Experiments in Social Salvation: The Settlement Movement in Chicago, 1890-1910

Janet Reed
Western Kentucky University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses
Part of the United States History Commons

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses/697
EXPERIMENTS IN SOCIAL SALVATION: THE SETTLEMENT MOVEMENT IN CHICAGO, 1890-1910

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of History
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Janet Reed

May 2000
EXPERIMENTS IN SOCIAL SALVATION:  
THE SETTLEMENT MOVEMENT  
IN CHICAGO,  
1890-1910

Date Recommended: 12/04/39

Director of Thesis

Kathleen Abbott

Charles Johnson

Dean, Graduate Studies and Research  5/8/00
EXPERIMENTS IN SOCIAL SALVATION:  
THE SETTLEMENT MOVEMENT  
IN CHICAGO, 1890-1910

Janet Reed  
May 2000  
103 pages

Directed by: Patricia Minter, Charles Bussey, and Kathryn Abbott

Department of History  
Western Kentucky University

In this study, the settlement movement in Chicago is presented as a crucible for the development of Progressive reform. The subjective and objective necessities for social settlements are described through the lives of men and women central to the movement. Reformers such as Jane Addams, Graham Taylor, and Mary McDowell fused their personal motives to their expanding assumptions regarding public welfare in their pursuit of social salvation. The settlement community advanced a methodology of experimentation and flexibility, which was instrumental to the transformation of nineteenth century ideas of charity into the new twentieth century science of social work. The processes of reform were greatly influenced by the evolving concepts of class, gender, and race. The feminine nature of settlement work and the opportunities afforded to generations of college-educated women were integral to the impact the settlement community had on Progressive reform in general and to the role settlement workers played in affecting public opinion. Primary sources include Jane Addams’ correspondence, Twenty Years at Hull-House, and issues of the periodical The Commons. The historiography of the Progressive Era is also considered, and the effects of class, gender, and race upon its development throughout the twentieth century.
Acknowledgements

The range of primary sources was constricted by time and geography. Due to the assistance of the Inter-Library Loan Department of Western Kentucky University, I was able to look at microfilmed copies of correspondence lodged within archives far from my home. Having access to *The Commons* on microfilm from the archives of the New York State Library was especially beneficial. The librarians in the Special Collections Department at the University of Illinois at Chicago, which houses the Jane Addams Memorial Collection, were also helpful. In the main, however, my appreciation of the traditions and controversies of Progressive Era history was gained from a wide reading of secondary sources. The journey has just begun, and it is hoped this master’s thesis will give positive sign of its eventual, though perhaps distant, end.
Introduction

This is a study of the settlement community in Chicago during the years 1890 to 1910. Many of the men and women who provided the locomotion for reform by starting settlement houses, by instigating investigations into living and working conditions, by organizing conferences and publishing books and articles on social issues, had a connection to the Chicago settlement community—whether directly or by association. Jane Addams was the contemporary figurehead for Progressive reform; the journal Chicago Commons grew into a dominant medium for the reform movement in America. The plight of the working classes was brought to public attention in the fight for protective legislation suggested, supported, and penned by men and women who had passed through Chicago, visited Hull-House, or worked closely with someone who had been educated in the Chicago settlement community. By outlining the beginnings of that community and discussing its development of purpose and method I hope to show Progressive reform in microcosm.

Before venturing into an investigation of primary source material, the research for this project began with a reading of some of the more important historiography on the Progressive Era. The most obvious starting point was Richard Hofstadter’s The Age of Reform, followed by Allen F. Davis’ Spearheads for Reform and American Heroine. These two historians provided valuable reference points for the body of secondary source material, and were essential in that historians indicated knowledge of one or the other’s work. Chapter One is broadened from its initial construct as a simple intellectual study.
by the influence of class and gender – upon the historians as well as the reformers. Initially the emphasis of this study was upon the motives and perspectives of the men and women of the settlement community, but a consideration of issues of class and gender proved dominant throughout the discussion. In answering the question, “What does this microcosm of reform in Chicago reveal about class, gender, and progressivism,” I came to realize that during the Progressive Era – and also in the historiography produced on the period – those issues were so interconnected as to be convergent.

Jane Addams is the focal point of Chapter Two, which follows her path toward the decision to establish a settlement house. Addams’ struggle for a vocation, for work for which she was inherently suited and by which she could find personal fulfillment, was made universal in her autobiography. She put her journey before the American public in hopes that others would recognize themselves and realize their salvation in settlement work, as she had done.

Chapter Three is a discussion of the settlement as a community with a particularly feminine perspective, where class met gender head on. College-educated middle- and upper-middle class women separated themselves from the feminine sphere of influence and entered into the male sphere of public life. They were in a sense transformed into a super-class or a neo-gender. There had been nothing like them in American history and they were as a group singular, arising out of the coincidence of time and opportunity.

Chapter Four places the Chicago settlement community within the perspective of Progressive reform, outlining the development of the settlement method there. The process from charity to civic reform to national legislation is summed up in the Conclusion. The settlement goal was to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor,
between the upper and lower classes, between those who worked by the sweat of their brow and those who benefited from it. The subjective necessity of social settlements, it was generally agreed, was complemented by the objective necessity of the urban masses in particular and of American society in general.

The settlement community, by making their middle-class values and ideals dominant within their neighborhoods, helped to Americanize the immigrant population, to nullify to a large extent ethnic and class distinctions they felt disruptive to social stability. Class reciprocity as understood and articulated by the settlement community in Chicago was an equalizing factor, a facilitator of democracy's promise.
# Table of Contents

Abstract iii

Acknowledgements iv

Introduction v

Chapter One
*Perspectives on Progressivism* 1
Notes 17

Chapter Two
*Jane Addams and the Road to Hull-House* 19
Notes 33

Chapter Three
*The Settlement as Community* 35
Notes 54

Chapter Four
*The Settlement Method* 59
Notes 77

Conclusion
*The Objective Necessity* 80
Notes 86

Bibliographic Essay 88
Chapter One

Perspectives on Progressivism

The Progressive Era in American history is defined as a period of political, economic, and social reforms lasting from 1890 through the end of the second Wilson administration in 1920. Historiography on the Progressive Era developed along generational lines, as men and women began to write its history while they still lived it, reflexively interpreting events according to their own and others' experiences and marveling at the changes they had wrought. Thus their writing was largely subjective, having much to do with the authors' ages and positions with respect to the reform movements. Reformers who kept their hand in the mix were more optimistic about its gains than those who had lost influence and authority and tended to be less sanguine. For example, in 1930 Graham Taylor published *Pioneering on Social Frontiers*, an account of his involvement with the settlement movement in Chicago, in which he discussed such diverse issues and incidents as the Social Gospel, organized labor, municipal politics, and the education and training of social workers. Taylor's memoir reflected the less professional and more generalized approach to reform that existed in the pioneer stage of Progressivism. He showed a preference for the missionary call and moral vision that was so much a part of the reform impulse of the nineteenth century, in contrast to the emphasis on scientific method and academic validation predominant among social workers in the first decades of the twentieth.¹
In marked contrast to Taylor was Charles Austin Beard, a progressive historian who in 1930 edited *A Century of Progress*, a collection of essays by experts on the developments occurring within their fields of endeavor over the past one hundred years. Beard authored the first chapter, titled “The Idea of Progress,” in which he made it clear that his concept of the activities of the Progressive Era had no real connection to any religious motivation or moralistic understanding of the reform impulse, such as Taylor’s. Beard defined progress as “a theory that the lot of mankind on this earth can be continually improved by the attainment of exact knowledge and the subjugation of the material world to the requirements of human welfare.” The inevitability of advancement over time gave progress “its cosmic nature,” and the particular methodology – “science and technology” – gave progress its rationality. To an academic like Beard, progress could not be defeated by any system of politics, economy, or social conflict, but marched ever onward, whether at the heart of society or at the periphery of civilization.²

In the aftermath of World War II, historians looked back upon the Progressive Era, out of whose traditions many of them were educated, and, in the words of Richard Hofstadter, tried to answer “the need for a new analysis from the perspective of our own time.”³ As a consensus scholar, Hofstadter differed from the earlier progressive historians, who stressed the effects of conflict and economic interest as forces in American history, by his emphasis upon the connective tissue of the American body politic - the “‘common climate of American opinion,’ a ‘general framework of shared ideas . . . and a general acceptance of industrial capitalism.’”⁴ Both progressive and consensus historians, however, accepted the tenet that history is propelled forward, developing toward the better and the greater.
Hofstadter’s *The Age of Reform*, published in 1955, is generally considered the starting point for study of the Progressive Era. Historians often begin with Hofstadter, noting their approval or rejection of his thesis in part or as a whole, before presenting their own interpretation. Although criticized for his model of status politics and his attempt to make cohesive what was in fact chaotic, Hofstadter is recognized for bringing an interdisciplinary methodology and complex interpretation to the study of history. He considered the ideology of reform and the motive forces that shaped the reformers and dictated their responses to the world around them. Hofstadter disdained the view of reformers as altruistic souls dedicated to the salvation of the brotherhood of man. His “sense of guilt” thesis suggested that reformers were merely looking to salve their consciences for the successes of the American dream and the concurrent atrocities of the Industrial Revolution. On the other hand, Hofstadter asserted that much of the reform impulse was a defensive reaction to “social and psychological anxieties that stemmed from their loss of ‘rank in society.’” The reformers’ embrace of American mythology – such as the agrarian and frontier myths – was an attachment to “an imagined past” they longed to restore. Thus there was a “tension between perception and reality” – between what reformers said they were doing and what they were doing in fact.5

Two studies of the Progressive Era published in 1958 arrive at some of the same conclusions as Hofstadter’s thesis. George Mowry found the roots of the reform movements in the disillusionment of the middle class, which he understood to be “generated in part from both a fear of the loss of group status and a confidence in man’s ability to order the future.” Hofstadter and Mowry understood the middle class in America to be the mainstream, or at least “the greater part of society.” However, where
Hofstadter saw class conflict, Mowry saw class absorption, an effort of the middle class to adapt American society to its own value system and thereby remove class distinctions altogether. William Leuchtenburg described the conflict in terms of the urbanization of America – immigration, industrialization, and the corruption of morals. "The city threatened to disrupt class stability . . . The city imperiled the hierarchy of social status . . . The city represented everything . . . which prewar America most feared." The reformers then were both reactionary and conservative. Rather than ushering in a new era of peace and security for the common man, reformers were simply working to ensure for themselves positions of stability and dominance within a changing social structure.6

Consensus historians emphasized the American middle class and its role as the centrifugal force for change throughout the Progressive Era. They viewed issues of class through a myopic lens – that of their own middle-class values and imperatives, which had much in common with those that had provided the framework for Progressive reform. Working-class activists, such as those involved in the struggling trades-union movement, were perceived as being led, or at the very least vitally supported, by a leadership of middle-class reformers. For the most part this perception was a valid one. However, it failed to portray the depth of Progressive reform, out of which layers the movement derived the effectiveness to achieve permanent social change. Thus, perhaps the most marked alteration in the study of the Progressive Era over the course of the twentieth century was that of perspective, as later generations of historians considered class and gender issues previously disregarded. Influenced by the New Left and the Civil Rights Movement, historians in the later decades of the twentieth century questioned the traditional verities. Not least among their concerns were how historians had defined and
identified “America” and “Americans” over time, and whether any definition could be inclusive and comprehensive of the whole. They began by examining the supposition of cohesiveness in the Progressive Era, positing instead that the mass of activity was a result of the efforts of disparate groups, each motivated by its own interests. Consensus historians had attempted to create a synthesis, to define a “Progressive Movement.” The inclusion of women and working-class activists forced a rethinking of traditional assumptions. Without throwing out the baby with the bathwater, historians began to broaden the scope of the context suggested by the terms “Progressive Era” and “Progressive reform.”

