred workers.....	3,737,000	38
Professional, technical and kindred workers.....	1,784,000	38
Sales workers.....	1,264,000	38
Service workers, except private household.....	2,143,000	40
Farm laborers and foremen.....	608,000	40
Private household workers.....	1,872,000	43
Managers, officials, and proprietors, except farm.....	1,039,000	45
Farmers and farm managers.....	205,000	48

There are seven occupational groups in which more than one million women are employed. Of these seven, clerical work is the one with the highest proportion of young women. Over 60 percent of all women clerical workers are less than 35. Although many women employed in every occupation are under 35 years of age, this group varies in the other occupations from a low of one-fifth to a high of slightly more than two-fifths. Private household workers, other service workers, and managers and proprietors are the major occupational groups in which considerably more than one-third of all employed women are over 45 years.

<i>Occupational groups with more than 1 million women</i>	<i>Percent of employed women</i>		
	<i>Under 35 years</i>	<i>Under 45 years</i>	<i>Under 65 years</i>
Clerical and kindred workers.....	61.4	80.9	99.2
Operatives and kindred workers.....	43.0	70.2	98.5
Service workers, except private household.....	40.1	61.0	95.7
Private household workers.....	35.6	54.7	92.7
Professional, technical, and kindred workers.....	42.6	66.8	97.1
Sales workers.....	42.5	66.7	96.9
Managers, officials, and proprietors, except farm..	21.3	49.1	92.1

Work opportunities in the various occupations apparently differ with age. Employment in different types of work seems to broaden out for the older age groups so that while young women under 25 years cluster in only three occupational groups, the middle-aged woman is found to a substantial extent in five groups.

Of the 4 million employed girls and women between 14 and 24 years, 42 percent are clerical workers. There is no other type of work in which this age group is similarly concentrated. In fact, there are only two occupations other than clerical in which more than 10 percent of this age group works. The next age group is not as concentrated in type of work. Even so, the 8 million employed women between 25 and 44 are found largely in only four occupational groups. In this age group clerical work predominates but not to the same extent and is followed closely by operatives.

<i>Occupations with more than 10 percent of age group</i>	<i>14-24 years</i>	<i>25-44 years</i>
Number of employed women (all occupations) . . .	4,093,000	8,060,000
	<i>Percent in occupation</i>	
Clerical and kindred workers . . . . .	42.1	28.1
Operatives and kindred workers . . . . .	16.2	24.3
Service workers, except private household . . . . .	10.5	10.9
Professional, technical, and kindred workers . . . . .		10.7

The five million employed women between the ages of 45 and 64 are more evenly distributed among the various occupations than any other of the age groups, whether younger or older. Among the middle-aged women, however, the clerical worker no longer predominates. The largest numbers of these women are operatives (mostly in factories), and clerical workers.

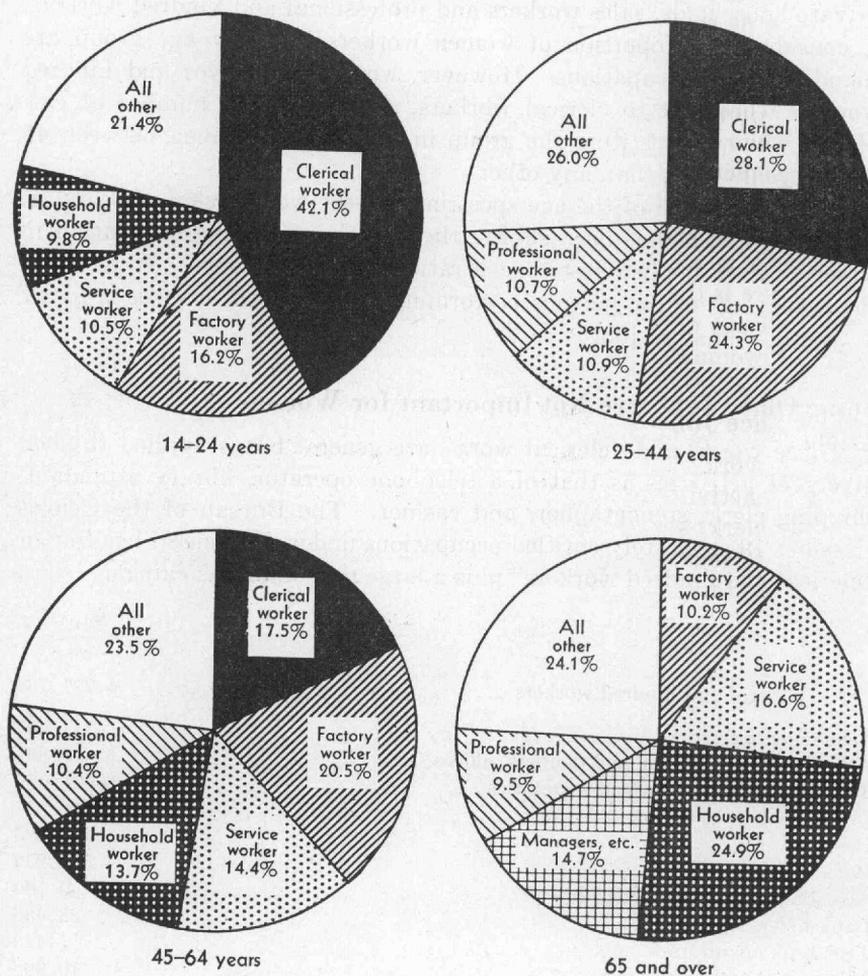
<i>Occupations with more than 10 percent of age group</i>	<i>45-64 years</i>
Number of employed women (all occupations) . . . . .	5,178,000
	<i>Percent in occupation</i>
Operatives and kindred workers . . . . .	20.5
Clerical and kindred workers . . . . .	17.5
Service workers, except private household . . . . .	14.4
Private household workers . . . . .	13.7
Professional, technical, and kindred workers . . . . .	10.4

