

# From Home to Headline: Women's Pages in Twentieth-Century Illinois Newspapers

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## Newspaper history and characteristics

Newspaper history in America begins as early as America's colonial history. Newspapers printed during America's colonial period published news both "foreign and domestick" and contained news primarily of interest to traders, merchants, and foreign rule. It wasn't until the late 18<sup>th</sup> that newspapers in America were printed for a general reading audience; by the 1820s and 1830s, more newspapers were being established and printing general news.

The advent of new methods of paper production in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century allowed for the cheaper production of newspapers. As a result, there was a boom in newspaper publication, and publishers could print more copies of an issue, leading to higher numbers in circulation. Publishers could also increase the number of pages per issue or publication frequency. This period coincided with the increase in general literacy and newspaper readership. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the number of newspapers in publication increased greatly.

## Content for women readers

It wasn't until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that newspapers started to regularly publish content directed at women readership. Prior to this period, newspaper editorship and readership was primarily represented by men, particularly educated men who could afford a newspaper subscription and who had business and social interests, and—on the production front—those who could financially invest in a printing press.

However, by the turn of the century, content devoted to the interests of women emerged in many newspapers in small or large columns, corners, full pages, or multi-page sections. Some specialized newspapers published entire editions specifically for women readers, though this was less common among newspapers of record that covered general news and public affairs.

Early women's columns were centered around the home and the kitchen, as evident by their titles such as "Woman and the Home," "The Kitchen Cabinet," or simply, "The Home," or "The Kitchen." Gendered language was used perhaps as a way for women readers to easily identify the parts of a newspaper written for their interests. These columns and pages commonly shared

fashion trends and tips, recipes, craft ideas and patterns, and other information evident of domestic life for the early 20<sup>th</sup> century American woman.

This paper studies newspapers freely available in the Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections (IDNC), a digital newspaper access platform maintained by the University of Illinois, and uses the platform as a discovery tool for researching content aimed toward women readers in historical Illinois newspapers. The objective of this paper is to locate and explore themes provided in newspaper content aimed at women readers during the 19th and 20th centuries. (Note: Although most newspapers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century commonly printed recurring “Society” or “Personals” columns for both men and women audiences, these columns are not included in the research of this paper unless they were embedded in a woman’s page or section.)

## Farm and rural newspapers: The “Home Department” and reader participation

Many smalltown and rural newspapers created Home Departments to facilitate the publication of content for an emerging woman audience. These departments relied in part on the participation of women readers to generate newspaper content, and editors often encouraged readers to submit housekeeping tips or meal recipes or give or seek advice on homemaking and child rearing. Letters to and from the editor comprised much of the content published in early Home Departments.

### Farmers Voice

The Home Department of the *Farmers Voice*, a farm publication published in Chicago, Illinois, from 1887 to 1913, curated pages for women readers including the “Evening Lamp,” the “Homemakers Club,” and the merged “Evening Lamp and Homemakers,” which were regularly printed starting in 1899 until the newspaper’s final issue in 1913. The department was run a female editor and pages contained poetry, recipes, health tips, and articles on crafting, child rearing, education, food, farming, and society. The department also served as a space for women readers to submit letters that sought advice, shared tips, and expressed views and ideas on contemporary topics.

The Evening Lamp ran from 1899 until 1912 when it merged with the Homemakers Club to form the Evening Lamp and Homemakers Club. Though the name of the page does not explicitly imply it was printed for women readers— it was a phrase commonly printed in newspapers of the era as a space devoted to the family—language within the articles suggest that it was primarily for homemakers. The page printed longer articles such as editor’s notes on cooking and housekeeping, a serialized “One Housewife’s Diary” (1901), and other longform general interest news. It also printed articles of general interest to women, like poetry, historical facts and tidbits, and notes on subjects such as arts, culture, society, and local interest.

The Homemakers Club published from 1905 to 1912 and was a dedicated space for sharing information or advice in letters to and from the editor. Additionally, the column facilitated writing contests for its readers, and each month, the editor selected topics of discussion to encourage readers to compose and submit letters for publication. The winning essays were printed the following month, and the author would receive a cash prize. Topics varied; for example, readers of the October 1911 page were asked to write about “how to cultivate socialbility in county life,” “a ‘well-balanced meal (including three recipes),” or “woman’s greatest enemy, fear<sup>1</sup>.” These writing contests speak to the ways in which women readers used newspapers to circulate ideas and opinions. Similarly, printing the winning letters created a physical space for circulating women’s thoughts and opinions.

