AFTER GRADUATING FROM RADCLIFFE IN 1900, Lucy Sprague (1878-1967) came to Berkeley in 1903 at the behest of President Wheeler to help advise women students. Three years later she was appointed the first dean of women. She also lectured in the Department of English. In her desire to promote women’s educational and career opportunities Sprague developed a “curriculum of experience,” which became a hallmark of the pioneering educational institution she founded twenty-five years later, the Bank Street College of Education in New York City. Shortly after her appointment as dean, women students claimed that “the best thing that ever happened to the University was the creation of the office of Dean of Women, and that the best thing that ever happened to the office of Dean of Women was the appointment of Miss Sprague to fill it.” She was awarded an honorary doctorate in 1958 at the inaugural ceremonies for President Clark Kerr, who hailed her as “one of the greatest professors of half a century ago.”

She described the origin of what became an annual spring pageant or masque known as the Partheneia, an original presentation by the women students at Berkeley. After a competition for a student-written script in the fall, the first performance was April 6, 1912 and continued each year until 1931—when students no longer were interested in it. Originally performed under the oaks bordering the eucalyptus grove near the west end of the campus, later performances were given in Faculty Glade, where spectators could be more comfortable.\footnote{1} The following excerpt is from Lucy Sprague Mitchell’s book, Two Lives, published in 1953, which includes her recollections of her years in Berkeley from 1903 to 1912.\footnote{2}

As a group, [women] were tolerated in a man’s college. I wanted them to create something that was peculiarly their own, something that would give them standing in their own eyes and in the eyes of the community. Some of the girls were writing on their own and they brought me their poetry. One day at the end of my reading [poetry to the women students who dropped in at her home on Wednesdays], I suddenly suggested that the women students write and put on some kind of dramatic performance on the campus. My remark was like a match put under dry evergreen boughs which turned into a sizzling roaring flame shooting sparks into the air: How could it be done? What kind of thing should they write? Who would choose from the manuscripts? Questions. Excitement. Suggestions. And finally a plan.
Janet Ruyle • DEAN LUCY SPRAGUE, THE PARTHENEIA, AND THE ARTS

Costume designs for *The Partheneia*, the first Partheneia, performed April 6, 1912. *University Archives.*