In *The Triumph of Conservatism*, published in 1963, Gabriel Kolko challenged the established understanding of the Progressive Era as a revolution of the people against the special interests. Kolko’s interpretation incorporated some aspects of Hofstadter’s status model, illustrated by his acceptance of the Progressive Movement as motivated by the simple need “to preserve existing power and social relationships.” But Kolko believed that corporations were not the archenemy of reformers, as the muckrakers had portrayed them in the pages of popular magazines. Rather, as the corporations held vested interests in the welfare of the American economy, they lent their support to those reform efforts they deemed valuable to the growth and stability of commerce. Either through financial support or the use of the political lobby to promote legislation and regulation, corporations and the moneyed interests wanted to control and stabilize both the societal and the economic conditions responsible for the clash between labor and business. Kolko described this endeavor as “a movement for the political rationalization of business and industrial conditions.” In Kolko’s view, then, the Progressive Era was
not mired in the mythology of an imagined past, as Hofstadter saw it; instead it was reaching expectantly (but conservatively) toward a positive future.\textsuperscript{8}

In 1965 Christopher Lasch published \textit{The New Radicalism}, in which he supported Hofstadter's thesis of a status revolution and also the perception of Progressivism as "more deeply indebted to the populism of the nineteenth."\textsuperscript{9} To Lasch, the Progressive reformers of the early twentieth century were young men and women who felt themselves outside the mainstream of American society. They created the new intellectual climate that developed in the later stages of the Progressive Movement out of an attempt to build niches for themselves where otherwise none would have existed. In 1967, Robert Wiebe asserted in \textit{The Search for Order} that this "new middle class was a class only by courtesy of the historian's afterthought." It was characterized by men and women with "professional aspirations," most particularly those whose attributes or skills lent them recognition as "specialists." The growing numbers of college-educated men and women found legitimacy, "respectable and profitable positions," and "outlets never before available for their talents" in the "new order" they were fashioning within the political, economic, and social landscape of the Industrial Revolution. Wiebe noted the potential for discord in regard to issues of class and gender, but he did not allow that either was especially divisive. In answer to the question, "What public tasks would women seek and which ones would men allow them to fulfill," he replied, "Men usually did not feel threatened until women's activities pushed past the stereotype," which "they seldom did." Wiebe suggested that the Progressive Era was "a critical time of revelation and cohesion for reformers," regardless of whether they shared common beliefs or not. "It drew together groups undergoing similar experiences and sharing similar values and interests."
The common ground on which they fought and the common heritage from which they were launched into the world were more important than the conflicts that might have arisen from differences of class or gender. The Progressive reformers, as a generation, were "building a new structure of loyalties to replace the decaying system of the nineteenth century communities."\(^\text{10}\)

In his 1970 article titled "An Obituary for 'The Progressive Era,'" Peter Filene argued that the diversity of reforms and the disparate nature of the groups of reformers denied any claim to a Progressive Movement. "According to most sociologists," he wrote, "a social movement is a collectivity acting with some continuity to promote or resist change in society." He asserted that the "myriad disagreements" "divided rather than collected" the reformers into anything resembling a movement.\(^\text{11}\) Filene criticized consensus historians in general, and Hofstadter in particular, for finding coherence in the underlying values of the reformers. This coherence was in itself misleading, as "non-Progressives also shared" in the status, values, and many of the aims of the so-called Progressives. These historians were "struggling desperately to fit their concept onto data," reasoning that the presence of reformers must then indicate an identifiable reform movement. Describing this "logic" as "elliptical," Filene concluded, "the evidence points away from convenient synthesis and toward a multiplicity" of "shifting coalitions" and emphases on different issues. Filene issued a call for historians "to tear off the familiar label and, thus liberated from its prejudice, see the history between 1890 and 1920 for what it was - ambiguous, inconsistent, (and) moved by agents and forces more complex than a Progressive Movement."\(^\text{12}\)
About this same time, David Thelen published an article that spoke directly to Hofstadter’s model of status politics and shared Filene’s conclusion that a synthesis was not supported by the evidence, as interpreted by Hofstadter and other consensus scholars. In “Social Tensions and the Origins of Progressivism,” Thelen warned against “the dangers in building a conceptual approach to such a problem as Progressivism upon so many rickety psychological foundations.” Placing the Progressive Era “in the context of the chronological evolution of both industrialism and reform,” Thelen argued that “not competition but cooperation between different social groups . . . was what distinguished Progressivism from . . . earlier reform movements.” The question was not, as in Hofstadter’s thesis and in others’ interpretation of it, “what drove groups apart, but what drove them together.”

Thelen focused on the issues that brought the heterogeneous American reform community together to bring about changes in their communities, in spite of their individual motives and goals. He found the depression of 1893 which, in the cities, had “vividly dramatized the failures of industrialism,” to be the motivating force behind the growth of Progressive reforms. He contended that it was “the collapse of prosperity and the failure of national partisan politicians to alleviate the crisis by the traditional methods that generated an atmosphere of restless and profound questioning,” out of which new reform organizations developed. These organizations were unlike any before in American society, the result of “weakened class and status allegiances” as well as the growing emphasis on experts and science-based, empirical knowledge. Young men and women found themselves making careers out of “studying the social and economic breakdown” and offering advice to reformers across the social spectrum. Thelen urged
historians of the Progressive Era to concentrate on the successes of the reform movements, rather than consider the reformers as “victims” of urbanization or industrialization, in the manner of status politics and social tension models.\(^\text{14}\)

As historians became adept at questioning the familiar understanding of the Progressive Era, they also narrowed their focus to consider particular aspects of reform and specific reform movements. In his 1967 study of the settlement movement, Allen F. Davis remarked that Hofstadter made “too much of the Protestant sense of guilt in explaining the reforms of the Progressive Era.” He asserted that “the settlement movement was in the vanguard of reform in the Progressive Era,” and settlement workers “did not fit many of the sweeping generalizations made by historians about the Progressive Movement.” Davis observed that among his colleagues “it has become fashionable to explain the reform impulse of the Progressive Era as the product of a ‘status revolution’ or the result of the ‘alienation’ of a group of potential leaders from the mainstream of American life.”\(^\text{15}\) In his 1973 biography of Jane Addams, Davis made his case that her decision to open a settlement house ran contrary to status or alienation theories. It was an effort to develop a “creative solution” to a personal and, in Addams’ view, a societal problem.\(^\text{16}\)

Lela B. Costin echoed Davis’ criticisms of conservative consensus scholarship in her 1983 biography of Edith and Grace Abbott, two women who were involved with the most radical phase of the Progressive Era – Lasch’s “new radicalism.” Describing the Abbott sisters as “strong, energetic, analytical, and self-confident” women, Costin asserted that “neither could be charged with a psychological or status deficiency or with being alienated from the mainstream of American life.” She added, “They carried no
great weight of guilt for their happy and privileged childhood.” Robyn Muney also chose to emphasize positive characteristics, such as “autonomy and circumspection,” in her study of women reformers. Noting that “gender was an important determinant of experience,” Muncy recognized that “women’s experience in female-dominated professions revealed different patterns.” The nature of the settlement movement in America was formed to a large extent within the chrysalis of women’s colleges, where in “this world of female friendships and duty, middle-class women nursed a peculiarly female culture.” Side-stepping the restrictions placed upon them as women in the public sphere, female settlement workers mentored the generations of Progressive reformers, creating a female dominion in American reform. “This foundation of personal support that women provided each other in the settlements made their public lives possible.” In *The Women of Hull-House*, Eleanor Stebner considered the concept of vocation as motivation for reform, based upon the expressed feeling among many middle-class women that they had a calling to public service. Stebner understood that for women such as Jane Addams vocation had both personal and public benefits. One could be a Mary, answering the growing need for self-awareness and self-fulfillment, while meeting the duty of a Martha, making an offering of self-sacrifice and endeavoring to be useful. Stebner’s discussion of vocation indirectly amplified a more negative aspect of reform that Meredith Tax, in *The Rising of the Women*, had emphasized in bold type.

In her 1980 study of women and trade unions, Tax suggested that in the “united front” or “alliance” between working women and women reformers, the reformers usurped the legitimate claim of the workers to attain for themselves as wage-earners what would become recognized as the American standard of living. Ultimately, she attributed
the dominance of the reformers to cultural or class differences, and to the social status and political power which those in the fore of the movement stood to gain. Tax asserted that in trying to unite “the working-class struggle and the struggle for women’s liberation,” the reformers made the working women subordinate and dependent — within the movements for reform as they already were in the larger environment of organized labor — to the detriment of all. As she concluded, “The women’s movement, when led by the middle-class allies, lack(ed) the independence, the militancy, and the creative quality provided by the socialist, left-wing leadership.”

Rivka Shpak Lissak also believed that the class struggle, fed by the rising tide of immigration, played a primary role in the reform movements of the Progressive Era. Reformers sought “acculturation or cultural assimilation,” to Americanize the immigrants by forcing an “acquisition of the culture of the dominant group,” which historians have agreed was that culture shared by the majority of middle-class reformers. In the process, the reformers — in particular the settlement workers who had direct, day-to-day contact with the immigrants — were “obliged . . . to formulate views on the nature of American nationalism and culture . . .”. There was as yet no “pluralistic view of society,” but Lissak concluded that in developing “their concept of humanitarian social democracy and their benign policies of assimilation” the settlement workers “created a dynamic that unintentionally paved the way.”

The function of class and gender on the reform movements of the Progressive Era led to the development in the 1930s of what Theda Skocpol described in 1992 as a maternalistic welfare state. She suggested that class-consciousness was obstructed and gender-consciousness was encouraged by the nineteenth-century philosophy of separate
spheres for men and women. "Operating largely without votes, women became civicly involved," projecting their "maternal values" "onto the agendas of state and national politics." Women reformers worked outside the system, allowing them more easily to manipulate it. "For a time, women's mode of politics - public education and lobbying through widespread associations - was ideally suited" to the separate sphere ideology that limited their reach and access in the public realm. Skocpol compared this female method of reform in America to that of their fellows in Great Britain, concluding that the different emphases - class in Britain and gender in America - fostered different results - civil service activity in Britain rather than reform as in America. Instead of being forced to manipulate or function outside the system, women of a certain class in Britain were allowed to work within it. For this reason, Skocpol concluded, "Settlement houses in the United States remained for quite some time a prime outlet for the aspirations of idealistic, higher-educated young people (read women) who wished to find public solutions to the problems of urban, industrial capitalism."  

In 1998 Alan Brinkley published *Liberalism and Its Discontents*, a study of the historiography of the Progressive Era that positioned Richard Hofstadter at its center. He credited Hofstadter's introduction of the status model as "perhaps the most influential and certainly the most controversial of all his scholarly views." Brinkley understood Hofstadter's concept of "status politics" as one of conflicts arising not from interest or class but from "status aspirations and other personal motives." By placing his emphasis on common experiences of frustration, guilt, and aspiration, Hofstadter in effect created a homogeneous grouping out of what was actually a heterogeneous aggregate of men and women focused upon a wide variety of reform goals and aims. But this "impressively
coherent picture of the progressive mind,” Brinkley wrote, was in reality an interpretation of but “a single segment of the progressive constituency” – a rendering of elitist politics rather than a comprehensive characterization of the leading forces of an entire era. Brinkley’s study suggested that historians should consider whether or not a more positive approach to reformers and their efforts necessarily negated the contribution consensus scholarship ought to bring to our understanding of the Progressive Era. When he questioned whether it was “possible for scholars to take into account the enormous range of factors that affect human motivation and historical causation and still bring anything like coherence to their picture of the past,” Brinkley observed, “Hofstadter had identified a dilemma fundamental to historical studies.”

The issue of coherence, however, has less relevance to twenty-first century scholarship than it did in the post-World War II era. The social approach to historical study has gained dominance in recent decades, placing an emphasis upon a broader variety and scope of historical evidence and altering the template from which historiography is drawn. Many historians now consider alternate voices, such as those of women and ethnic minorities, to be necessary and relevant to an accurate understanding of the connections between the “public events” and the “social phenomena that form their context,” constituting “the next important frontier for historians of twentieth-century America.”

More recent studies such as Brinkley’s have the advantage of perspective and can view Hofstadter and consensus scholarship against the criticisms of Thelen and his contemporaries, while bringing into the mix the perceptions of social theory evolving over time. The resulting broadening awareness of modern historiography can bring
sharper focus and richer detail to the consideration of forces shaping both individuals and societies. For example, Davis and Costin looked at the settlement movement as distinct within the Progressive Era, and integral to it. Also, both historians considered women reformers specifically, with the view that the involvement of women had an effect upon the development of the processes of reform and colored the results. They shared the consensus historian’s myopic lens, in that the women they considered were of the middle class, but their understanding of class issues was expanded by the realization of gender. Thus, historians of the Progressive Era have come to accept that in many ways gender constituted another dimension of class, as the concerns of women were both separate from and included in the issues besetting their male fellows. Especially in the earlier phases of Progressive reform, the extent of one’s ability to participate (and, by correlation, the weight of one’s influence) related less to gender than to class, to one’s access to a personal income in lieu of salary. Stebner’s assertion of vocation as a vital motivation, then, was a luxury unavailable to Tax’s understanding of the working classes, whose activism arose from a need more basic and essential, and was therefore less romantic.

As new generations of historians investigate long-available primary sources in a new light, conventional interpretations and tired controversies may be left by the wayside. For example, in his biography of Jane Addams, Davis rejected the idea that her encounter with chronic back pain had any connection to emotional stress. He chose instead to champion Addams as “a strong-willed person who resisted the attempts of so many around her to make her an invalid.” It is plausible, however, that in his efforts to rationalize the young woman who would become Jane Addams with the confident and
competent social reformer known to history, Davis removed her from the context of her
time. A reading of relevant firsthand sources taken with a consideration of more recently
published literature on the connection between mind and body suggests that historians
can reach a more objective and sympathetic understanding of the havoc Addams’
emotional life may have wreaked upon her body. 28

Jane Addams’ struggle to articulate “The Subjective Necessity for Social
Settlements” was indicative of the complex nature of Progressive Era reforms. To her
way of thinking, the settlement was intended to provide a public solution for a personal
problem among individuals – chiefly female – of the middle- and upper-middle classes.
Young men and women, feeling themselves out of place within the bounds of family and
social class, were “seeking an outlet for that sentiment of universal brotherhood” instilled
at college. By virtue of family position and wealth, they had been “cultivated into
unnourished, oversensitive lives . . . cut off from the common labor by which they live . .
(and) feel a fatal want of harmony between their theory and their lives, a lack of
coordination between thought and action.” Addams’ primary motivation for founding a
settlement – as well as the reason others should join one – came from this “need of
putting theory into action,” which was best answered by “the settlement form of
activity.” 29 The corollary to her understanding of the subjective necessity of the reformer
was the objective necessity of the community. The nature of settlement work demanded
flexibility – in concept and in practice. Reformers must constantly reconsider their
assumptions of gender, class, and ethnicity in an effort to make their work suit the
particular needs of each community. Reform, then, required the reformers to operate
within an environment, which though not unstable, was in a constant state of flux. Her
confidence that her personal experience had universal value lends credence to historians' use of Jane Addams as a symbol for the men and women of the Progressive Movement. She is representative of the middle and upper middle class as well as the educated female of post-Civil War America; she was a contemporary ideal of American womanhood and of Progressive reform. Through her autobiography *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, Addams proved that her unflagging pursuit of the transcendent in life, for experiences that would validate and enhance human existence, ran counter to such convenient explanations of motive and goals as those later supplied by Hofstadter's sense of guilt thesis and status model. Jane Addams provides, therefore, an appropriate starting place from which to begin a consideration of the Progressive Era and the place of the settlement movement within it.
Notes


5 Brinkley, Liberalism and Its Discontents, 136; see Hofstadter, Age of Reform, 3-22.


7 See Brinkley, Liberalism and Its Discontents, 111-30.


12 Ibid., 30,32-34.


14 Ibid., 336-37, 341.


notes, cont.