In April 1951 there were only slightly more than one-half million women 65 and over who were working. Considerably more of these older women were employed as private household workers than in any other type of work. The rest were employed chiefly in the service trades, as nonfarm managers and officials, and as operatives.

<i>Occupations with more than 10 percent of age group</i>	<i>65 years and over</i>
Number of employed women (all occupations) . . . . .	559,000
	<i>Percent in occupation</i>
Private household workers . . . . .	24.9
Service workers, except private household . . . . .	16.6
Managers, officials and proprietors, except farm . . . . .	14.7
Operatives and kindred workers . . . . .	10.2

In every age group there were, of course, women employed in the other occupations. But in no case did the number in the occupation equal 10 percent of the women workers in that age group.

CHART 3.—Most Common Jobs for Women, by Age Group, 1951.



Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census.

At one extreme of the age spectrum are the managerial occupations, both farm and nonfarm, and the private household workers, with about half the employed women over 45 years of age. Of women under 45 years who work, very few are in these three occupations. Not until the age group between 45 and 64 years is considered are as many as 10 percent of the women workers found in any of these occupations.

However, among women 65 and over who work, almost one-fourth work as private household workers and almost one-sixth as managers, officials, and proprietors of nonfarm establishments.

Between the "old" and "young" jobs are the many millions of women who work as semiskilled factory operatives, service workers outside of private households, sales workers and professional and kindred workers. A considerable proportion of women workers in every age group are found in these occupations. However, women operatives and kindred workers who, next to clerical workers, are the largest number of employed women, constitute the group in which more women between 45 and 64 years work than any other.

At the other end of the age spectrum are the women clerical workers. Office work is, as has been shown, the woman-employing occupation in which there is the heaviest concentration of young women. In terms of the actual age of the persons performing the work, office work is today a "young woman's" job.

### Some Office Jobs Are Not Important for Women

"Office work" and "clerical work" are general terms applied to such divergent activities as that of a telephone operator, library attendant, shipping clerk, stenographer, and cashier. The Bureau of the Census classifies 19 separately entitled occupations under the general heading of "clerical and kindred workers" plus a large miscellaneous category.

	<i>Number of women (1950)</i>
Clerical and kindred workers .....	4,291,764
Telephone operators .....	341,707
Attendants, physicians' and dentists' offices .....	38,861
Stenographers, typists, and secretaries .....	1,501,089
Office machine operators .....	116,917
Cashiers .....	183,586
Bookkeepers .....	556,229
Attendants and assistants, library .....	9,169
Bank tellers .....	28,486
Telegraph operators .....	7,440
Messengers and office boys .....	10,098
Agents, not elsewhere classified .....	19,296
Collectors, bill and account .....	3,450
Ticket, station, and express agents .....	7,656
Dispatchers and starters, vehicle .....	3,544
Telegraph messengers .....	751
Shipping and receiving clerks .....	19,883
Baggagemen, transportation .....	153
Mail carriers .....	3,460
Express messengers and railway mail clerks .....	279
Other, not elsewhere classified .....	1,439,710

There were some women employed in almost all of the specific office occupations in 1950 but most women were concentrated in a few of these occupations. The job group with more women clerical workers than any other was that of stenographers, typists, and secretaries. Over 1½ million women, 35 percent of all the women clerical workers, were in this group. Next in number were the ½ million women bookkeepers and the more than ¼ million telephone operators. Two other occupations, cashiers and office machine operators, employed more than 100,000 women. All the other clerical occupations had fewer than 100,000 women each and in some there were only a few hundred women.