The *Farmers Voice* was a paper for the farmer and his family. Its decision to publish pages for women for nearly the entirety of its run suggests that farm women read the publication for the same reasons their husbands did—to stay up-to-date on information about their work. Rural homemakers and farm wives read the *Farmers Voice* to seek and give advice and home tips, and to create a space to share thoughts and ideas on contemporary topics. Because it was a national rural farm paper, *Farmers Voice* served as a printed community for farmers and their families. Women’s content in farm journals reflects the domestic responsibilities of women and how these responsibilities are tied to their identity and to their communities.

## Prairie Farmer

The *Prairie Farmer* is a farm newspaper published in Chicago, Illinois, and still in publication today (though it has printed under varying titles throughout its history). In 1884, the paper established a Home Department which was later renamed Home and Household Department. The department was run by a series of women editors, including Lena Stevenson Mann, who held the position from 1914-1921 before becoming an Associate Editor.) Very early content printed by the department was dispersed throughout the regular issue. By 1874, a “Household” column was printed, and in 1908, the paper established a recurring “Home and Household” page, which contained a recurring “Training our Children” column and, later, the corner “My Baby Says.” In the 1920s, the page also printed a recurring corner advertisement for trends in fashion. Over time, the page printed recipes and letters from readers and editors about homemaking, domestic work, cooking, fashion, and crafting. It was published until at least 1941.

Compared to smalltown and urban newspapers, farm journals printed much content for women readers, perhaps because agriculture and domestic science have long acknowledged the role women (and children) play in keeping farms running. A notable difference with *Prairie Farmer* is that content for women wasn’t exclusively held within gendered newspaper spaces; instead, much was integrated into the entire issue. (We see occasional traces of this in *Farmers Voice*.) This cannot be said for urban or even smalltown newspapers of the same era.

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<sup>1</sup> *Farmers Voice*, 15 October 1911, p.17 (<https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=FFV19111015.2.12>)

## The Canton Register

The *Canton Weekly Register*, published in Canton, Illinois, from 1845 to 1915, ran a Home Department for one year from 1905 to 1906, which printed the columns “The Home” (renamed “The Home Department” in 1906) and “Housewife’s Corner.” It printed:

*“The REGISTER is eminently a paper for the home. It finds its way to many homes and firesides, and it is read as the family gathers around the evening lamp. Since this is true, it is fitting that it should contain a department devoted to the home and things relating to the home.”<sup>2</sup>*

Although the language does not specify the gender of its intended readers, it is evident that the content was intended primarily for women. “If you have valuable recipes,” it goes on, “suggestions for homemaking and homekeeping—anything in the wide range of housekeepers’ lore that will help someone else—send it in.” Content printed by the paper’s Home Department included poems, household tips, advice, and articles about education, food, religion, and society.

Like departments established in farm publications, the Housewife’s Corner depended entirely on women to submit recipes for publication. Occasionally women readers submitted articles or poems for “The Home;” these were typically attributed by the author’s initials. The department also reprinted relevant articles from larger newspapers.

Canton was a small town in Illinois that relied on agriculture and industry, and its Home Department reflects those of farm publications. However, unlike the farm newspapers, the department was not tied to a single woman editor but instead was seemingly run by the editor of the paper, as is the nature of a smalltown paper with a small staff. Unlike *Farmers Voice* and *Prairie Farmer*, the department was short-lived, perhaps due to limited staff and available content. However, what remains the same is that in almost all Home Departments, women readers are seen as *participants* and are integral to the publication of newspaper content for women.

## The East St. Louis Daily Journal and the Urban Woman

Despite socio-economic differences, newspaper content for women in urban areas likewise reflected the social hierarchies and cultural expectations placed upon women. The *East St. Louis Daily Journal*’s society pages offer a glimpse into the lives of white middle and upper-class women in St. Louis’s urban metropolis at the turn of the century. First appearing in the early years of the twentieth century, the society section reflected life in a bustling urban area for affluent white women.

