



Dearest Ones At Home: Clara Taylor's Letters from Russia, 1917-1919

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On November 5, 1917, Taylorville, Illinois native Clara Taylor stepped off a Trans-Siberian Railway train into a city then called Petrograd, Russia. Employed by the YWCA as an industrial expert, Clara had been sent to Russia to help establish Associations in Petrograd (now St. Petersburg) and Moscow. Her main charge while in Russia was to survey and report on factory conditions, but Clara only spent a fraction of her stay in Russia visiting factories; due to the vagaries of the political, social, and economic revolution—the upheaval of an entire culture—Clara and her colleagues spent most of their first year in Russia teaching English, home economics, book keeping, literature, and basketball, and sponsoring lectures, dances and sing-alongs for Russian working women.

Clara's letters, collected in this book, tell of both the mundane and the extraordinary: what the YW staff ate for dinner; how the Bolshevik suppression of free speech impacted Americans' ability to communicate with those at home; shootings in the streets; bartering for pounds of sugar; conversing with nobility, with intellectuals, and with workers; attending the opera; and sight-seeing at monasteries. Together, Clara's letters to her family—her “dearest ones at home”—tell a compelling story of one American woman's experiences in Revolutionary Russia.

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