	<i>Number of women</i>	<i>Percent distribution</i>
All clerical and kindred workers.....	4,291,764	100
Stenographers, typists, and secretaries.....	1,501,089	35
Bookkeepers.....	556,229	13
Telephone operators.....	341,707	8
Cashiers.....	183,586	4
Office machine operators.....	116,917	3
Other.....	1,592,236	37

All office occupations are not "women's jobs." Some fields of activity which fall into the general category of clerical work employ almost no women while others are almost entirely staffed by women. At the top of the list of "women's" office jobs are telephone operators, attendants in physicians' and dentists' offices, and stenographers, typists and secretaries. More than 94 percent of all the workers in these occupations are women. Another group of office workers who are predominantly, although not exclusively, women are office-machine operators, cashiers, bookkeepers, and library attendants and assistants. Bank tellers are almost evenly divided between men and women, with men predominating slightly. In the other 11 office occupations women are less than 25 percent of the employees. In some occupations, such as mail carriers and baggagemen, women constitute as little as 2 percent of the workers in that occupation.

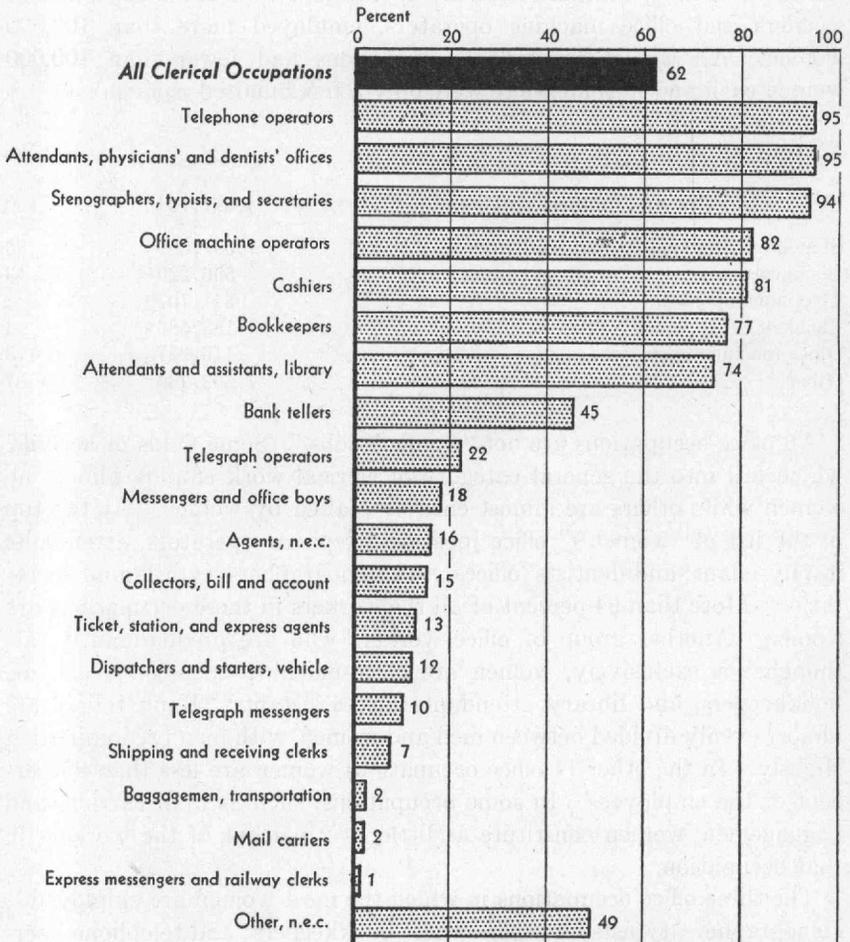
The three office occupations in which the most women are employed—stenographers, typists and secretaries; bookkeepers; and telephone operators—are predominantly woman-employing occupations. One occupation, bookkeepers, is a group in which men represent approximately one-fourth of the total workers, while the two others are almost completely staffed by women.

Although office work is not always "women's work," the bulk of the office workers are in those occupations which are predominantly filled by women. While office employment has increased and expanded throughout the years, bringing with it the greatly increased employment of women

as office workers, some of the office occupations are more important to women than others. The most important is that occupation in which the greatest number of women, 1½ million, are working—stenographers, typists, and secretaries.

CHART 4.—Women as a Percent of All Workers in Specific Clerical Occupations, 1950.

*Not all clerical jobs are women's jobs.*



Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census.

## Older Women Work Part-Time, But Not in an Office

The labor force is not a static and unchanging group. There are certain seasonal fluctuations in work—the harvest season in agriculture, the Christmas rush in the department stores—which require the addition of thousands of workers for a relatively short time. Young people begin work for the first time, and old people retire. Throughout any one year, therefore, there are many more persons who have worked than are working at a given time. In 1951 there were 70 million persons who worked for some time during the year. Of these, 25 million were women.