19 Eleanor J. Stebner, *The Women of Hull House* (Birmingham: State University of New York Press, 1997). She asserted that vocation “has most often been gender specific,” and is made up out of a more feminine than masculine perspective. “It relates to how one regards one’s place in the universe, one’s specific purpose in life, and one’s relations to all living beings.” (4, 3) “The community of Hull-House shaped the vocational directions of its residents because it allowed for diversity under a uniting spiritual vision of social and political involvement . . . by summoning a vision of how the world ought to be, by calling individuals to utilize their lives in implementing the vision, and by giving women, especially, the experience of knowing and using their voices.” (143)

20 Meredith Tax, *The Rising of the Women* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980). Tax discussed the interaction of women of different classes and the effect of that interaction upon reform, and was somewhat disdainful of the precedence history has given to the “allies,” as she referred to the middle-class reformers who sympathized with the struggles of working-class women.

21 Ibid., 277-279.


26 Ibid., 131.


28 This issue is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two of this text.


Chapter Two

Jane Addams and the Road to Hull-House

Jane Addams published Twenty Years at Hull-House in 1910, when she was fifty years old and nearing the peak of her career as a Progressive reformer. She earlier had published three books and a number of articles promoting Progressive ideals in general and the ideology of the settlement movement in particular. Her focus in this fourth book was of a more personal interest. Twenty Years at Hull-House was the story of the settlement house she and her friend Ellen Gates Starr established in 1889. It was not intended as either an institutional biography or an intimate account of her life. Instead, Addams related episodes from her experience with the work at Hull-House that in her estimation possessed relevant social value. She wrote in the preface, “No effort is made in the recital to separate my own history from that of Hull-House.”

Choosing to filter her life through the prism of her work, Jane Addams believed Hull-House was the chief expression of her true self and found it difficult to divorce one from the other. Addams' work within the settlement movement and the larger world of Progressive reform was what, to her mind, lent any mark of distinction to her life story. By presenting the influences in her life and outlining the events that guided her toward the decision to open a settlement house in the crowded, immigrant district of Chicago’s nineteenth ward, Addams revealed her personal understanding of her life and its value.

Addams hoped that the first chapters of the book, “presenting influences and personal motives (in) detail,” would “make clear” her changed personality, so that the
reader might gain an accurate impression of the path she traveled to Hull-House. She painted a picture of an idyllic, rustic childhood in keeping with the contemporary romantic attachment to the myth of the American frontier, pre-figuring the adult model of American experience Addams had become. She omitted the routine of daily life and family obligations and emphasized the inward development of her character, sharpening the focus upon her intellectual and moral evolution. Describing herself upon graduation from Rockford Female Seminary at the age of twenty as “absolutely at sea as far as any moral purpose was concerned,” Addams presented herself in a way that would seem familiar to many young, middle-class women of the Progressive Era.

Jane Addams’ father, John Huy Addams, was the most enduring influence in her life and the images of him she conjured are of a kind, honorable, and noble man. He was the touchstone by which she gauged the good and true things in life. In the summer of 1881, after Jane’s graduation from Rockford Female Seminary, John Addams died suddenly from a ruptured appendix. In relating this experience of personal grief, Jane Addams referred in Twenty Years at Hull-House to the “black days following the death of my father,” when she had trouble finding solace in “Christian platitudes.” A friend comforted her with the suggestion “that sometimes consolation came to us better in the words of Plato, and, as far as I can remember, that was the first time I heard Plato’s argument for the permanence of the excellent.” This statement was a fitting tribute to the man whom she had earlier described as “in favor of ‘mental integrity above all else.’” Addams recognized the dominant role her father played in her life even after his death, to the point that her stepmother, Anna Haldeman Addams, made not even a brief appearance in the record presented in Twenty Years at Hull-House. Proudly
acknowledging her father’s impact on her life, Addams failed to consider the debt she owed her stepmother, from whom she “unwittingly learned” the social graces that allowed her to move so easily through the upper echelons of Chicago society.\(^5\)

In the eighteen months following her father’s death, Addams quit her pursuit of formal education and entered a period of drift that lasted nearly eight years. Grief and an uncertainty as to the direction that her course should take circumscribed her confidence in the future. To that point Addams’ education had been guided and controlled by her father and his wishes, her understanding of any potential reckoned in the light of her family’s values. The trajectory of Addams’ life dissipated, and she entered into a state of depression, confusion, and lassitude, signified most acutely by the development of chronic back pain. The most apt description for her reaction to the tragic loss of her father is “a paralysis of the will to act.”\(^6\)

Among women of her generation and class it was not uncommon for one to live within the world of family responsibilities, setting sail upon the occasional European excursion. But Addams’ personality did not permit her to relax her expectations, and so she searched anxiously for something that fulfilled her sense of purpose – something extraordinary. Her first European tour, lasting from the fall of 1883 through the spring of 1885, only seemed to intensify her frustration with what she later termed, as a chapter heading in *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, the “snare of preparation.”\(^7\) While family circumstances kept her occupied, intellectual stimuli were few and far between and then not always satisfying. In October 1885, while visiting her sister Mary Addams Linn at her home in Geneseo, Illinois, Jane wrote a letter to her stepmother that conveyed her feeling of futility in ever truly accomplishing anything. “You know my experience in
Philadelphia,” she wrote, referring to her failed attempt at medical school. “I am afraid that trying to study here would leave me with the same uneasy consciousness that I had not done what I came purposely to do, because I tried to do something else and failed at that.”

Pulled in two directions at once -- to be of use to her sister and spend time with her sister's children, and to continue to pursue the life of the mind in hopes of finding some public avenue of service -- she was fearful of failing at both.

These interim years, however, were not without their small improvements. Jane Addams continued to exercise the leadership abilities realized at college in managing family affairs. A particular example involved her brother Weber Addams, who in 1883 experienced a nervous breakdown and was admitted to the state hospital at Elgin, Illinois. Jane accompanied his wife Laura on a visit in November 1885 and wrote to her sister Alice Addams Haldeman, “They did not think it best for Laura to see him but I saw him for about twenty minutes.” This telling comment revealed much about the character and poise of the twenty-five-year-old Jane and the position she held within her family. The youngest child, she had essentially become the family’s caretaker, one on whom they did not hesitate to call for aid and advice in time of crisis.

Addams' relatively low self-esteem and fear of failure stemmed from her practice of comparative introspection. She had failed to meet the potential uncovered during her college experience. Ellen Gates Starr, a former classmate at Rockford, shared Jane's frustrated desire for self-fulfilling activity. These two women, both strangely brave and intensely curious in comparison with many of their peers, shared an awful anxiety that their best days were behind them. Confident in their abilities but frustrated in their attempts, Addams and Starr longed for that opportunity through which they would
consummate the sense of purpose instilled at Rockford. In religious terms, this yearning would have been named a vocation — ”a divine call to, or sense of fitness for, a career or occupation.” If they had been men, Addams and Starr could have recognized this “sense of fitness” for what it was — a “drive to power,” a desire for an extraordinary and transcendent life. Each woman traveled her own path toward understanding her personal call to public service, but their shared experiences and the interdependent nature of their friendship led Addams and Starr to arrive at a common answer.

The failure of potential weighed heavily on the minds of both women, but Starr clearly considered Addams’ the greater loss. A few months earlier, shortly after Jane’s return from Europe, Ellen had been nostalgically perusing old college papers and showed something of Jane’s to one of her favorite students, a girl named Tilly. Ellen wrote to Jane, “I said to her, ‘If my friend’s body had been equal to her mind, and if a great many demands on the strength of both hadn’t come to her which do not come to most people, she would have done a good many remarkable things which the Lord doesn’t seem to have intended her to do.’” In an unwitting bit of foreshadowing, a little farther on in the letter Ellen referred to an aborted trip to Europe. “I suppose Spain must be given up. Perhaps we shall go together sometime. One kind of air castle is as good as another.”

The “air castle” of a European trip became a reality two and a half years later. Ellen left for Europe in the fall of 1887. On December 14, Addams and another former Rockford classmate, Sarah Anderson, set sail from New York for Southampton, England. They arrived on December 22, and after a few days proceeded to the continent. On January 6, 1888, they met up with Ellen in Munich. In her autobiography, Addams called the group “our little party of three.” Their itinerary included a number of stops in
Austria and Italy before a three-week stay in Florence beginning January 16. They were scheduled to arrive at Rome in February and after three weeks spend the balance of March traveling about Italy. In April they would visit the South of France and then Spain. They would return to the United States from Paris. Jane mailed this itinerary to her sister Alice so that she and her family could correspond while she was out of the country, posting their letters with the knowledge of a two-to-three week time delay.\textsuperscript{15}

On January 26, while the group was in Florence, Mary Addams Linn’s daughter Esther wrote to her “Aunt Jenny,” sending the letter to Rome in anticipation of Jane’s arrival there on February 10. The letter is short and sweetly childish. It read in full: “I am sick now. Mary has the whooping cough and Stanley has it too. I have my bed in the sitting room. Mary is better but Momma has to hold her all the time. The name of the sickness is yellow jaundice that I have. I do not go to school now. Weber gave me a top.”\textsuperscript{16} Five days later, on January 31, John Addams Linn, Mary’s eldest son, sent an update to Esther’s letter. “Dear Aunt Jennie,” he began, “Little Mary has gone into the better world. She departed last night at five minutes before seven. The funeral will be this evening at half past seven. Papa and I will go to Cedarville with her. None of the others are able to go.”\textsuperscript{17} In the short interim between January 26 and January 30, as the anguished Mary Addams Linn told to Jane in a letter written a week after her daughter’s death, the child Mary’s ordinary case of the whooping cough had developed into capillary bronchitis, “and that ended it.” In a second letter, dated only two days after the first, Mary shared her deeply felt grief, communicating an agonizing feeling of loss and her understanding of the hope her daughter had represented. As a Christian woman and minister’s wife, she would rely upon her faith in “the Father’s will.”\textsuperscript{18} On February 5,
before any news had reached the party in Rome, Mary received a letter from Jane. In her reply dated February 23, Mary wrote of her concern that Jane, separated from the family by time and space, would be forced to bear her grief alone. “It seems as if I would feel better when I once know you have heard and that the blow did not crush you.”

On February 16, Jane related to Alice Addams Haldeman the manner in which she had discovered little Mary’s death. That day, she and the others went out after dinner to do some shopping. On the way Jane went into the bank to collect her mail and found a packet of letters from the family. She opened one of them there on the street and afterwards “did not feel like the afternoon shopping we had planned.”

Naturally placing herself within the bosom of family obligation, the distance between them exacerbated her sorrow, sustaining Mary Addams Linn’s fear that “the blow” might “crush” her. Jane grieved for her family and the loss they were experiencing together. She wrote to Alice, “I do so long to be with Sister Mary and know of course that you can’t go to her either now . . . it seems to me almost impossible that she can give her up – as brave and strong as she is.” Speaking to her own close connection to the children, she continued, “I shall always be glad that I was with the dear little girl as much as I was last spring, and have so distinct a picture of her babyhood. It makes me feel very insecure about all of the children and I hope and pray very fervently that dear little Marcet [Alice’s infant daughter] will grow and thrive.”

A week later, Ellen Starr sent a letter to Anna Addams with the news that her stepdaughter had been put to bed with an attack of sciatica. She was also recovering from a severe cold, but thankfully “not with Roman fever.” Ellen and Sarah Anderson were tending to her, with the advice of a doctor. The group had plans to go on to Naples
and Amalfi. According to the itinerary Jane sent to Alice, they were to stay in Naples for three weeks. Jane encouraged the two to go on without her. "She wishes a nurse, that we need not give up going out, and the doctor seems to think it best." They hoped that "Jane will not be in bed more than a week," and, indeed, once left alone with the nurse, she recovered enough that she was soon able to go down for meals and move about on her own.22

In Twenty Years at Hull-House, Jane Addams mentioned this episode only as it affected her intellectual life. "But my study of the Catacombs was brought to an abrupt end in a fortnight by a severe attack of sciatic rheumatism, which kept me in Rome with a trained nurse during many weeks, and later sent me to the Riviera to lead an invalid's life once more."23 She placed more importance upon a later experience in Spain, as having an emotional connection to her decision to enter settlement work.

