Kindergarten pioneers
A web side about kindergarten history

The aim of the research project is to investigate, document and disseminate personal life stories from kindergarten professional interest.

http://prosjekt.hib.no/barnehagepionerene/

Anna Ida Blom Hermansen: Kindergarten teacher and leader of one of Norway’s first factory company kindergartens during the Second World War

Anna Ida Blom Hermansen was born in Drammen in 1916. After completing secondary school in Norway, she went abroad to study languages. Following a year in Denmark, she moved on to study in Germany and finally at the Alliance Francaise in Paris.

On her return to Norway, Anna worked in a kindergarten in Oslo, and was inspired by the leader’s use of music with the children. She decided to become a kindergarten teacher and took up her studies in Oslo, a process that was complicated due to the war. On completing the program, she worked for several years for various companies as the leader of their kindergartens.

Following her marriage, Anna moved to Skien started and worked in a number of kindergartens. She later began to work as a volunteer at the local Polio institution, teaching children who had various handicaps. In the 1960s, this idealism led her, with a number of other volunteers, to establish a kindergarten for children with cerebral palsy. These children needed not only kindergarten facilities, but also the services of physiotherapists and speech therapists. In rented premises, they were soon offering them broader educational opportunities.

In addition to the kindergarten, Anna was employed at Bøler School for the Disabled, teaching children who were, to use the term of that time, “mentally handicapped”. Since her training was as a kindergarten teacher, she decided to return to college as a mature student and obtain a teaching certificate. While in Oslo studying, she participated in a project led by Professor Magne Nyborg, who introduced her to an approach to learning that influenced her profoundly. Even after she returned to work at Bøler, the professor continued to draw upon her experience and she worked actively with him in this field.
Film summary:

The Eidvoll factory company kindergartens (1942-43)
The idea of kindergartens began to catch on in areas outside the cities in places such as Eidsvoll where there were large factories. The factories employed a large number of workers and the kindergartens were intended for their children.

The owners’ wives concern with the workers’ children and wives
Many of the large landowners also established factories and it became fashionable to provide kindergarten facilities. These women started them for the sake of both the children and their mothers, who they felt needed some free time. They were not trained in pedagogy themselves but they had the money to hire teachers like herself. It was not cheap to start a kindergarten what with the cost of equipment and salaries. In fact, the owners’ wives began to compete to set up the best kindergarten, which was good because it meant that the teachers were provided with everything they needed. These women were very concerned about the welfare of the workers.

The content of the kindergarten program
The teachers at the centres always had a young girl to assist them. The groups were usually around 20 children and they were at the centre 4 hours a day. The focus was on behavior and on expanding the children’s range of experiences through play and outdoor activities. The children often lacked social skills and needed to learn how to behave with others.

New experience for the mothers
Most of the mothers stayed at home while their husbands went out to work. They were pleased with the kindergartens because it allowed them some free time and the children were learning a great deal. These children were not in need – their mothers were both kind and competent. But children need to learn to think of others, to share. As “I would like to have this doll, no, but am playing with it now, you can have it afterwards. You cannot take it from me, then I will start to cry."