Many jobs are of such a nature that, whether for the whole year or for a season, they are “short hour” jobs, such as ushers in a neighborhood movie that is open only in the evening. Other occupations are of such a nature that, while they have many full-time workers, they also need “relief” or “fill-ins” to work on a part-time basis. Many restaurants with lunch-time rush hours regularly employ additional part-time waitresses. Other occupations do not necessarily require part-time workers but have been adapted to the use of part-time employees because of special circumstances, such as a shortage of full-time workers, or because an employer desires to retain a valued worker who does not wish to work a full schedule.

The U. S. Bureau of the Census, when it counts the number of part-time workers, includes all those who ordinarily work less than 35 hours a week. Of the 70 million men and women who worked for some time during 1951, 10 million were part-time workers—4 million men and 6 million women.

A very high proportion of women workers are employed in part-time jobs. Over one-fourth of all the women who worked during 1951 regularly worked less than 35 hours a week while less than 10 percent of employed men were part-time workers.

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Total who worked in 1951.....	45,364,000	24,598,000
Worked at part-time jobs.....	4,026,000	6,392,000

Except for school girls and students, the prevalence of part-time employment increases with the age of the women who work. Women working part time are found to the greatest extent among women workers under 17, reflecting the prevalence of part-time work among students, often for only part of the year. This proportion of part-time workers falls considerably when dealing with women workers between 18 and 19 years and hits the lowest point for employed women between 20 and 24 years of age. Only 13 percent of the working women between 20 and 24 regularly work less than 35 hours a week. From this age on, however, the proportion of women who work on a part-time basis steadily

increases until almost half of the jobs held by women 65 and over are part-time jobs.

	<i>Percent of all women workers in part-time jobs, 1961</i>
All ages.....	26.0
14-17.....	65.7
18-19.....	20.3
20-24.....	13.2
25-34.....	21.2
35-44.....	25.2
45-54.....	26.2
55-64.....	28.6
65 and over.....	45.0

The extent of part-time work varies considerably with the type of occupation, from almost two-thirds of all female farm laborers and foremen to only 6 percent of women craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers. Part-time work is most apt to be found in those occupations where the work by its very nature tends to require less than a full week of work. The two occupations with the greatest proportion of part-time workers, private household workers and farm laborers, have long been associated with casual employment. Private household workers often work by the hour or by the day in various private homes; and many of the farm laborers working on a part-time basis are unpaid family members who work as needed during busy periods on the family farm. Other occupations with a high percent of women part-time workers are in store and service industries, such as restaurants and beauty shops, which regularly supplement their full-time working force with part-time sales and service workers to meet rush-hour demands or act as relief workers.

	<i>Percent of all women workers in part-time jobs, 1961</i>
Total.....	26.0
Farm laborers and foremen.....	64.1
*Private household workers.....	58.5
*Sales workers.....	38.4
Farmers and farm managers.....	37.3
*Service workers, except private household.....	24.5
Laborers, except farm and mine.....	21.1
*Professional, technical, and kindred workers.....	14.4
*Operatives and kindred workers.....	12.9
*Managers, officials, and proprietors, except farm.....	12.9
*Clerical and kindred workers.....	11.9
Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers.....	6.4

\* More than 1,000,000 women in occupational group.

Of the seven occupational groups in which there are more than 1 million working women, clerical work has the lowest proportion of part-time

workers. This is the occupation, also, with the highest proportion of young women. Private household work, at the other extreme of the large women-employing occupations in terms of the age of the women employed, is also at the other extreme in proportion of women working part-time. Almost 60 percent of women domestic workers are employed part-time.

Except for the very young women, the proportion of part-time employment increases with the age of the woman worker and varies in extent considerably from one occupation to another. While many middle-aged and older women work part-time, it is not in an office.

### **Wanted: Office Help**

Ever since the shortage first arose during World War II, there has been a continuing and steady need on the part of employers for women office workers. Since June 1950, when the manpower needs of the defense program were superimposed on an already flourishing civilian economy, the need has grown more acute. The most general and pressing scarcity has been among stenographers and typists, although—depending upon the local situation—it also exists for the other clerical occupations. Although the extent of the shortage of women office workers varies considerably from one locality to another, almost every large city or town finds that the supply of women office workers is less than the demand for their services.

Part of the lack of balance between supply and demand is that the actual number of such jobs continues to increase. Even though increasing numbers of young people have completed courses in junior colleges, specialized business schools, or high schools since World War II, their numbers have not been sufficient to fill all the job openings.

Another reason for the difficulty in making the supply meet the demand may be attributed to the high rate of turnover among the office occupations. Since the jobs are filled chiefly by young women, many leave their jobs when they marry or, if they continue to work after marriage, when they have children. Other young office workers may be college graduates who have taken a clerical job to gain experience in a particular business or industry and then advance to professional or administrative work. Other young college graduates may accept office employment as a "fill-in" until they find a job in their field of training. Still other young women with little training may find wages more limited in office work than in other work opportunities, such as factory operatives, that may be open to them. High turnover rates, which are usual in occupations where young women predominate, continue creating job openings.