These two events following so close upon one another (hearing about Mary Linn's death and coming down with a severe cold and an attack of sciatica), one might conclude that Jane Addams' illness developed as an emotional response to her grief. The medical community of this period accepted that chronic pain of the sort Jane Addams experienced throughout her adult life had a relation to mental stress and emotional issues. Many believed that neurasthenia, "the harbinger disease of urban America" the symptoms of which "were almost unlimited," resulted from confusion as to one's role and duty to family and society.24 Young men and women — though mostly women — either to tried to do too much and collapsed from exhaustion or dithered fretfully on the verge of the gaping chasm dividing action from passivity. Many middle-class, college-educated women of Jane Addams' generation felt trapped in a netherworld between private and
public spheres. To go forward into the public realm, an idea their education had encouraged them to entertain, was to step off into the abyss as there were no models. Thus, “self-deception about an intellectual or professional career culminated in the standard Victorian ailment of emotional prostration.”

Though less gender specific, studies within the American, Canadian, and British medical communities on the cusp of the twenty-first century continue the investigation of mind-body theories with regard to chronic pain and its relation to the conjunction of the physical, psychic, and emotional environments. In layman’s terms, pain is being studied as an illness or a disease in its own right, rather than merely a symptom. Scientists speculate that pain exists entirely within the brain - that when one stubs one’s toe, it is not the toe that tells the brain that it has done so, but the brain that tells the toe. The Cartesian theory that pain was a physical process originating from an external stimulus has been replaced by the “gate-control” theory that a series of “gating mechanisms” in the spinal cord allow pain signals to be processed in the brain. As “a pain neuromodule is not a discrete anatomical entity but a network, linking components from virtually every region of the brain,” the gates can be influenced by mental and emotional factors, as in biofeedback. The “social etiology” of chronic pain is also interesting in light of the neuralgia endemic to middle-class females of Jane Addams’ generation. A group of people who shared a common physical complaint, though expressed by a variety of symptoms, could feel their ailments were socially sanctioned once they were given a name and the medical community proposed remedies for relief. The number of cases would then increase rapidly, until a point when the illness no longer served its purpose –
to highlight the changed or new experience of a particular group within a social class or among people holding a particular position within society. Among his contemporaries in the late nineteenth century, Dr. S. Weir Mitchell and his Hospital of Orthopedic and Nervous Disorders in Philadelphia dominated the investigation of the “startling ideas (in) the relationship between physical ills and mental condition, especially among women.” Addams was treated at Mitchell’s hospital during her brief stay in Philadelphia while attending medical school, and one can make a direct connection between her experience of back pain and “the period of darkness, depression, and lethargy” in the wake of her father’s death. This “supreme tragic experience of Jane Addams’ life” occurred at a time when her personality was not yet fully formed and had stood relatively unchallenged. Addams’ education at Rockford was a continuation of her family’s value system, and until the time of her father’s death there was as yet no shock to that system, no extreme awareness of the world and of Addams within it as distinct from her family.

Addams’ illness and, more importantly, the time devoted to her recuperation, need not be interpreted as an attempt to escape or to postpone reality, but instead can been viewed as a retreat within herself for the purpose of gaining perspective. This latest episode of sciatica in Rome represented the nadir of Addams’ emotional struggle for identity and purpose. Conveniently separated from her family, she was unable to carry the burden of duty. Alone in Rome, Addams could through quiet introspection embrace her grief over her niece Mary Linn and put her relationship with her family into perspective. This second tragic loss also allowed her the opportunity to revisit her father’s death, and so, by looking backward over the expanse of time, make peace with
the young woman whose dreams she had frustrated. As Addams wrote in *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, "It is easy to become a dupe to a deferred purpose," especially when the central tenets of one's faith have been shaken, as hers were upon John Addams' death.

Addams understood her decision to open a settlement house to be the direct result of her experience that spring in Europe. It was not immediate, however, but part of a process; as she admitted, "I gradually became convinced." In *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, she revealed the catalyst for her epiphany, the moment when she was driven forward to action, to have occurred in April, after the party had arrived in Madrid. She painted the scene in brilliant hues: "Nothing less than the moral reaction following the experience at a bullfight had been able to reveal to me that so far from following in the wake of a chariot of philanthropic fire [her "dreamer's scheme" of "mere paper reform"], I had been tied to the veriest ox-cart of self-seeking." The next day she shared with Ellen her "very simple plan which afterward developed into the Settlement." Perhaps as an explanation for why she left little documentation behind of the intellectual and emotional process by which she came to the decision, Addams stated plainly, "I do not remember to have mentioned this plan to anyone until we reached Madrid in April 1888." Ellen's enthusiasm for the scheme reinforced Addams' determination and encouraged her faith in her own instincts. She embraced the new sense of purpose as an anchor dropped amid rough seas. The period of drift constituting the "snare of preparation" was ended. "I had confidence that although life itself might contain many difficulties, the period of mere passive receptivity had come to an end, and I had at last finished with the ever-lasting 'preparation for life,' however ill-prepared I might be."
Historians generally agree that the available record of Addams' correspondence does not support the account in *Twenty Years at Hull-House*. Arguing against the epiphany as Addams presented it, Allen F. Davis asserted, "It is more likely that she embellished the event for dramatic purposes when she was writing the autobiographical account. At least the letters she wrote home at the time indicate no dramatic shift in her perspective." This lack of evidence thus viewed by Davis as a failure to indicate the extent of her psychic turmoil in communications with her family was not unusual, however. Jane Addams was an introspective woman who at some point came to feel entangled by her emotional attachment to her family. Considering the distress her decision to break away from them was likely to cause, it is unlikely Jane would have conveyed this changed perspective through letters written while in Europe, rather than waiting until her return home. Davis believed that *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, "like all autobiographies," contained elements of fiction, which derived from Addams’ "autobiographical habit of mind" and from her need to "establish her own identity and place in the world." Herbert Leibowitz, including Addams in his study of American autobiography, suggested that her "memory serves as the integrating faculty through which the child and the woman became reunited." Thus the manipulation of memory when conceptualized as a method of self-representation furthers the historical understanding of subjective perception. Leibowitz wrote, "If the crisis as told is a trifle contrived, the passage nonetheless illustrates the compulsive way Addams’s memory reshapes experience so as to bring her past into harmony with her developed self." To Christopher Lasch, "It suggests rather that the meaning of her early life became clear to
her only after a period of intense self-examination, of which the bullfight itself was the beginning and the writing of her autobiography the culmination."

If historians read Addams' account of her life in *Twenty Years at Hull-House* as not merely autobiography or even memoir but as part of the larger settlement movement and reform efforts of the Progressive Era, the propaganda value of her dramatic manipulation of memory is realized. Jane Addams did not pen her story as a means of self-revelation, nor did she intend to create a foundation upon which others might build her mythology. As Addams stated in her preface, her more "worthy" motive in writing the book was an attempt to justify and communicate the value of the settlement movement, to the residents involved and the neighborhoods in which they worked, and doubtless to potential philanthropic donors as well. It would have been out of character for Jane Addams to portray her complex inner struggles in a way that might separate her from the mainstream and thus detract from both her evangelism of the settlement idea and her increasing fame as an ideal of American womanhood. Historians' use of Addams as representative of her era is in keeping with Addams' own perceptions of her public life and its value. She made her personal experience of drift into a morality play of American life at the turn of the century. For women like Addams, a public life had meaning as a life outside of the female sphere of hearth and home, where women might enjoy an active experience as opposed to passive interest. For both Addams and Starr, the scheme constituted a secular vocation – in the sense that each felt particularly fit for the work. Rockfield Female Seminary’s mandate was to provide missionaries; Addams and Starr would enter the unmapped territory of urban America. Hull-House, then, was more than the very opportunity through which Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr could prove their
aspirations. As Addams realized in “The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements,” its purpose was also to provide refuge and sustenance for generations of young people of the Progressive Era seeking to live out their vocation for public service.
Notes


2 Ibid., xvii.

3 Ibid., 59-60.

4 Ibid., 28, 51-52.


8 Jane Addams to Anna Haldeman Addams, October 23, 1885, Correspondence, Jane Addams Memorial Collection, University of Illinois, Chicago, IL (hereafter cited as JAMC).

9 Jane Addams to Sarah Alice Addams Haldeman, November 11, 1885, JAMC.


12 Ellen Gates Starr to Jane Addams, April 28, 1885, Ellen Starr Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA (hereafter cited as SSC).


15 Jane Addams to Sarah Alice Addams Haldeman, January 1, 1888, Mrs. Sarah Addams Haldeman Manuscripts, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN (hereafter cited as SAHM).

16 Esther Linn to Jane Addams, January 26, 1888, Jane Addams Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA (hereafter cited as SCPC).

17 John Addams Linn to Jane Addams, January 31, 1888, SCPC.
notes, cont.

18 Mary Catherine Addams Linn to Jane Addams, February 6, 1888; February 8, 1888; SCPC.

19 Mary Catherine Addams Linn to Jane Addams, February 23, 1888, SCPC.

20 Jane Addams to Sarah Alice Addams Haldeman, February 16, 1888, SAHM.

21 Ibid.

22 Ellen Gates Starr to Anna Haldeman Addams, February 23, 1888, SCPC.


28 Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, 72-73.

29 Ibid., 72-74.


31 Ibid., 157-58.


34 Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, xvii-xviii.


36 Adams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, 90-100.
Chapter Three

The Settlement as Community

The settlement movement in America had three distinct phases. The leadership of the movement included pioneers such as Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr of Hull-House (1889), Vida Scudder of the College Settlement Association (1889), Robert Woods of South End House in Boston (1892), Graham Taylor of Chicago Commons (1894), and Lillian Wald of the Henry Street Settlement in New York City (1895). These men and women acted as links between the moralizing reform impulse of the nineteenth century and the development of professional social work in the twentieth. They set the policies and advanced the evolution of a methodology that made the settlement movement integral to the larger reform efforts of the Progressive Era. The men and women who staffed the nascent organizations essential to the shift from charity to social work comprised the phase in between the vocational and the professional reformers, a fundamental but often overlooked group. Overall the settlement community in America believed, as did the founders of London’s Toynbee Hall, that social settlements were intended “to bridge the gulf that industrialism had created between rich and poor.”\(^1\) In the process, settlements might also further the progress of society toward a more reciprocal relationship, absent of class distinctions.

In starting a settlement in Chicago, Jane Addams did not simply copy the form and method of Toynbee Hall, the grandfather of all settlements. Nor did she found an institution or a home mission, as might be said of Stanton Coit’s Neighborhood Guild in
New York City, the first American settlement. Neither did she envision a society of women, such as the College Settlement Association, an environment fostered by peer relationships and closed to men. Instead, her conception of the settlement idea was uniquely personal and distinct, in answer to her own individual needs, which she intended to share through an open invitation to any and all who had an interest. Addams made a home for herself in the city, and in so doing developed a public role that animated and gave dimension to her life.

Jane Addams' understanding of “The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements,”\(^2\) as she titled her most famous and most often-cited essay, derived from personal experience. After nearly a decade of psychic paralysis, she made the decision to take control of her life’s direction; but acting upon this newfound determination was another matter entirely. Jane Addams wanted to live a life of action – “to give tangible expression to the democratic ideal” toward which she had been educated. If she were to discover for herself a new and yet acceptable form of service, she must leave off searching about for an existing social niche, as there was none. To settle into convention would be to continue upon a passive life of leisure - “so different from what she had expected (her life) to be.”\(^3\)

Upon her return from Europe in 1888, the strong pull of the family claim tugged at Jane Addams' sense of obligation and duty. She and Ellen Gates Starr had agreed to meet in Chicago in January 1889 and begin working out the details of their settlement scheme. Jane failed to show, as she was with Mary Addams Linn in Geneseo, Illinois, giving aid to her family. She wrote to Ellen, “I am dreadfully disappointed. I was quite sure I would be in Chicago Saturday but simply cannot leave Stanley, the little fellow has
been threatened with diphtheria, and looks like a ghost.” Apparently, the specter of little Mary Linn hovered near, deepening Jane’s feelings of guilt and providing an excuse, if she wanted one, not to carry through with her plans. She “owe(d) so much to Mary in so many tender ways that I feel now as if I ought to stay.” Any doubts or fears she harbored as she stood within the bosom of her family, looking out upon the vista of a new and unbroken path of action in the public sphere, were nurtured by feelings of debt and responsibility. In the conclusion of her letter to Ellen, Jane wrote, “I know you disapprove dear heart, and I appreciate your disapproval. I disapprove myself in a measure, but ‘God as make me so’ I suppose.”

Their commitment to the founding of a settlement house in Chicago was as much personal as it was professional, having consequences both private and public. If one of the women were to withdraw from the possibilities implied in their move away from convention and toward public service, the other would be left to go forward on her own—and, perhaps, to fail. Each had much to lose if their plans were to be put away. Jane Addams was a personality driven toward the public sphere, and strove to discover a place in society suitably elevated to satisfy her personal vanity and desire for public validation. Unlike Jane, Ellen “lacked the means to develop an alternative style of life which might comprehend larger goals.” More introverted and less gregarious, Ellen’s yearnings were for more intimate and personal successes. While on tour in Europe, during her visit to Monte Cassino while Jane stayed behind in Rome, Ellen had experienced her own moment of epiphany. Her spiritual connection to St. Benedict was born there and was a part of her commitment to the “settlement concept.” The simple and direct creed of the Benedictine order acted for Starr as a means for translating the Victorian ideals she had
learned at school into a practical philosophy for living. Thus, the two women were bound together by more than intimate friendship or a common desire to do good and satisfying work in the world. Each had experienced that spring in Italy an awakening that impacted upon their lives in a manner as powerful as it was personal.