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<sup>2</sup> Canton Weekly Register, 23 February 1905, p.6 (<https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=CWE19050223-01.1.6>)

The *East St. Louis Daily Journal* was founded by James W. Kirk in 1889. Initially published as a weekly newspaper titled the *East St. Louis Journal*, in its second year of publication, the paper switched to printing daily and was retitled the *East St. Louis Daily Journal*. The paper had a wide circulation in the St. Louis metropolitan area, which had become an economic powerhouse during the Gilded Age. Its connections to both river and rail transportation positioned itself well to attract factories, and factory workers, making St. Louis the fourth largest city in the United States by the late nineteenth century, behind New York City, Philadelphia, and Chicago.

Across the Mississippi River in Illinois, East St. Louis was also booming. As the home of steel manufacturing in the metropolitan area, East St. Louis attracted factories and their workers, quickly establishing itself as a desirable place to live and work. East St. Louis became a target destination for Black Americans leaving the South in the first Great Migration in 1917, and the demographics of the town shifted throughout the twentieth century. By the early twentieth century, it was the second busiest railroad hub in the country, behind Chicago. Serving the St. Louis metropolitan area as well as surrounding towns in Illinois and Missouri, the *East St. Louis Daily Journal* provided daily information to a growing readership in the booming manufacturing town.

## Special Sunday Magazine

*The Daily Journal* did not have an explicitly gendered section in their paper until January 1906, when they introduced a full-page women's section in the Sunday edition of the paper. Focusing primarily on fashion and housekeeping, the section's name underwent changes, with names such as "In the Feminine World," "For Women's Wear," "Of Interest to Women," "A Page for Milady," and "Fashion Magazine Section" rotating frequently. The page primarily featured illustrations and photographs of the latest styles. While the section initially focused on fashion, the coverage expanded over time to include home furnishings and housekeeping tips.

The treatment of fashion in the section provides valuable information about its readership. In reporting on new silhouettes, it assumes a certain level of wealth to keep up with the trend cycles of the day. There is little information on how to retrim out-of-date styles. With occasional tips for the home dressmaker, the advice also assumes that the reader has enough disposable income to not only purchase on-trend garments, but to have them made. This highlights women's increased purchasing power at this point, as well as the St. Louis metropolitan area's heightened wealth due to manufacturing success. However, at the same time, the inclusion of housekeeping tips implies a certain level of involvement in the maintenance of the household, duties for which an upper-class woman with servants may not hold responsibility. This may indicate the status of the recently wealthy in a booming industry town, as well as the development of a middle-class household.

As the decade progressed, the offerings in the women's section continued expanding to include short-form literature and advice pieces. With no designated editor named for the advice column, each piece was distinct with no syndication nor connection to prior issues, a contrast to the farm publications that identified their female editors. Topics varied and were fairly liberal in their scope, with many targeting married mothers. However, there were also articles tailored to the lifestyles of single and working women, recognizing a changing world in which more women were outside the home. Instead of condemning the choice to pursue an education or a career, the advice pieces embraced women in different circumstances. While not explicitly feminist, the *Daily Journal's* liberal approach to shifting gender roles is certainly notable.

## Immersion into Society: Personal-Society-Clubs

During the first years of the 1910s, the coverage in the women's section shifted more towards housekeeping. The section also saw a return to a more standard format, with the primary column titled "Women and the Home." Cooking was a major focus, including how to best utilize ingredients efficiently along with recipes. The society section returned to the Sunday edition in 1918, with expanded coverage and a different name, titled "Personal-Society-Clubs." While it was not explicitly designated for women, the section grew to an entire page, with women's interest pieces on the same page as the society section. A notable addition to the page came in the form of a regular column titled "With the Women of Today," first appearing in 1919. The column profiled women in different careers, detailing the journeys to reach their current position. Examples include Clara Beranger, an early screenwriter, and Bessie T. Conkwright, a newspaper reporter working on stories internationally. In addition to attention on women in the workforce, the paper also began highlighting more stories on women's suffrage in other countries, shortly after the 19th Amendment was ratified in the United States.

The society section functionally became the catch-all page for women's issues, local social gatherings, and housekeeping advice. It changed names a few times throughout the late 1910s and early 1920s, with titles such as "Out in Society" and "Society Events". By 1923, the *Daily Journal* changed its publication style again, opting to use a supplement format for special sections in the Sunday edition of the paper. The society page became a multi-page supplementary section, and with increased page space, local clubs and organizations took advantage. While advice columns from its predecessors remained, most of the section consisted of announcements from local organizations. Beyond purchasing power, these also demonstrate another benefit of increased wealth and independence: the emergence of leisure time. Notably, this marks a shift to a less gendered society section.