The long-term increase in actual number of jobs which require office workers and the high turnover explain why the demand for office workers

is as great as it is. A number of factors account for the limitation in supply. First, there is a much smaller proportion of young persons in this country than ever before. In 1950 there were about 19,000 fewer young women 20 to 24 years of age than there were in 1940, and approximately one million fewer girls 14 to 19 years of age. The overall population in this same 10-year period increased by 6 million. This means that not only proportionately, but in actual numbers, the supply of young women workers will continue to decrease in the near future.

Another probable reason for the limited supply is the high marriage and birth rates of recent years. These have diminished even more the decreasing supply of young women available for employment. Of the 33 million women ever married who were not in the labor force in April 1951, approximately half were caring for children under 18 years of age.

Another limitation on supply of office workers consists of the hiring standards set by employers. The criterion of age, often automatically imposed, serves to limit the number of women an employer or placement agency will consider. Standards of physical appearance, limitations imposed on the employment of religious or racial minorities, unrealistic demands for specialized training or experience, all play a part in limiting the supply of what an employer considers an "employable" office worker.

Under current economic conditions, it would appear that the need for women office workers will continue. The factors creating many job openings—increased number of clerical jobs and the high turnover rate—are still in operation. Similarly, those factors which limit the supply—the decrease in number of young women, the high marriage and birth rate, and employer hiring restrictions—also continue.

### An Answer

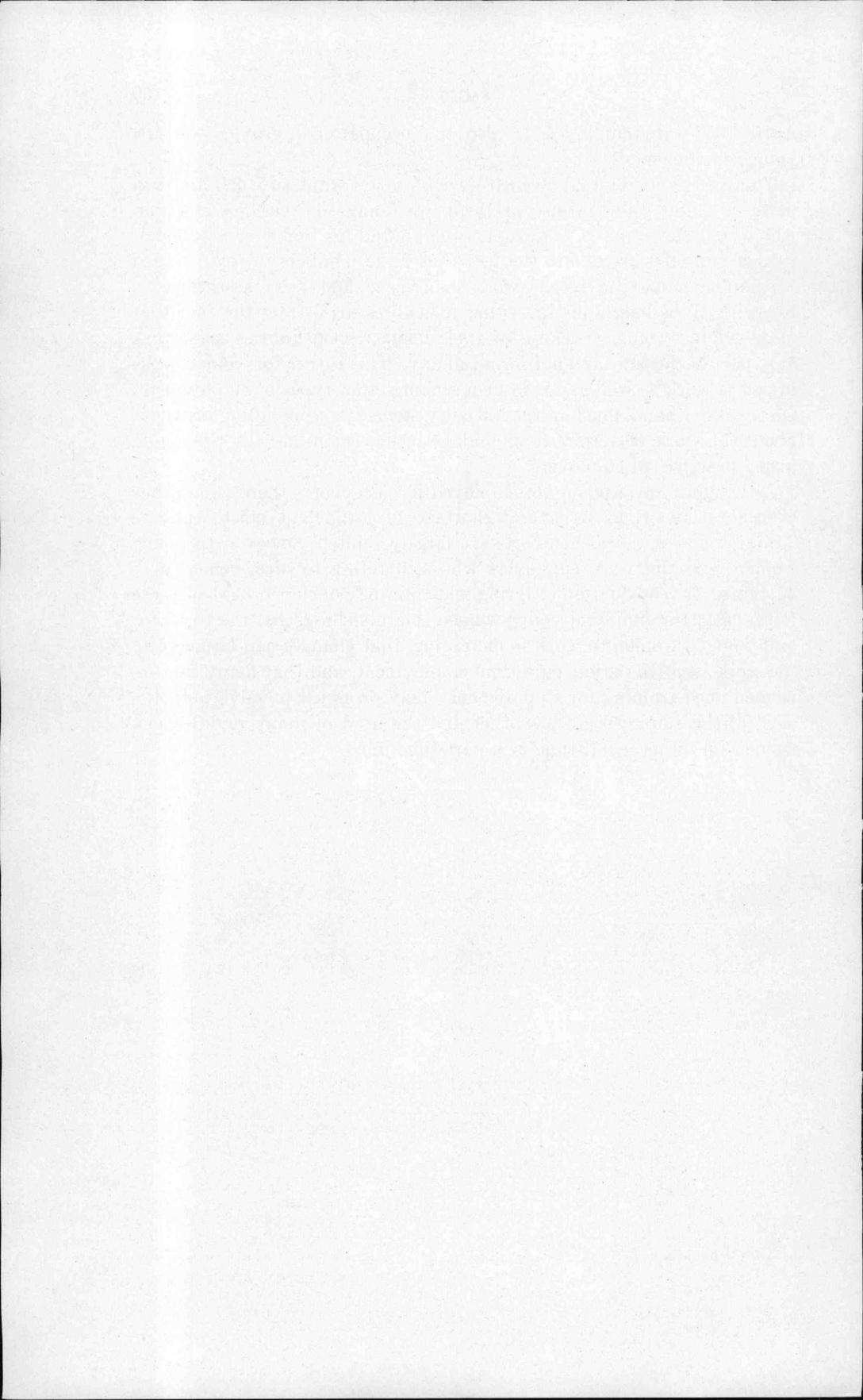
The business man unsuccessfully searching for a competent secretary "under 25" and the woman of 50 hopelessly looking for work in an office exemplify two aspects of a basic labor supply problem in clerical employment. A glance at the "want ads" is sufficient to show the prevalence of age restrictions in office work. Although limitations on the age at which a woman will be employed can be found in many types of work, office work is among the occupations in which age ceilings are most frequently encountered. The demand in office work is almost always for the young woman.

