

Sumida: Collected Works of Ellen H. Swallow Richards

This is a collection of writings by the American chemist and home economist, Ellen Henrietta Swallow Richards. From the Preface by Kazuko Sumida: Ellen H. Swallow Richards (1842–1911) was the first woman graduate and staff member at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and the first woman professional chemist in the U.S. She was known mainly as a founder of the American home economics movement and, to a lesser extent, as the mother of American public health. Her contribution included not only the establishment of the standards for water analysis, but also the provision of school lunches, food and environmental education, and the consumer movement. Through such activities, Richards showed people a new direction to follow for modernized home and urban life. She is deserving of special attention as a woman who was active both academically and socially from the late 19th century to the early 20th century when the foundation of modern society in the U.S. was laid. This collection provides primary sources which will enable the reader to have a proper understanding of the thoughts of Richards who advocated a science of environment as early as the 19th century. She considered environment to be a total whole, and was active in pursuit of what science, human possibility or development should be. For her, environmental education was strongly linked to social and ethical issues, and the key to the solution for these was the very human activities in daily life affecting their environment. Richards, whose cooperative belief that 'man is a part of organic nature, subject to laws of development and growth' (Euthenics) was a basis of daily life, cannot be called merely a material feminist—which a certain scholar classified her as). What she had in mind means 'the man in the community environment'. These materials are essential for interdisciplinary research that includes multiple fields such as the history of science, of education, of ideas, social history of the U.S., sociology, and feminism as well as home economics and public health. The thoughts and lifelong activities of Richards will show us a direction at which we ought to aim in current everyday life.

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