While the women's section and subsequent iterations of the society section offer insights into the daily lives of women in the St. Louis area at the turn of the century, the readership of the paper only caters to a limited readership. Despite being published in a major manufacturing town, the women's section caters specifically to wealthy women with disposable income to spend on the latest fashions and the leisure time to attend societal events and to attend club meetings. Lower-

class women, including factory workers and wives of laborers, a large subset of the population in East St. Louis at the time, are not represented. For most, the section represented an aspirational vision of womanhood but did not reflect their lived realities. Similarly, the *Daily Journal* remained exclusively white, despite rapidly changing racial demographics in St. Louis in the late 1910s and early 1920s. This is especially evident in the women's section, where whiteness and respectability are enforced through implicit social cues.

The development of women and society sections in the *Daily Journal* illustrate the changing landscape of St. Louis society for white women at the turn of the century. They demonstrate the subset of the population that benefitted from a booming manufacturing industry, as well as the beginnings of a middle-class society in an urban area. The sections also record women's shift towards the workforce due to World War I and early feminist movements.

## Specialized newspapers: women's editions

One distinctive voice for women was provided by *Zgoda : Wydania dla niewiast* ("Harmony: Women's edition"), a women's weekly edition that stemmed from *Zgoda* ("Harmony"). First published in 1881, *Zgoda* appeared as a weekly newspaper for the Polish community in the Chicago metropolitan area. It operated under the aegis of Związek Narodowo Polski (ZNP, "Polish National Alliance"). In contrast to many other immigrant community newspapers, many of which had clerical, political, or labor allegiances, the ZNP encouraged social unity among Polish immigrants. *Zgoda* initially functioned as a predominantly political and organizational newspaper. Its coverage emphasized Polish nationalism, political developments in Europe and the United States, the activities of the ZNP, and the responsibilities of Polish immigrants to their homeland. By the turn of the twentieth century, however, the newspaper began to recognize women as an essential audience and political constituency within the Polish American community. As part of this mission, *Zgoda* began publishing a special weekly edition in 1900 titled *Zgoda: Wydania dla niewiast*, with the intent to foster solidarity among women in the immigrant Polish community throughout the Chicagoland area. In its inaugural issue, the editor argued that a society without women as active participants would be short-lived and weak, thereby framing women's participation as essential to the community's survival and cohesion.

The development of a women's edition began in September 1900.<sup>3</sup> In volume 19, issue 37, of *Zgoda*, an article introduced the possibility of publishing a separate edition for women, followed by a women's version of issue 38.<sup>4</sup> The editors argued that although men are responsible for

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<sup>3</sup> N.B.: As the authors have no knowledge of Polish language, work was done in 2016 to review the entire contents of *Zgoda* (including men's and women's editions) by a native Polish speaker and University of Illinois student, Patricia Duch. She prepared a summary of relevant issues and compiled notes for the creation of a title essay to better inform us of the contents of Polish-language newspapers.

<sup>4</sup> *Zgoda* = Unity (1881–1901) 19, no. 37 (September 13, 1900), <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=ZGO19000913>

earing wages, women were essential for raising children and transmitting knowledge of Poland, Polish culture, and national aspirations to the next generation. The edition was therefore not a marginal supplement, but rather a means of the ZNP to ensure that women's perspectives and contributions were incorporated into communal life and recognized as critical for future ethnic identity and cohesion. The paper invited Polish women, with no mention of class, to submit their opinions, ideas, and writings so that they could have a voice in shaping the Polish immigrant community.

The contents of the women's edition are substantially different from those of the men's edition. While the men's newspaper devoted considerable attention from its inception to political developments, business and financial reports, labor issues, and public affairs, the women's editions were generally, and initially, less overtly political and more varied in subject matter. The women's edition included lengthy articles on child rearing, medicine, health, cooking, finances, and family relationships. As an example, an article published on October 31, 1907, extolled the virtues of frugality and cautioned against excess in spending.<sup>5</sup>