The spring of 1889 found the two women in Chicago, visiting neighborhoods and meeting with various religious and philanthropic leaders. Early on Jane and Ellen were taken under the wings of several influential men and women, including Mary Wilmarth, a founding member of the Chicago Woman’s Club. Later, Wilmarth became a patron of Ellen Starr, “paying for her room, board, and furnishings at Hull-House,” and providing her “with funds to set up a (book) bindery.” Unlike Addams, Starr did not inherit a personal income; she found it difficult to pay her own way at the settlement, which insisted that residents contribute to the day-to-day expenses of housekeeping. Scholarships provided by universities and private donors, in addition to personal philanthropy such as that extended by Wilmarth, allowed men and women like Starr the opportunity to share in the settlement experience. At a meeting of the Board of the Armour Mission, the two women were introduced to Allen B. Pond, a young architect involved in the “design and construction of the model town of Pullman.” The Pond brothers’ firm would come “to specialize in an architecture of social concern,” as they designed the expansion of the physical plant at Hull-House, in addition to other settlements in Chicago. Both Allen Pond and Mary Wilmarth were members of the first Hull-House Board of Trustees incorporated in 1895. When they met that spring, Allen Pond offered to assist the women in finding a neighborhood and a house for the settlement.
As spring turned into summer, Jane and Ellen arranged to rent a two-story brick mansion known locally as the Charles Hull house. Built in 1856, it had survived the Chicago fire of 1871, as it was situated toward what was then the western boundary of the city. After Hull’s death in February his estate transferred to Helen Culver, his niece, who had acted as his business manager during his lifetime. When the two young women came to Culver and asked to rent the second floor of the house for their proposed settlement in the immigrant district of the nineteenth ward, she questioned the wisdom of the venture. Over the course of time, however, this “keen witted woman” came to value the work of the settlement and eventually gave over to that work the entire block of property upon which the house stood.9

On September 18, 1889, Jane Addams and Ellen Starr moved into Hull-House with Mary Keyser, a friend of Jane’s from her days in Geneseo, Illinois. “Miss Mary” acted as the housekeeper. She was responsible for “maintaining the practical aspects of life,” and gradually developed her own role in the life of the settlement - “neighborly work, the daily ministration to the needy and heartsick and the despairing.” Her family joined her, shortly if not immediately after her arrival in Chicago. In the Hull-House Bulletin dated January 1896, Mrs. Keyser and Mary’s brother Frank are listed among the residents; Frank was described in Mary’s obituary as “an engineer at Hull-House.”10

The opening of the settlement was accompanied by a public relations campaign in the pages of newspapers and magazines. The publicity was positive if not entirely accurate, in its emphasis upon the benevolence and morality of the two young women who made such a sacrifice for the improvement of the less-privileged citizens of Chicago.11 One of the first articles, written by Leila G. Bedell and published in The
Woman's Journal in May 1889, carried the appellation used by Addams and Starr in the early days of the settlement - “A Chicago Toynbee Hall.” This article and others gave Addams and Starr an opportunity to communicate the settlement idea to potential residents and workers who might contribute time and effort, if not financial support. Bedell’s piece included a reference to private philanthropy as well as a disclaimer of public fund-raising. In the hope that others would contribute to the work, Bedell simply acknowledged that Addams and Starr “undertake this enterprise without asking money. But,” she continued, “be assured Chicago will come to their rescue generously.” Together with Addams and Starr, Bedell also assumed that the residents and volunteers who joined them in the work would be young ladies of the middle class, financially able to provide their own room and board as residents, without need of pecuniary compensation. In addition, the volunteers would be college educated and therefore likely to gain personal benefit from an association with the settlement. Bedell hoped these women would be attracted by the prospects to be found in “a glimpse at the reverse side of life,” which “will beget a broader philanthropy and a tenderer sympathy, and leave less time and inclination for introspection, for selfish ambition, or for real or fancied invalidism.”

An article published in the New York World in June 1889 mentioned Addams’ and Starr’s plan for Hull-House in connection with the College Settlement Association’s projected Rivington Street Settlement. The reporter noted that “the experiment is watched with much interest because the enemies of higher education of women have been making charges that women’s colleges tend to foster selfishness and concentrate individual interest in narrow channels of feeling abstracted from the general life of the world.” Both Hull-House and the Rivington Street Settlement were designed to appeal
to the college woman, who would embrace the work out of "the sense of uselessness and
frustration" that was so prevalent among them. The College Settlement Association,
formed in 1887, included women from the five eastern women's colleges: Wellesley,
Vassar, Bryn Mawr, Smith, and the Harvard Annex (Radcliffe). They had difficulty
raising funds for the work, but in September 1889, only days after Hull-House, five
resident volunteers joined head resident Jean Fine in establishing the CSA's first
settlement at Rivington Street on New York's Lower East Side.  

The CSA settlements were clearly distinguished from other settlements by their
segregation from men. The CSA was "a voluntary association of college women rather
than an association of settlement residents." But, as one historian has declared,
settlement houses were more than a "nineteenth-century women's dormitory" or a re-
creation of the "college world for adult women in the city." Consistent with Mary
McDowell's description of the University of Chicago Settlement, those of the CSA were
communities of like-minded people, homes shaped by their inhabitants whose character
"strengthen(ed) the influence of the house." Moreover, as a collection of settlements,
the CSA was able to offer to a number of women the opportunity to stretch and to
uncover a seemingly limitless potential as part of a larger, collective body of reformers.
The CSA settlements were without the dominance of a single personality to shape and
define their mission, tactics, and goals, as Jane Addams did for Hull-House.

The founders of both Hull-House and the Rivington Street Settlement worked
from a masculine perception and appreciation of knowledge and experience, in an effort
to fulfill their feminine mandate to serve and to protect the moral fiber of the nation. For
these first American women scholars, "the value of knowledge lay in its social utility."
Settlement work gave purpose to their education and allowed the women to gain experience, which was "the only guide to perceptions of reality." These women would prove what was possible through action, not theory.\textsuperscript{18} Thus, Vida Scudder's effort to create the CSA was an attempt to make "concrete and actual" for this first generation of college women "what had only been abstract and confusing for her."\textsuperscript{19} Scudder was fashioning the methods by which she and other college women could make practical their education. In this way, "the founders constructed a social class that was above, yet part of all other classes – a kind of superclass characterized by living a genteel middle-class home life in the midst of poverty,"\textsuperscript{20} suggesting that these women were looking to expand the societal parameters of gender.

The residents and workers who entered into the settlement community, whether at Hull-House or through the CSA, came from similar backgrounds, held common social and political ideals, and devoted an average length of time to their participation in the work. The typical settlement resident, transcending all three phases of the movement, was college-educated and usually "unmarried," as "marriage meant the end of active participation in the movement, leaving the young and unmarried to carry on." These men and women had urban roots, growing up "in pleasant residential neighborhoods," and were "moderately well-to-do." They approached the work from a "nagging sense of uneasiness about their relationship to the world's problems." They tended to view the work, moreover, as "merely an extension of graduate school" or as "a place to test the new ideas and theories discovered in college."\textsuperscript{21} Their tenure in settlement work was short-lived; "after a few years' apprenticeship they usually moved on to paid positions with social agencies or public institutions."\textsuperscript{22}
The primary difference separating the first generation of residents from the pioneer leadership was one of age, as it contributed to the experience of settlement work. These younger men and women often came directly from colleges and universities, bypassing the period of drift commonly experienced by their elders who had been born before or during the Civil War. Their main contribution to the settlement movement and Progressive reform was the establishment of a working concept of charity as a function of municipal government, as distinct from the uses of private and church-based philanthropies. The next generation of residents, who in the new century would be among the first professional social workers, represented the Progressive Era’s growing understanding of the benefits of reform. The settlement idea, which had been articulated by the pioneer generation and enforced through the development of the settlement method by the second generation, was realized by this third wave of residents as occupation rather than vocation.23

It was not unusual for a resident, upon graduation from college or completion of a post-graduate degree, to move from one settlement to another, possibly to join a new settlement house as its head resident or founder. Myer Bloomfield graduated from Harvard in June 1901 and planned to “start a settlement in the North End of Boston next fall.” Bloomfield wrote to Jane Addams asking to visit Hull-House that summer in order to observe “the settlement and its kindred activities.” His primary experience with the settlement movement was that of a neighbor, as he had lived as a young man near the Henry Street Settlement and had “grown up with the settlement movement of the East Side” as one of Stanton Coit’s “East Side boys.”24
A few among the first-generation residents rose above their peers to become leaders in their own right. Julia Lathrop and Florence Kelley are the most extraordinary examples, but Robert Hunter is more typical of this group. Born in Terre Haute, Indiana, he graduated in 1896 from Indiana University with degrees in social science and economics. By 1899, with experience gained from "several Chicago settlements," Hunter joined Hull-House as a resident. He had also been named the president of the Chicago Board of Charities. He went on to publish two books on reform, *Tenements in Chicago* (1901), the result of an investigation sponsored by the City Homes Association of Chicago, and *Poverty* (1905). He was drawn to charity and settlement work by a religious impulse that the Social Gospel could not fulfill. Hunter "struggled" over time "to connect his faith to a practical career," searching for "the social role that would accommodate the lay ministry that most attracted him."25 This complaint was common among those early settlement residents who encompassed their social efforts with Christian precepts. Social settlements were by no means radical. The conservative agenda frustrated many men and women who rejected compromise and planning and proposed to work directly towards changing society, not simply modifying it.

By 1894, there were enough settlement houses in the neighborhoods of Chicago to form the Chicago Federation of Settlements. Jane Addams was its president and Graham Taylor its secretary. Although the National Federation of Settlements was not formed until 1911, other cities followed Chicago's example by forming local federations. The nature of the settlement movement was one of cooperation. The settlements shared ideas, programs, residents, workers, donors and patrons, and even architects. The Chicago Federation included ten settlements in its membership when a Convention of
Social Settlements was held at Hull-House in May 1899. In addition to Hull-House, the Federation included the Northwestern University Settlement, Chicago Commons, and the University of Chicago Settlement.26

The Northwestern University Settlement was founded in December 1891 around the dinner table of Hugh and Alice Wilson. The first in Chicago to be affiliated with a university, the settlement was supported by a Council, headed by Emma Winner Rogers, wife of Henry Wade Rogers, the university’s president from 1890-1900. Its first head resident was Charles Zeublin, who later joined the faculty of the University of Chicago and was one of the contributors to Hull House Maps and Papers, published in 1895 out of a series of investigations conducted by that settlement’s residents and workers.27

Chicago Commons was the second most influential settlement in Chicago, due in large part to its founder, Graham Taylor, a Congregational minister. Taylor had been invited to Chicago in 1894 to join the faculty of the Chicago Theological Seminary. He had strong hopes that the city of Chicago and the Seminary together would provide him an opportunity to follow through with his intention “to erect a seminary settlement house where his students could live among the working classes and observe social and industrial conditions.”28 Chicago Commons was oriented toward the Social Gospel, a New Testament-based Christianity that preached the salvation of the individual through an evangelical message of social service to the community. As part of the work of the settlement, Taylor contributed to and John Palmer Gavit edited “A Monthly Record of Social Settlement Life and Work” originally called Chicago Commons or The Commons.29 In the first issue of April 1896, Gavit included a quotation from the settlement’s Articles of Incorporation to describe the purpose of both the settlement and
the journal. He wrote, “It consists of a group of Christian people who choose to live where they seem to be needed, for the purpose of being all they can be to the people with whom they identify themselves, and for all whose interests they will do what they can.”

*The Commons* contained news of the settlement movement in the United States and abroad, with special emphasis upon Chicago and its own programs.

The University of Chicago Settlement was situated in an area referred to as “Back of the Yards” or “Packingtown,” in reference to the Chicago stock yards. The University of Chicago’s Christian Union established the settlement in 1894, although there was no formal affiliation with the university, intending it to serve as a laboratory for the new Department of Sociology. Jane Addams suggested Mary McDowell for head resident, an experienced kindergartener who had worked at both Hull-House and the Northwestern University Settlement. McDowell moved into the settlement’s rented rooms on September 17, 1894, shortly before Chicago Commons opened its doors. By this time the social reformers had realized a more complete understanding of the nature of settlement work. McDowell gave an explanation of the settlement’s purpose in an article published in the Chicago *Record* in which she was quoted, saying, “A settlement is not an institution . . . . It is a neighborhood in itself. We cannot start out with a cast-iron plan and not deviate from a certain course. As our work develops and we see the need before us we shall extend our plans.”

Though she began as a first generation resident, Mary McDowell was more akin to the pioneer founders. As with Jane Addams and others in the leadership of the movement, she had been born before the Civil War to a family of means. Her father brought the family to Chicago in 1865, and then moved to the suburbs of Evanston after
the Chicago fire in 1871. She also held a responsible position in her family dynamic, and, whether as an explanation or in consequence, was her father’s confidante. Unlike most of the men and women who founded settlements, she had not been to college; instead she attended a kindergarten school. She was well acquainted with the religious and philanthropic communities in Chicago. In her approach to the work, McDowell had more in common with Graham Taylor than Jane Addams, motivated less by subjective need than by acceptance of the tenets of the Social Gospel. As she articulated in her unpublished autobiography, settlement work gave her the opportunity to share in the broader life of the community. McDowell appreciated the University Settlement as “a chance to work with the least skilled workers in our greatest industry (meat packing), not for them as a missionary, but with them as a neighbor and a seeker after truth.”