On the other hand, the general trend in the population is toward a decreased proportion of the young and an increased proportion of the middle-aged and elderly. An even more accentuated trend exists toward the increased employment of women, especially the middle-aged. However, the occupational group in which the most women—5¼ million in

April 1952—are employed is also the occupational group with the youngest women.

There is no doubt that women over 35 years want to work and can perform a job well. Many of them are doing so. Others, however, who would like employment are not able to find it. Some of the difficulties encountered are due to the fact that large numbers of middle-aged women have had no recent work experience and need assistance in renewing skills long unused. Other difficulties arise from the fact that many of the women, because of their home responsibilities, can work only part of the time and not for a full day. This is true for women seeking office work as well as for women seeking other types of employment. On the other hand, much of the difficulty stems from prevailing attitudes about the work performance of middle-aged women and the prevailing hiring practices of employers.

Although many women are employed in office work, there is, and has been for some time, a general shortage of competent office workers. Training and recruitment efforts are largely limited, however, to young women, and there are employers who still refuse to hire women over 35 years. A reevaluation of hiring and training policies in light of these facts—that the supply of young women is diminishing, that the trend for middle-aged women to work is increasing, that changes can be made in the work itself to permit part-time employment, and that many mature women need training for employment—may do much to solve both the need of the employer for a worker and the need of many middle-aged women for either a full-time or a part-time job.



## Appendix

TABLE I.—POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES, BY AGE AND SEX, 1900-1950

[In millions]

Age and sex	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	Percent increase 1900-1950
Total	76.0	92.0	105.7	122.8	131.7	151.2	99
Under 10 years	18.1	20.4	23.0	24.1	21.3	29.4	62
10 to 19 years	15.7	18.2	20.1	23.6	24.1	21.8	39
20 to 34 years	19.5	24.2	26.5	29.9	32.9	35.5	82
35 to 44 years	9.2	11.7	14.2	17.2	18.3	21.5	134
45 to 54 years	6.4	8.4	10.5	13.0	15.5	17.4	172
55 to 64 years	4.0	5.1	6.5	8.4	10.6	13.3	233
65 years and over	3.1	4.0	4.9	6.6	9.0	12.3	297
Male	38.8	47.3	53.9	62.2	66.1	75.2	94
Under 10 years	9.1	10.3	11.6	12.2	10.8	15.0	65
10 to 19 years	7.9	9.1	10.1	11.9	12.1	11.0	39
20 to 34 years	9.9	12.5	13.2	14.8	16.2	17.4	76
35 to 44 years	4.9	6.2	7.4	8.8	9.2	10.6	116
45 to 54 years	3.4	4.5	5.7	6.8	8.0	8.7	156
55 to 64 years	2.0	2.7	3.4	4.4	5.4	6.7	235
65 years and over	1.6	2.0	2.5	3.3	4.4	5.8	263
Female	37.2	44.7	51.8	60.6	65.6	76.0	104
Under 10 years	9.0	10.1	11.4	11.9	10.5	14.4	60
10 to 19 years	7.8	9.1	10.0	11.7	12.0	10.8	38
20 to 34 years	9.6	11.7	13.3	15.1	16.7	18.1	89
35 to 44 years	4.3	5.5	6.8	8.4	9.1	10.9	153
45 to 54 years	3.0	3.9	4.8	6.2	7.5	8.7	190
55 to 64 years	2.0	2.4	3.1	4.0	5.2	6.6	230
65 years and over	1.5	2.0	2.4	3.3	4.6	6.5	333

Source: U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1950 Census of Population (data include Armed Forces and employed civilians and their families overseas).

1900-1940: Historical Statistics of the United States, 1789-1945 (data for 1900 to 1930 adjusted to include persons of unknown age).

