

DOTHA STONE PINNEO: HAVE LECTURE WILL TRAVEL

BY

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A box of material relating to our first librarian, Dotha Stone Pinneo, constitutes one of the treasures of the Norwalk History Room. Among a variety of letters, postcards, photographs, receipts, and other documents one in particular attracts attention: a small six-page pamphlet measuring 3¼ by 5¼ inches printed on cream colored paper by the Brown Press in 1900. The cover boldly states: “*Dotha Stone Pinneo, Story-Teller and Lecturer Norwalk, Connecticut, Is prepared to make engagements to give the following Stories and Lectures.*”¹ Dotha, in addition to her duties as librarian, also pursued a career as a public presenter. In the days before television, radio, internet, YouTube and Zoom, people had to create their own entertainment or attend live entertainment such as the theater, opera, ballet, concerts, circus, or the public lecture. In a pamphlet, just the right size to place in a person’s hand, Dotha advertised what she had to offer organizations seeking a speaker thus making the case for retaining her as a presenter.

Dotha includes titles for stories and lectures constituting her offerings. She lists her charges under “TERMS TO WOMEN’S CLUBS.”² The less she has to travel, the less she charges: “\$10.00 and expenses within fifty miles of Norwalk.”³ After that her fee rose to \$15.00 and presumably her travel expenses also increased. Dotha definitely traveled as a presenter: Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Colorado. With a national reputation aimed at inspiring confidence in organizations seeking presenters so did a roster of notables who upon request could “testify to her ability as a speaker”⁴ as well as press coverage from the *New York Herald*, *New York Sun*, *New Haven Register*, and *Bridgeport*

Standard amongst others. Everything possible was included in this pamphlet to send the message that for Miss Pinneo, it was definitely a case of have lecture will travel!

¹ *Dotha Stone Pinneo, Story-Teller and Lecturer.* (The Brown Press, 1900): cover.

² *Dotha Stone Pinneo, Story-Teller and Lecturer.* (The Brown Press, 1900): 2.

³ *Dotha Stone Pinneo, Story-Teller and Lecturer.* (The Brown Press, 1900): 2.

⁴ *Dotha Stone Pinneo, Story-Teller and Lecturer.* (The Brown Press, 1900): 4.