By the turn of the century Chicago, Hull-House, and Jane Addams in particular, exerted a strong influence over the settlement movement and the reform community. From the time of her participation in the Ethical Culture Societies’ summer school at Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1892, Addams was established “as the national leader of the settlement movement in America.” Although other pioneer leaders were present at the conference — Vida Scudder, Helena Dudley, Emily Balch, and Jean Fine, all of the CSA, to name a few — it was Addams who laid claim to a national voice. Addams gave the credit to Julia Lathrop, noting in her biography of her friend, “Julia urged that the idea we were trying to embody at Hull-House should be put before the country while settlements were still young.” On their way back to Chicago, she and Lathrop stopped to meet with a publisher in New York City. “The articles” taken from two addresses she had given
were later published in a book with other lectures delivered at Plymouth” titled *Philanthropy and Social Progress.*

In considering the central role Addams grew to play in the Progressive Movement, one must wonder why it was Addams out of all the prominent reformers of the day whom the public should have embraced as a national symbol. The key likely lay in Addams’ personalizing of the settlement movement. In making Hull-House the vehicle of her own personal salvation, and in telling her story in *Twenty Years at Hull-House* as one with that of the settlement and reform movements, Addams “embodied in her person a solution to the problem of the role of women which was acceptable for both men and women” - and was also “no threat to the accepted fabric of society.”

Hull-House did not have a “head resident” in the same way that other settlement houses did. Jane Addams was clearly the defining element of the house, and all who resided in or worked at the settlement took their cues from her. Louise de Koven Bowen was a wealthy philanthropist actively involved in the work of Hull-House from its early days. She considered her relationship with Jane Addams as one of pupil to teacher: “I feel that, in a certain measure, I received there from Miss Addams the training and education in social work” that might be gained from a college education. This description of Bowen’s relationship with Addams presumes a distance between two women who worked together closely for decades and even shared leisure time. The distance might be ascribed to the high regard in which Bowen held the younger woman, or to a lack of warmth on the part of Addams.

Some historians have portrayed Jane Addams as a repressed woman with a domineering personality. She was the direct opposite of Ellen Starr, a woman who
could be described in terms more representative of the mainstream of females in the settlement movement - as someone who “craved intimacy and surrendered herself unself-consciously to passionate attachments.” Affectionate relationships with other women were essential to Starr - as emotional outlets, as support structures for her psyche, and as conveyors of vocational experience. Jane Addams was no less susceptible to the need for emotional connections. Within the first year or so of the settlement, Ellen found herself “replaced” in “Addams’ affection” by Mary Rozet Smith, daughter of Charles Mather Smith, a wealthy philanthropist and donor of the building that housed the Hull-House Music School. Smith was introduced to Hull-House in 1890, and shortly thereafter she and Addams became the primary association in each other’s lives. Smith was Addams’ emotional support and acted for her, often in ways not available to Addams’ more restricted personality. During the years of her public life as a reformer, Smith “may have been the only individual who knew a ‘private’ Jane Addams.”

Women’s intimate relationships helped to create a “secure and empathic world,” one in which they “valued each other.” In the middle-class culture of the nineteenth century – when the middle class still qualified as an elite, men and women were alien creatures, “socialized to different behavior.” Same-sex relationships were “supported and paralleled by severe social restrictions” proscribing intimate contact between young men and women. The “cultural taboos” of the nineteenth century were designed to “inhibit” heterosexual behaviors. It is no wonder then “that within such a world of female support, intimacy, and ritual it was only to be expected that adult women would turn trustingly and lovingly to each other.” The bonds between women functioned as conduits of acculturation, occasionally extending beyond the lives of the persons involved and into
the next generation. "It was a behavior they had observed and learned since childhood."\textsuperscript{43}

In addition, choosing to examine intimate female relationships through a cultural lens illuminates the fact that women who married in most instances gave up their independence and lost the opportunity for such deep and satisfying fulfillment as might be gained through involvement in charity or reform work. The alternative, however, "was not a foreclosure on rich, emotional partnerships." The beauty of the Boston marriage, as long-term, companionate relationships between two women were designated, was to be found in its nature of interdependence. In a Boston marriage, a woman was free to continue to develop her personality through activity in the public sphere, while at the same time she gained the advantages of a committed relationship with another person of her own choosing, a relation outside the scope of family obligation. In addition, intimate relationships with other women were not excluded, in contrast with heterosexual marriage, and allowed for a life in which "no single relationship had to bear the burden of all the partners' needs."\textsuperscript{44}

The close and intimate bonds Jane Addams formed with Julia Lathrop and their colleague Florence Kelley were among the strongest within the Hull-House family, paralleling her more intensely personal relationship with Mary Smith. The three reformers had much in common. They were of similar age and economic background, with family connections to the Quaker faith, woman suffrage, and abolition. Father rather than mother had played the more significant role in their lives while growing up, greatly influencing each young woman's self-perception and worldview. Lathrop and Kelley worked in Addams' shadow while residents at Hull-House, but not so deeply as to
miss detection by prominent men. Lathrop made a name for herself in the realm of civil service reform, in addition to her work on behalf of children. Kelley came to Hull-House with a background in legal studies and a familiarity with the tenets of Marxian socialism. Her campaigns on behalf of women and children laborers during her stay at Hull-House and her later work as General Secretary of the National Consumer League carried Kelley onto the public stage. Over time the two women developed powerful voices and became leaders of active movements for reform reflecting their own interests, exerting authority in their own right.

When Florence Kelley’s daughter Margaret died in September 1905, Kelley withdrew into herself for a period of mourning. As with her own family when Mary Linn died in 1888, it was Addams’ first inclination to rush to Kelley’s side, to share her pain and comfort her in her grief. Kelley was living in New York at the Henry Street Settlement, and Margaret was to be buried in Philadelphia. Addams sent off a telegram asking, “Shall I come We are all grief stricken When funeral.” Receiving no response from Kelley, four days later Addams wrote to Kelley’s son Nicholas. “My dear Ko,” she began, “I was ready to come to Philadelphia but could not find where your mother would be.” She did not wish to arrive unexpectedly or to intrude uninvited. And yet, “I find it hard to keep away and my whole soul longs for her.” She asked him to let her know “if at any time it seems that I might be of special use and comfort to your mother.” Addams’ reaction to the silence from Kelley was not dissimilar to her experience in Italy upon hearing of Mary Linn’s death. She was a woman who needed to share her grief with the one more principally affected, in the attempt to ease both of their pain. Her feelings of loss were genuine and sincere, but the greater emotion seems to have been
empathic, sympathetic to other loved ones left behind. She wrote to Lillian Wald at Henry Street two days after her letter to Nicholas Kelley, asking for "word of Sister Kelley's condition." Addams was "filled with anxiety" and could "scarcely think of anything else." The next day she wrote directly to Kelley herself, as "we hear nothing from Miss Wald nor any of you but the first telegrams." She ended the note, "My heart bleeds for you, dearest."46

Addams scattered terms of endearment and loving concern throughout her correspondence with settlement residents and reform colleagues with whom she connoted a familial relationship, whether sincere or rhetorical one cannot always know. She did not hesitate to press the emotional buttons necessary to satisfy the Hull-House residents and keep them active within the fold. Addams resolved a crisis with Eleanor Smith, director of the Hull-House Music School, by emphasizing the homelier aspects of their relationship over the purely business ones. She wanted Smith to "stop calculating how 'profitable' you are" and "come back to" the household "because you belong to it and you are a part of it."47

In 1903, Rose M. Gyles, a resident who had charge of the girls in the Hull-House Gymnasium, took temporary leave of the settlement. She wrote to Addams from England in 1904 worrying over her position at Hull-House. "I have always felt a little sensitive about my being allowed to stay with you at Hull-House so long," she wrote. "I mean, I have perhaps been selfish in keeping someone else out of so happy a place." Gyles' had left because of personal and financial matters: "I was having a hard struggle to make both ends meet without my father's help." She concluded on a plaintive note, "If you want to keep me . . . And if not - well - I'll make the best of it!" Addams responded to "Sister Gyles" while on summer vacation in Gloucester, Massachusetts,
with Mary Smith. She told Gyles that she was aware Rockford College had offered her a position with its gymnasium, but “how much I hope you don’t take it.” She tried to assure the younger woman of her value at the settlement, going into some detail about “how much I appreciate . . . and admire your work.” The situation was resolved in favor of Hull-House.⁴⁸

The relationships among the residents at Hull-House were personal and intimate, extending beyond the settlement to carry over into other related reform work. The work was their bond, encouraging in them a greater respect and affection for one another. They did indeed create a “female dominion” within the reform community. While they did not exclude men, Hull-House was representative of the settlement movement in that the dominant perspective was female. The women who lived there formed personal and professional connections in settlement work which they later developed into opportunities for useful employment in the broader sphere of national reform. Placing an emphasis on gender-specific issues, such as child care and domestic science, the settlement presented to the women of the Progressive Era an effective “female community,” chosen by those who entered into it by “acts of will.”⁴⁹ Accordingly, one of the best ways to understand Hull-House and the settlement movement is by viewing it through the needs of the women who lived within it. American settlement houses were established not for the neighborhood alone. For women like Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr, the settlement provided “a life of action and community” and a “foundation of personal support” that “made their public lives possible.”⁵⁰
Notes

1 Allen F. Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 6. Toynebee Hall was the settlement established by Canon Samuel Barnett in 1884 in the slums of East London; its residents were college students from Oxford and Cambridge universities.


3 Ibid., 92-93.

4 Jane Addams to Ellen Gates Starr, January 24, 1889, Ellen Starr Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA (hereafter cited as SSC).


9 "Business Woman," no publication listed, January 24, 1896, Hull-House Scrapbooks, Hull-House Association Records, Jane Addams Memorial Collection, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL (hereafter cited as HHAR); Allen B. Pond to Helen Culver, April 8, 1906, Correspondence, Jane Addams Memorial Collection, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL (hereafter cited as JAMC).


11 Davis, *American Heroine*, 59-60. That summer, before the settlement had opened its doors, Addams and her fellow residents began the collection of newspaper clippings that make up the volumes of Scrapbooks in the Hull-House Association Records contained in the Jane Addams Memorial Collection at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

notes, continued

13 "A Chicago Belle’s Schemes to Help the Poor,” New York World, June 16, 1889, Scrapbooks, HHAR. These two articles (nl2 and nl3) reveal a public awareness of the fears of some in the medical and educational communities that this first generation of college-educated women would be undone by the over-exertion of their mental faculties. See also John Haller, Jr., and Robin Haller, The Physician and Sexuality in Victorian America (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 28-30, 37-38. The Hallers found that “a large number of physicians regarded education as a factor” in the development of neurasthenia. “The young girl needed to conserve the powers of the brain during her formative years,” principally due to the fact that the female was “more conventional and more a creature of routine” than the male, and was burdened with “innate limitations on her capacities.” There was a certain panache attached to the diagnosis of neurasthenia. College women, such as Margaret Cleaves, who published The Autobiography of a Neurasthenic in 1910, argued that they had been educated towards the masculine as well as the feminine, and since society was not yet prepared to accept such women, they fulfilled no practical purpose. Essentially, there must be an exception to any rule that lumped women together and failed to distinguish the influence of cultural and intellectual determinants on biology. Thus, claimed the Hallers, “one receives the impression that these women had the satisfaction of believing that society thought them better women for their neurasthenia.”


16 Horowitz, “Hull-House as Women’s Space,” 55.


19 Carrell, Reflections in a Mirror, 68-72.

20 Rousmanier, “Cultural Hybrid in the Slums,” 65.

21 Davis, Spearheads for Reform, 33-38.


24 Myer Bloomfield to Jane Addams, May 23, 1901, Jane Addams Papers, Swathmore College Peace Collection, Swathmore, PA (hereafter cited as SCPC).

25 Wade, Graham Taylor, 418; Davis, Spearheads for Reform, 129; Carson, Settlement Folk, 29, 96-97.
notes, continued


29 The name of the journal evolved over time. Originally, in April 1896 Volume I number 1 was titled *Chicago Commons*; beginning with Volume II in 1897 it was called *The Commons*. After merging with *Charities* in October 1905, Volume XV, it was known as *Charities and Commons*. A second merger occurred in March 1906 with *Jewish Charities* (no change). In April 1909, Volume XX, the name was changed to *The Survey*.

30 *Chicago Commons*, I:1 (April, 1896): 1; reproduced on microform from the collection in the New York State Library, Albany, NY (hereafter cited as NYSL).


32 University of Chicago Service League Records, Series VIII, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL (hereafter cited as SLR); “Culture at the Yards,” Chicago *Record*, September 12, 1894, Scrapbooks, HHAR.

33 Wilson, *Mary McDowell*, 18. Wilson wrote, “In womanhood she wanted to work out a career for herself, and in the days when kindergartens were new and their work experimental she studied in the school of Elizabeth Harrison, now the National Kindergarten College.” See also Davis, *Spearheads for Reform*, 43-45. Davis offered a brief description of the kindergarten movement, which grew in essence out of the ideas of Friedrich Froebel transplanted in America by German immigrants after the failed Revolution of 1848. Davis believed the kindergarten and the settlement to be natural partners: “Indeed, the kindergarten ideal of developing the whole personality seemed closely related to the settlement idea of making life more meaningful for those who lived in the overcrowded tenement districts.” (44)

34 Mary E. McDowell, “Beginnings,” 2, CHS (italics hers).

35 Carrell, *Reflections in a Mirror*, 201.


notes, continued


39 In particular, historians giving primary consideration to women other than Jane Addams tended to view her personality in a comparatively negative light. With regard to her male colleagues, however, she is usually allowed a more feminine, though clearly atypical, perspective. See Carrell, *Reflections in a Mirror*, and Davis, *American Heroine* and *Spearheads for Reform*.