TABLE II.—PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES, BY AGE AND SEX, 1900-1950

Age and sex	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950
Total.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 10 years.....	23.8	22.2	21.8	19.6	16.2	19.4
10 to 19 years.....	20.7	19.8	19.0	19.2	18.3	14.4
20 to 34 years.....	25.6	26.4	25.1	24.3	25.0	23.5
35 to 44 years.....	12.1	12.7	13.4	14.0	13.9	14.2
45 to 54 years.....	8.4	9.1	9.9	10.6	11.8	11.5
55 to 64 years.....	5.3	5.5	6.2	6.9	8.0	8.8
65 years and over.....	4.1	4.3	4.6	5.4	6.8	8.1
Male.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 10 years.....	23.4	21.8	21.5	19.6	16.3	19.9
10 to 19 years.....	20.4	19.3	18.8	19.1	18.3	14.6
20 to 34 years.....	25.5	26.4	24.5	23.8	24.5	23.1
35 to 44 years.....	12.6	13.1	13.7	14.2	13.9	14.1
45 to 54 years.....	8.8	9.5	10.6	10.9	12.1	11.6
55 to 64 years.....	5.2	5.7	6.3	7.1	8.2	8.9
65 years and over.....	4.1	4.2	4.6	5.3	6.7	7.7
Female.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 10 years.....	24.2	22.6	22.0	19.6	16.0	18.9
10 to 19 years.....	21.0	20.3	19.3	19.3	18.3	14.2
20 to 34 years.....	25.8	26.2	25.7	24.9	25.5	23.8
35 to 44 years.....	11.5	12.3	13.1	13.9	13.9	14.3
45 to 54 years.....	8.1	8.7	9.3	10.3	11.4	11.4
55 to 64 years.....	5.4	5.4	6.0	6.6	7.9	8.7
65 years and over.....	4.0	4.5	4.6	5.4	7.0	8.6

Source: See table I.

TABLE III.—AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE FEMALE POPULATION 14 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER, 1900-1950<sup>1</sup>

Age	1900	1920	1930	1940	1950
[In millions]					
Total <sup>2</sup> .....	25.0	36.2	44.0	50.5	57.1
14 to 19 years.....	4.6	5.8	7.0	7.4	6.4
20 to 24 years.....	3.7	4.8	5.5	5.9	5.9
25 to 34 years.....	5.9	8.5	9.5	10.8	12.2
35 to 44 years.....	4.3	6.8	8.4	9.2	10.9
45 to 54 years.....	3.0	4.8	6.2	7.6	8.7
55 to 64 years.....	1.9	3.1	4.0	5.2	6.6
65 years and over.....	1.5	2.5	3.3	4.6	6.5
[In percent]					
Total <sup>2</sup> .....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
14 to 19 years.....	18.3	16.0	15.9	14.6	11.1
20 to 24 years.....	14.9	13.2	12.6	11.7	10.3
25 to 34 years.....	23.5	23.5	21.7	21.4	21.4
35 to 44 years.....	17.4	18.7	19.0	18.1	19.0
45 to 54 years.....	12.0	13.4	14.1	14.9	15.2
55 to 64 years.....	7.8	8.5	9.2	10.2	11.6
65 years and over.....	6.1	6.8	7.6	9.1	11.3

<sup>1</sup> Data refer to April, except 1900 (June) and 1920 (January).<sup>2</sup> Details do not necessarily add to totals due to rounding.

Source: U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1950 Census of Population (data include Armed Forces and employed civilians and their families overseas).

1900-1940: Data computed from John D. Durand, *Labor Force in the United States, 1800-1960*. New York, Social Science Research Council, 1948.

TABLE IV.—THE FEMALE LABOR FORCE IN THE UNITED STATES, BY AGE, 1900-1950<sup>1</sup>

Age	1900	1920	1930	1940	1950
[Numbers in thousands]					
Women <sup>2</sup> .....	4,999	8,229	10,396	13,015	16,512
14 to 19 years.....	1,230	1,640	1,591	1,395	1,474
20 to 24 years.....	1,179	1,785	2,316	2,688	2,521
25 to 34 years.....	1,139	2,011	2,581	3,607	3,839
35 to 44 years.....	652	1,303	1,823	2,500	3,762
45 to 54 years.....	427	869	1,224	1,691	2,902
55 to 64 years.....	245	441	613	859	1,507
65 years and over.....	127	180	243	275	509

## [Percent distribution of the labor force]

	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
14 to 19 years.....	24.6	19.9	15.3	10.7	8.9
20 to 24 years.....	23.6	21.7	22.3	20.7	15.3
25 to 34 years.....	22.8	24.4	24.8	27.7	23.2
35 to 44 years.....	13.0	15.8	17.5	19.2	22.8
45 to 54 years.....	8.5	10.6	11.8	13.0	17.6
55 to 64 years.....	4.9	5.4	5.9	6.6	9.1
65 years and over.....	2.5	2.2	2.3	2.1	3.1