However, the women's editions were by no means politically disengaged. The political content was, nonetheless, distinct from the reporting seen in the men's edition, with more focus instead given to social reform, cultural preservation, community mobilization, and even prostitution and the sex trade. One example of this domestic engagement is found throughout issues from 1906, in which the paper repeatedly encouraged women to establish organizations that would raise funds for impoverished Poles in eastern Europe. On April 12, 1906, the paper urged women to form their own subcommittees within the ZNP to address issues affecting women, Polish culture, children, and the preservation of Polish identity within the community.<sup>6</sup> By February 25, 1909, the newspaper was then announcing the selection of representatives for a Polish women's committee formed along these lines.<sup>7</sup> Intriguingly, these appeals continued to argue for the position of women as organizers rather than merely supporters of mass movements. The April 8, 1909, issue included an article titled "An Overview of the Women's Movement."<sup>8</sup> Although indeed the newspaper continued to emphasize women's responsibilities within the family as their core *raison d'être*, many articles published in the late aughts encouraged women to participate in organized public life and view their labor (in all of its incarnations) as essential to the strength and future of the ZNP and the Polish-American community.

The women's edition also connected local immigrant life to international discussions of women's rights and political reforms. The April 21 and April 28, 1904, issues explicitly addressed the

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<sup>5</sup> Zgoda : Wydania dla niewiast [Women's ed.], Volume 26, Number 44, 31 October 1907: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=ZGN19071031>

<sup>6</sup> Zgoda : Wydania dla niewiast [Women's ed.], Volume 25, Number 15, 12 April 1906 : <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=ZGN19060412>

<sup>7</sup> Zgoda : Wydania dla niewiast [Women's ed.], Volume 28, Number 8, 25 February 1909: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=ZGN19090225>

<sup>8</sup> Zgoda : Wydania dla niewiast [Women's ed.], Volume 28, Number 14, 8 April 1909: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=ZGN19090408>

importance of writing for women and argued that women had a considerable influence on the moral development of society.<sup>9</sup> The February 18, 1904, issue recounted a meeting with scientist Marie Skłodowska-Curie, presenting her achievements as an example of intellectual accomplishment.<sup>10</sup> The April 20, 1905, the issue featured Ellen Key, an educational reformer and suffragist, describing her as a “woman with ideas” and<sup>11</sup> many issues describe women’s creative work, arguing that women’s creative talents should not be restricted. These discussions broadened the scope of women’s issues beyond the domestic sphere and connected readers to issues surrounding education, science, artistic expression, and social reform.

Not hesitating to raise issues of dire, albeit often controversial, concern; the newspaper also addressed issues directly related to women’s welfare. The October 30, 1902, issue specifically wanted against excessive alcohol consumption and discussed its effects on children and families.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps even more indecorous to some is the direct mention of the “white slave trade” in the December 23, 1909, issue, candidly describing the exploitation of immigrant women.<sup>13</sup> Articles on health, child development, and domestic safety appeared alongside frank discussions on women’s safety, education, and organizational capability. This unique mix of practical advice along with prevalent social commentary demonstrates that for this paper the household and role of women were a critical site of social and public concern, rather than a segregated sphere from politics and societal change.

As was common for many Polish publications of the era and region, nationalism remained a central part of the newspaper’s overall tone and orientation. The women’s edition frequently<sup>14</sup> While most of the biographic vignettes are indeed of men, the May 1, 1904, issue honored the recently deceased Polish author.<sup>15</sup> Through highlighting such figures, the paper wanted to impart to its readers that their identity in the community allows them to be a means of preserving collective memory and transmitting Polish history to the next generations.

During its later existence, *Zgoda : Wydania dla niewiast* expanded into a broader, more family-oriented publication. The December 20, 1910, issue included a children’s supplement titled

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<sup>9</sup> Zgoda : Wydania dla niewiast [Women's ed.], Volume 23, Number 16, 21 April 1904: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=ZGN19040421> ; Zgoda : Wydania dla niewiast [Women's ed.], Volume 23, Number 17, 28 April 1904: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=ZGN19040428>

<sup>10</sup> Zgoda : Wydania dla niewiast [Women's ed.], Volume 23, Number 7, 18 February 1904: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=ZGN19040218>

<sup>11</sup> Zgoda : Wydania dla niewiast [Women's ed.], Volume 24, Number 16, 20 April 1905: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=ZGN19050420&e=-----190-cn-20-ZGN-81-byDA-txt-txIN-pieni%C4%85dze----1907----->

<sup>12</sup> Zgoda : Wydania dla niewiast [Women's ed.], Volume 21, Number 44, 30 October 1902: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=ZGN19021030>

<sup>13</sup> Zgoda : Wydania dla niewiast [Women's ed.], Volume 28, Number 51, 23 December 1909: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=ZGN19091223>