40 Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 7, 16. See also Carrell, *Reflections in a Mirror*, 201. Carrell investigated Ellen Starr and Vida Scudder not only as reformers but also as women with much in common, emphasizing the religious and emotional aspects of their personalities, which took root from a core of sensuality. Carrell presented Starr and Scudder as dependent upon “consuming relationships with other women.”

41 Stebner, *Women of Hull House*, 160. Stebner believed that in the relationship between the two women Smith acted as a force to ground Addams, allowing her the freedom and fostering her desire to explore her personality in the public sphere. She stated, “... their friends treated them like a married couple,” but Stebner did not assume a sexual aspect to this “marriage.” “The question of what makes a relationship between two women lesbian is a contemporary debate.” (165) The union had benefits for Smith as well. “Like many women, Smith’s vocation was innately tied to her personal relational commitments.” (164)

42 Carson, *Settlement Folk*, 82.

43 Carol Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth Century America,” *Signs* 31 (1975), 2-3, 8, 9, 14, 20-21, 27-29. Smith-Rosenberg considered same-sex, affectionate relationships between women in the nineteenth century as representative of cultural values, “as one aspect of women’s overall relations with one another.” Rejecting the vague sexual connotations inferred by other historians, she attempted to “shift the focus of the study from a concern with deviance to that of defining configurations of legitimate behavioral norms and options” by asking, “What emotional function did such female love serve? What was its place within the hetero- and homosocial worlds which women jointly inhabited?” (2-3, 8) She suggested it was more natural to “view sexual and emotional impulses as part of a continuum or spectrum of affect gradations strongly effected by cultural norms and arrangements, a continuum influenced in part by observed and thus learned behavior.” (28-29). Smith Rosenberg’s findings were consistent with Jill Kerr Conway’s assertion of the priority given to experience as a conveyor of knowledge (reference to note number 20, op. cit.).


45 Jane Addams to Florence Kelley, September 29, 1905, Florence Kelley Papers, New York Public Library (hereafter cited as NYPL); Jane Addams to Nicholas Kelley, October 1, 1905, JAMC.

46 Jane Addams to Lillian Wald, October 3, 1905; Jane Addams to Florence Kelley, October 4, 1905; JAMC.
Kathryn Kish Sklar, “Hull-House in the 1890s,” *Signs* 10:41 (1985): 658, 659, 662, 668, 672; Horowitz, “Hull-House as Women’s Space,” 50, 53-54. See also Carson, *Settlement Folk*, 95. Sklar described the Hull-House community as “one of the most politically effective groups of women reformers in United States history.” (658) She argued that this was so largely due to the “close affiliation with male-reformers and male institutions,” in addition to “the gender-specific issues they championed” which “helped advance class specific issues.” Because they did not confine themselves to a female world or sphere, these women “were able to realize the full potential of their collective power” by “reaching outside” and practicing “a more holistic approach than earlier reformers.” (659)

Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion*, 17.
Chapter Four

The Settlement Method

The Chicago settlement community earned its place in the vanguard of reform in large part by campaigning for a reevaluation of its purpose, method, and uses. Perhaps its most significant contribution lay in the effort to clarify the general perception of the settlement idea within the larger concepts of Progressive reform. In 1896 the Chicago Commons settlement began publishing a journal they hoped would encourage the settlement movement in America and keep it in line with the changing reform environment. Throughout the Progressive Era, The Commons was consistent in its promotion of social issues and its efforts to foster a growing understanding of the value of positive, active government. Originally titled Chicago Commons, John Gavit wrote in issue number four that the name of both settlement and paper was intended to give expression to the design of the work. “For the idea of the sharing of what each has equally with all” was to editor Gavit “the very conception of that community and communion . . . which constitute the essence of the settlement motive and movement.”

A newspaperman from Hartford, Connecticut, Gavit penned “almost every line in its four volumes not appearing under other signatures” until 1900, when he left the Chicago settlement. Graham Taylor then took over the main weight of editorial duty and continued to serve the journal in some editorial capacity through 1919. Beginning with Volume II, in April 1897 the title was shortened to The Commons. In October 1905, The Commons merged with Charities, the publication of the New York Charity Society, and the
new weekly periodical became known by the unwieldy name Charities and Commons. Edward T. Devine shared editorial duties with Taylor, and the journal was published in both New York and Chicago. In the first issue, Devine stated his belief that the common policy of the two journals would be given "increased effect;" Taylor made reference to "economy of resource and administrative efficiency." A second merger occurred in March 1906 with Jewish Charities but did not result in any further change in the name. In April 1909 the journal took on its final incarnation as The Survey.\(^3\) In the beginning, Taylor and Gavit had hopes The Commons would gain the sanction of the larger settlement community and become a forum in which various aspects of the reform agenda would be communicated, debated, and resolved. When the College Settlement Association announced in 1901 its decision to use the journal as a "medium of its communication with its own constituencies and the public," the editors lauded "this official action" for being "the first formal recognition which The Commons has received that it is fulfilling the purpose for which it was started."\(^4\)

From the outset, the Chicago community accepted the idea of both a subjective and an objective necessity for social settlements. As it was defined and recognized by Jane Addams, the subjective necessity for social settlements could be found in the need of many middle- and upper-middle class Americans to give shape and purpose to their lives. These men and women would find in the work a more complete understanding of the brotherhood of man, founded upon the basis of humanity rather than Christianity, upon ethical rather than moral behavior. For Addams, the larger purpose of social settlements was "to add the social function to democracy."\(^5\) Graham Taylor's appreciation of the subjective necessity differed from Addams' in that it bore more
heavily the imprint of Social Gospel teachings. An ordained minister, Taylor’s social conscience developed out of his embrace of Christian precepts. Recalling his transformation from minister to reformer, Taylor wrote, “And thus I was led to the conviction that the evangelization of industrial life and societal conditions is necessary to the evangelization of the soul, still more of the world.” In contrast to Hull-House, which distanced itself from any direct connections with organized religion, Chicago Commons drew moral and financial support from the Christian community of Chicago. In the first number of their new journal, Taylor and Gavit quoted their purpose from the Chicago Commons Articles of Incorporation: “It consists of a group of Christian people who choose to live where they seem to be needed . . . .”

The objective necessity mirrored the subjective; the urban masses of working-class men and women, immigrant and native-born, needed a helping hand, a leg-up from the lowest rungs of society if they were to share in the enlightenment and opportunity represented by the American dream of equality and democracy. It was thus “a thesis of ‘mutual need.’” However, it has been argued that reformers, whether out of a motive of status politics or as the fruit of commonly held racist attitudes, endeavored to erase all class distinctions and inure American society to middle-class values and ideals. In short, “The early settlement idea was an expression of the subjective necessity of the members of the upper-middle class to serve, and the objective necessity of the lower classes to be served and led.” Taylor defended himself and his colleagues against such criticism when he wrote in his memoir, “Personal acquaintanceship is the working capital for most of the settlement’s local work as well as for its wider influence.” It was necessary that the settlement use its influence on both the municipal government it wished to reform and
the local populace it endeavored to aid if it were to have any real impact on society overall. The settlement method was such that "each development was taken in response to a discerned need, and every detail was designed with reference to its particular use." Pragmatic in their idealism, Taylor believed the residents were uniformly positive in the intention of their efforts towards bettering their neighbors' lot in life through improved social conditions. "We did not attempt to superimpose the sanctions of our own or any other group upon any group of our neighbors. Taking each as we found it, we sought only to inspire its members with an aspiration for something a little better and higher than what had satisfied them."\(^{11}\)

Up to this time, charity in the United States had been private, usually church-based, and philanthropic. The state did not bear the brunt of the cost, nor did it oversee or circumscribe the process. Instead it was assumed that the wealthy – the "haves," would do their duty to provide for the poor and destitute – "the have-nots," relieving the community as a whole of the financial burden. Private, middle-class social organizations – largely staffed by women – would distribute the aid appropriately. Louise de Koven Bowen, born into wealth and well married, is an example of this capitalist tenet. She learned early the "responsibility of money," with the emphasis "that God would hold me accountable for the manner in which I used my talents."\(^{12}\) In those gilded days, however, the uses of charity were limited to meeting only the basest needs of the desperate, as common perception held that poverty was the result of individual moral failure rather than unjust societal conditions. Charity was not held to any universal notion of human decency, and in most instances was offered out of pity rather than sympathy. But, as Allen Pond declared in an article published in 1890, "We are coming to distrust the real
efficacy of much of our institutional and wholesale philanthropy.” He perceived a change was in the air. “It will soon be a recognized axiom that any form of relief which does not tend to enable the recipient to become self-dependent is at best a questionable makeshift and usually a misapplication of charity.” Louise Bowen concurred with Pond’s sentiments. “I had always had a very strong feeling,” she wrote, “that something must be done to put a family on its feet and not just to give temporary aid.”

When Julia Lathrop took a seat on the Illinois State Board of Charities in July 1893, she was in a position to evaluate the purpose, method, and uses of charity and to compare them with those of the burgeoning settlement movement. In 1894, Lathrop was invited to speak at the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, an organization of charity workers and public relief agencies. The first settlement worker to do so, she was followed in 1896 by Mary McDowell and in 1897 by Jane Addams. In 1904, the Conference established a department of Neighborhood Improvement. The next year The Commons merged with Charities, symbolizing the confluence of settlement and charity work. Finally, in 1909 the department of Needy Families was renamed Families and Neighborhoods and that same year Jane Addams was elected president of the Conference. By exerting a persistent though gradual influence within local and national philanthropic organizations, the settlement movement effected a change in the emphasis of charity work from that of the moral condition of the individual to that of the ethical framework of society. In reply to the question “Is the Settlement a Charity?” Graham Taylor proclaimed the settlement deserving of “the chief place” in any gathering of charities, due to its position as the “more fundamental reform agency” and for the way in which it “boldly foreshadows . the day of normal fellowship and normal social
democracy.” The issue, then, was not merely moral but social; at stake not only the salvation of American society but also the fulfillment of democracy’s promise.

Rather than usurp the role of charity, the settlement movement insinuated itself deep within the fabric of existing philanthropic organizations. In this same manner the settlement community intertwined and enmeshed its members within the larger arena of American reform. The settlement would improve the uses of charity by revising its purpose and supplying a better method. In an article published in *The Charities Review*, Hull-House resident Alice Miller described the settlement philosophy as “practicable socialism.” The settlement community would provide “a means of communication between the different charitable interests of the city and the people who need their help.” Indeed, the Hull-House purpose as stated in its Charter depended upon its ability to establish itself as an intermediary between institutions and the people. The settlement would produce change on a large scale, but through a focus upon individuals and as the agent of the neighborhood.

The neighborhood was a microcosm, a laboratory where the residents and volunteers developed their system for reform out of the life of the settlement, and so was directly related to the perceptions and preconceptions of those same residents and volunteers. In *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, Jane Addams’ discussion of the subjective necessity suggested that the processes involved in settlement work derived from an understanding of the reciprocal relation among the classes of society. The scheme combined “the desire to interpret democracy in social terms” with “the impulse . . . to aid in the race progress,” upon the foundation of “the Christian movement toward humanitarianism.” Addams concluded, “The one thing to be dreaded in the settlement is
that it lose its flexibility, its power of quick adaptation, its readiness to change its methods as its environment demands.”

Mary Kingsbury Simkhovich of Greenwich House in New York City had come to the same conclusion. In a 1906 issue of Charities and Commons she wrote, “To act on the basis of knowledge gained is the purpose of the settlement.” Simkhovich outlined three stages in the development of “the settlement method.” The first was “social impressionism,” during which the residents sought to understand the personality of the neighborhood and its specific needs. During the second stage, “interpretation,” the residents acted as a bridge between the people of the neighborhood and various municipal and state authorities. The final stage was “action,” signified by the development of experimental programs that would later be incorporated and maintained by the municipal, state, or federal government. Simkhovitch declared that within the settlement community “the underlying method remains the same and we hold the key to the genuineness of the settlement by the test of this method.”

Clearly, the most pivotal stage of the three was the first – getting to know the people of the neighborhood and gaining their acceptance and trust. Mary McDowell understood this intimate exposure of one class of people to another to be essential. Living in the neighborhood “day by day a good understanding had been built up, bringing in time an accumulation of facts that open up an avenue to social and civic problems that cannot be obtained by absentee students” or the casual charity worker. The residents who joined the settlement differed from their neighbors principally in the knowledge that living there was a choice, but those who made the settlement their primary home came to
empathize with the men, women, and children who cycled through the tenement landscape.

The simplest and most effective way of introducing the settlement to the neighborhood was through the children. Hull-House, Chicago Commons, and the University of Chicago Settlement each began their work in the wards of Chicago by establishing kindergartens and nurseries for the youngest children, those not yet enrolled in school or employed in factories, department stores, or sweatshops. The mothers of these children gained a favorable impression of the settlement through this personal contact with the residents and volunteers. Another particular concern of the tenement neighborhoods in Chicago was the lack of bathing facilities. In the *Hull-House Bulletin* for January 1891, Hull-House announced that it had built five public bathing rooms in one of its wings, to be open “daily in summer; in winter, on Wednesdays and Saturdays.” By addressing the personal concerns of the families within their vicinity, the settlement houses opened up dialogues by which they were able to gauge the need for a variety of reforms and the relative benefits of experimental programs.