## [Percent of women in each age group who are in the labor force]

	20.0	22.7	23.6	25.7	28.9
14 to 19 years.....	26.8	28.3	22.8	18.9	23.2
20 to 24 years.....	31.7	37.5	41.8	45.6	42.8
25 to 34 years.....	19.4	23.7	27.0	33.4	31.5
35 to 44 years.....	15.0	19.2	21.7	27.3	34.6
45 to 54 years.....	14.2	17.9	19.7	22.4	33.4
55 to 64 years.....	12.6	14.3	15.3	16.6	22.7
65 years and over.....	8.3	7.3	7.3	6.0	7.9

<sup>1</sup> Data refer to April, except 1900 (June) and 1920 (January).

<sup>2</sup> Details do not necessarily add to totals because of rounding. Figures for periods prior to 1940 adjusted to include persons of unknown age.

Source: U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1950 Census of Population (data include Armed Forces and employed civilians overseas).

1900-1940: Data computed from John D. Durand, *Labor Force in the United States, 1890-1960*, New York, Social Science Research Council, 1948.

TABLE V.—OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYED WOMEN, BY AGE, APRIL 1951

Major occupational group	Total 14 and over	Age group			
		14-24	25-44	45-64	65 and over
[Numbers in thousands]					
Total employed women <sup>1</sup> .....	17,890	4,093	8,060	5,178	559
Professional, technical, and kindred workers.....	1,784	330	862	540	53
Farmers and farm managers.....	205	8	78	101	19
Managers, officials and proprietors, except farm.....	1,039	42	468	446	82
Clerical and kindred workers.....	4,931	1,724	2,262	905	40
Sales workers.....	1,264	323	520	383	38
Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers.....	211	39	108	49	15
Operatives and kindred workers.....	3,737	662	1,959	1,059	57
Private household workers.....	1,872	401	623	711	139
Service workers, except private household.....	2,143	429	877	744	93
Farm laborers and foremen.....	608	98	275	211	23
Laborers, except farm and mine.....	97	37	32	29	.....

[Percent distribution]

Total employed women.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Professional, technical, and kindred workers.....	10.0	8.1	10.7	10.4	9.5
Farmers and farm managers.....	1.1	.2	1.0	2.0	3.4
Managers, officials and proprietors, except farm.....	5.8	1.0	5.8	8.6	14.7
Clerical and kindred workers.....	27.6	42.1	28.1	17.5	7.2
Sales workers.....	7.1	7.9	6.4	7.4	6.8
Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers.....	1.2	1.0	1.3	.9	2.7
Operatives and kindred workers.....	20.9	16.2	24.3	20.5	10.2
Private household workers.....	10.5	9.8	7.7	13.7	24.9
Service workers, except private household.....	12.0	10.5	10.9	14.4	16.6
Farm laborers and foremen.....	3.4	2.4	3.4	4.1	4.1
Laborers, except farm and mine.....	.5	.9	.4	.6	.....

<sup>1</sup> Details do not necessarily add to totals due to rounding.Source: U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports* (unpublished data).

TABLE VI.—AGE DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYED WOMEN, BY MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL GROUP, APRIL 1951

Major occupational group	All age groups	14 to 19 years	20 to 24 years	25 to 34 years	35 to 44 years	45 to 54 years	55 to 64 years	65 years and over
Total employed women.....	100.0	9.0	13.9	22.4	22.7	18.4	10.5	3.1
			Percent					
Professional, technical, and kindred workers.....	100.0	2.9	15.6	24.1	24.2	19.3	11.0	3.0
Farmers and farm managers.....	100.0	1.0	2.9	19.4	18.4	30.6	18.4	9.2
Managers, officials, and proprietors, except farm.....	100.0	0.4	3.7	17.2	27.8	26.6	16.4	7.9
Clerical and kindred workers.....	100.0	11.5	23.5	26.4	19.5	13.7	4.6	0.8
Sales workers.....	100.0	15.7	9.9	16.9	24.2	19.7	10.5	3.0
Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers.....	100.0	5.7	12.8	28.0	23.2	16.1	7.1	7.1
Operatives and kindred workers.....	100.0	5.5	12.2	25.3	27.2	18.1	10.2	1.5
Service workers, except private household.....	100.0	10.3	9.7	20.1	20.9	19.3	15.4	4.3
Private household workers.....	100.0	15.7	5.7	14.2	19.1	21.3	16.7	7.4
Farm laborers and foremen.....	100.0	8.1	8.1	20.6	24.7	21.6	13.2	3.8
Laborers except farm and mine.....	100.0	14.3	23.5	15.3	17.3	25.5	4.1	.....

Source: U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports* (unpublished data).