<sup>14</sup> Zgoda : Wydania dla niewiast [Women's ed.], Volume 23, Number 43, 27 October 1904: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=ZGN19041027>

<sup>15</sup> Zgoda : Wydania dla niewiast [Women's ed.], Volume 29, Number 4, 20 November 1910: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=ZGN19101120>

*Gazetka dla Dzieci* (“Children’s Newspaper”).<sup>16</sup> By February 20, 1911, the women’s edition moved beyond the urban setting and included a domestic management section titled “House and Farm.”<sup>17</sup> Far from being a demotion to pure domesticity, the paper continued to include articles regarding women’s essential role in the Polish community. These additions reveal the editor’s efforts to address the household as a focus of cultural importance. Women were indeed expected to manage domestic life, but they were also given resources aimed at making them informed, eager participants in the educational and social fabric of the Polish diaspora.

Despite ending publication in 1913, the women’s edition continued until its last issue to raise the issue of the centrality of women within the ZNP. Issues throughout 1913 promoted ZNP women’s rallies and stressed the ZNP’s ability to raise money to establish a Polish-language school in the United States. Issues constantly reminded women to remain active within the ZNP and to view their labor, be it performed in the household, workplace, charity, or women’s committees, as essential to the future of the Polish nation.

Overall, the publication of the women’s edition of *Zgoda* demonstrates how immigrant newspapers used gendered publications to expand community participation while reinforcing ethnic and cultural identity. In contrast to many other papers featured on IDNC, *Zgoda : Wydania dla niewiast* offers a view into a community that needed to not only contend with gender issues but also issues of ethnicity and belonging in their new communities. From its inception in September 1900 through 1913, this edition created a gendered and increasingly expansive and expressive forum in which Polish immigrant women could encounter literature, history, political commentary, social reform movements, labor issues, health information, and Polish community organizational news. Although the edition undoubtedly continued to emphasize motherhood and domestic management, it also presented women as workers, writers, reformers, intellectuals, and vital to the cultural life of the community.

## Conclusion

Women’s domestic roles reflect the content publishing in initial women’s columns, corners, and pages found in American newspapers at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The creation of Home Departments and newspaper content geared toward woman readers initially acknowledges the housewife of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Content surrounding homemaking, childrearing, and other components of domesticity gave women who were primarily in the home an opportunity to connect with other homemakers in their communities.

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<sup>16</sup> *Zgoda : Wydania dla niewiast* [Women's ed.], Volume 29, Number 5, 20 December 1910: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=ZGN19101220>

<sup>17</sup> *Zgoda : Wydania dla niewiast* [Women's ed.], Volume 30, Number 2, 20 February 1911: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=ZGN19110220>

The ideal of the American housewife persisted into the mid-20th century, and gendered divisions in newspaper content remained relatively common, especially in rural newspapers. Examples of this include the "Housewife's Corner," published in the *Tuscola Review* during the early 1940s, along with the "Woman's Page," featured in the *St. Joseph Record* through the 1960s. (However, by the 1960s, most rural and smalltown newspapers began incorporating what was traditionally seen as "women's news" into their general coverage.) This shift coincided with the growing visibility of women's rights activism and broader challenges to traditional gender roles. As political winds shifted and society allowed women's interests to expand beyond the domestic sphere and encompass current events, local news, community politics, along with national social and political causes, women increasingly engaged with newspapers as comprehensive sources of information and looked beyond the pages they were often historically relegated.

Urban newspapers began integrating women's content into full issues earlier than smalltown publications, beginning as early as the 1920s. For example, the *East St. Louis Daily Journal* printed disembodied and ungendered columns for women's readers, though they still maintained their established "Woman and the Home" and Sunday edition women's page. This paper also printed early notions of women as society members, economic consumers, and catered to a middle-class audience less focused on cooking and home keeping, and more focused on meeting trends in fashion and the home. *Zgoda : Wydania dla niewiast* used women's journalism to connect household labor with public activism and cultural stewardship, making Polish immigrant women vital participants in community life.

Both rural and urban newspapers allow researchers to understand the information behaviors of women reading newspapers at the turn of the century and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These women were interested in newspapers for information sharing, community building, and keeping up with modernity. With each passing decade, researchers can understand the shifting landscapes of women's domestic and social spheres and their interests in the world around them. We can also reflect on the integration of women into working members of society interested in politics and current events.

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