In addition to reflecting the neighbors’ needs, the expansion of the settlement and the development of its programs were strongly influenced by the specific interests of the settlement residents and volunteers. In March 1892 the *Bulletin* reported, “A Hull-House Diet Kitchen has been opened in the rear cottage. . . . Foods for the sick are prepared daily. . . .” The Hull-House kitchen was part of the settlement’s attempt to persuade working-class wives and mothers of the benefits of good nutrition. This concern with domestic science went hand-in-glove with the settlement community’s faith in the value of leisure time in the lives of working men and women. If the settlement movement was
about improving social conditions, the entirety of the societal construct must be considered. This included the home as well as the working environment. In August 1893 the Chicago herald reported the erection of a new building on a plot of ground behind the main wing of Hull-House. Within were the “people’s kitchen,” as the diet kitchen became known, as well as “a restaurant and lunchroom” or coffeehouse, “a gymnasium and a club room.” Hull-House also had established “a large playground for the children of the neighborhood in the next block.”

By the autumn of 1899, a full ten years since Hull-House opened its doors, the Chicago Chronicle could state, “There is now fairly completed a group of substantial buildings which will give comfortable and convenient quarters for every department of settlement work.” On a map representing the Hull-House complex published in 1904, the settlement proper covered the square plot of land facing Halsted on the west, Polk on the north, Ewing on the south, and backing onto an alley to the east. The female residents, including Jane Addams, had their rooms on the upper floors of the Main House. The juvenile court building was situated between the Main House and the Men’s Club Building, where the settlement’s male residents stayed. Married couples were lodged in the Hull-House Apartments on the corner of Halsted and Ewing. The Jane Club, a residential house for single working women, was on the alley between Ewing and Polk. The Athletic Field was located behind the Jane Club building. On the other side of the Main House was the Children's House, containing facilities for the boys club room, the Day Nursery, the Kindergarten, and the Music Studios. Around the corner on Polk was the coffeehouse and theater. Next door were the Butler Gallery and Annex, with the
art museum and studios, and the Bowen auditorium where the Women’s Club held its meetings, respectively. 

The purpose of such expansion was to provide for the varied and growing needs of Chicago’s neighborhoods, but the larger aim of the settlement community was to reform the municipal government so that ultimately it could carry the burden, rather than depending wholly upon private philanthropy. In action, their efforts translated into conferences, investigations, public campaigns, and political struggles. In result, the social consciousness was raised across the fabric of American social and political life. A corollary benefit was how involvement with a wide range of reform movements allowed those nurtured within the settlement community the confidence to take advantage of opportunities and so to leave their mark upon the Progressive Era — particularly with regard to women. For example, Florence Kelley and Julia Lathrop ordinarily would have been relegated to the netherworld of political action. However, due to the experience and stature they gained in settlement work and other areas of reform, these women spoke frankly to men in positions of power, penned legislation and assisted in its defense in the courts, and used their influence to effect public policy.

Hull-House benefited greatly from the arrival of Florence Kelley in December 1891, whose presence replaced the atmosphere of gentle persuasion at the settlement with a no-nonsense pragmatism. Dismissive at one time as to the usefulness of settlement work, her biographer and associate Josephine Goldmark believed that Kelley came to appreciate “the possibilities of the movement with all manner of civic and industrial as well as individual opportunities opening up on every side.” She found in Hull-House the lively “center of an area brimful of social significance, still largely unexplored.”
Addams gave Kelley charge of the Hull-House Labor Bureau and a salary of fifty dollars a month in addition to her board. Two months after her arrival, Kelley wrote her mother describing her pleasure that so soon she had returned to "working in the lines which I have always loved." At the same time he seated Julia Lathrop on the Illinois State Board of Charities, Governor Altgeld appointed Kelley to assist the Illinois Bureau of Labor in its investigation of Chicago sweatshops, to begin January 1893. This was quick on the heels of Kelley's responsibilities supervising the Chicago segment of "A Special Investigation of the Slums of Great Cities" for Carroll Wright, the federal Commissioner of Labor. Both investigations resulted in national exposure for Florence Kelley and the Hull-House settlement.

The slums investigation led the Hull-House residents and volunteers into each house, tenement, and room in their district. They conducted a thorough study of the life of the nineteenth ward, surveying the nationality, ethnicity, age, education, employment and cost of living of the people living there over the course of twelve months, beginning April 1, 1892. After completing the assignment for the Commissioner of Labor, the residents wrote essays about their findings, which were compiled and published in 1895 as *Hull-House Maps and Papers*. The ten chapters gave an insight into the Chicago settlement community's improving awareness of the vagaries of urban life at the close of the nineteenth century. Kelley's two contributions, "The Sweating System" and "Wage-Earning Children," were greatly influenced by her experience leading the Illinois Bureau of Labor investigation in 1893 and her later appointment as Chief Factory Inspector for the state of Illinois from 1894-1897. Most particularly affecting was the fight for
legislation limiting the workday to eight hours for women and children under the age of sixteen.

An unattributed article headlined "Cloakmakers Frame a Labor Bill," included the body of a proposed bill "drawn up by Mrs. Florence Kelley" among others. Abraham Bisno of the Cloakmakers Union (and Hull-House resident) submitted the bill to a joint investigating committee of the Illinois legislature which had been established as a consequence of the Illinois Bureau of Labor investigation. That bill was essentially the same as the one signed into law by Governor Altgeld and known as the Sweatshop Act or the Workshops and Factories Act of 1893. In the main it was designed to protect the health and welfare of children and to encourage their attendance in school. Section 4 of the law "prohibited the employment of any children under fourteen years of age in any manufacturing establishment, factory, or workshop within the state." Children between the years of fourteen and sixteen were permitted to work with the permission of a parent or guardian, validated by an "affidavit stating the age, date, and place of birth of such child." This certificate was "to be kept on file by the employer and produced for inspection upon demand." A physical examination and certificate of fitness were also required. The most offending portion of the bill, however, was Section 5, which "prohibited the employment of any female in any factory or workshop for more than eight hours in any one day or forty-eight hours in any one week."

The Sweatshop Act was an improvement upon earlier attempts at protective legislation because it included provisions for enforcement of the law. It established the Office of State Factory Inspector and authorized the hiring of a Chief Inspector, an Assistant, and ten deputies, five of whom would be women. Kelley was an indefatigable
Chief Factory Inspector; but, as her colleague Josephine Goldmark stipulated, “no staff of inspectors, however large and well-equipped, could grapple with the essential evil of tenement house manufacture in great cities.” Her annual reports were adamant denunciations of the sweating system and child labor. In *The Factory Inspectors of Illinois, Fourth Annual Report* (1896), Kelley argued, “The vital reason for legislative restriction of child labor . . is the injury to the child from too early employment.” Only a year earlier, in *Hull-House Maps and Papers*, Kelley had dismissed claims that child labor was in some instances necessary for the support or survival of the family. Ever the champion of justice, she urged all right-thinking men and women to consider the inhumanity of the conditions under which American workers labored. “It is for the sake of the children themselves that they should be removed from the labor market and kept in school, far more than for the sake of the effect that they have upon the conditions of the adults with whom they compete.”

In 1895 the Illinois Supreme Court in *Ritchie v. The People* overturned the 1893 Workshops and Factories Act as unconstitutional and an example of class legislation. Section 5 – restricting the labor of women to “eight hours in any one day or forty-eight hours in any one week” – was “not within (the state’s) limitations” under police powers. Justice Benjamin Magruder’s opinion claimed to support the “right to contract, which is thus included in the fundamental rights of liberty and property.” Noting that “it is not the nature of the things done” which mandated the state to seek protection of the workers “but the sex of the persons doing them,” the law was deemed class legislation. Magruder outlined the thinking of the court and in the process instructed the reform community on the path they should follow for proposing future legislation. “As a general thing it is the
province of the legislature to determine what regulations are necessary to protect the public health and secure the public safety and welfare.” To come under state police powers the law must be written in a way that makes clear the legislature’s intention to protect the health and welfare of those upon whom the restrictions will bear. “But inasmuch as sex is no bar, under the constitution and the law,” he maintained “the mere fact of sex will not justify the legislature in putting forth the police power of the state for the purpose of limiting her exercise of those rights” assumed fundamental to freedom of contract.  

Josephine Goldmark pointed to the decision in *Ritchie v. The People* as a pivotal moment in Florence Kelley’s public career. “With this decision of the Supreme Court of Illinois,” she wrote, “Mrs. Kelley entered upon her lifelong mission of interpreting the effects of court decisions upon American life,” which Kelley deplored as “the nullification of labor laws by the courts.” Denouncing judicial review with regard to *Ritchie* and similar protective legislation as “judge-made law,” Kelley continued throughout her life to argue the superior authority of the elected representatives of the people to decide what restrictions upon industry were necessary for the protection of the workers.

Graham Taylor shared Florence Kelley’s interest in the condition of the American worker. While Kelley pursued labor legislation as an avenue of reform, however, Taylor focused on the adversarial relationship between trades-unions and business. He firmly believed, as he wrote in the first of his Labor Studies published in *Chicago Commons,* “The Labor Movement is . . . far more than any organization, programme, plan of action, or single issue. *It is nothing less than the more or less concerted movement of the*
The conflict was inherent to the industrial world and thus afforded the reformer an opportunity to put the Social Gospel into action, to settle the class struggle and create the Kingdom of God on Earth. In his third Labor Study Taylor suggested, “The very first step toward solving the ‘Labor Problem’ is to acknowledge that the differences which divide the two great contending classes are real.” Taylor’s experience throughout the Progressive Era as an arbitrator in labor disputes convinced him that “the one hope of a permanent solution” to the conflict between the working classes and their employers could be found “in the arousement and education of public sentiment.” The American people were “a third party to the controversy . . . whose interests are more and more seriously involved, and upon whose attitude and action public safety and the progress of the whole Labor Movement in every last analysis depend.” Paramount to achieving this end, Taylor supported free speech and open dialogue among the American people.

Chicago Commons instituted a “Free Floor Discussion” every Tuesday evening in the basement of the settlement, where men gathered to discuss political theory and the labor movement. During his tenure at the Commons John Gavit chaired the events, which were intended to act as a safety valve within the community. Both Gavit and Taylor considered the free forum necessary and beneficial, as it called men “out of their corners where they nurse their grievances and brood social distrust and potential disorder.” Neither man saw danger in open political discourse; rather, both were eager for the opportunities that might be afforded on the occasions when men would “bring their discontent and their theory of social salvation into the light of day, for full
examination and frank discussion.” The settlement continued the evenings for nine years, until the gatherings became so sensational as to misrepresent the neighborhood and the settlement. Taylor wrote, “We tried . . . to counteract the tendency of radicals from other parts of the city to monopolize the discussion.” In addition, the settlement had to deal with the fact that “an increasing portion of the audience which likewise came from outside our neighborhood” attended the meetings as entertainment, seeking “to be amused by the extremes to which the speakers might go.” This situation arose out of the good intentions of the settlement, as “the only limit to the freedom of speech was against the advocacy of violence.”

The settlement community learned early that in order to succeed at grass roots reform – whether civil, legislative, or social, it was necessary at some point to dirty their hands. This fact of life, however, proved distasteful to more than a few of the residents and volunteers, especially those who tended to consider their work in more romantic lights. During a Conference of American Settlements held at Hull-House in May 1899, the attendees considered whether or not a settlement or its residents should become actively involved in the politics of its ward or municipality. Robert Woods of Andover House in Boston’s South End made an “earnest contention that the settlement would do well not to meddle in party politics.” Instead of working to rid municipal government of corruption, Woods “argued for the education of public sentiment to expect better service.” William E. McCord of the Union Seminary Settlement in New York disagreed, asserting “that it was the duty of settlements to raise up and train effective political workers . to battle for higher civic ideals.” Jane Addams, who had tried and failed to rid Chicago’s nineteenth ward of its corrupt alderman Johnny Powers, “held that the
settlement had no right to meddle in every other part of the community’s life and ignore that in which the people were most interested.” Graham Taylor judiciously suggested that the question was subjective and “must depend upon local conditions and the settlement personnel.”

Chicago Commons was better equipped than most settlements to venture into the political arena. Many of its residents and volunteers, including Graham Taylor, John Gavit, and Raymond Robbins, who took Gavit’s place as moderator of the Tuesday evening meetings, were political animals who embraced the chance to effect change by tackling the corruption rife within Chicago’s City Council. The settlement joined forces with the Civic Federation in support of the Municipal Voter’s League’s efforts to challenge the candidacy of aldermen up for re-election. Rather than support one party over another, the League made a concerted effort to assist Chicago’s Democrat and Republican organizations in choosing honest and capable men to run under their party banners. As Taylor argued in the pages of *The Commons*, party politics were “so irrelevant to all real interests at stake in local politics” and “hopelessly divisive.” The point was brought home when Chicago Commons supported an independent candidate of its own choosing named James Walsh, who won in 1897 “by the narrowest of margins,” but whose election “marked the decline of the political boss and the rise of Chicago Commons in ward politics.” By 1906, the settlement workers could state with confidence, “For a decade Chicago has been known as a stronghold among American cities for independent and non-partisan voting.”

One reason for this success in political and civil reform can be found in the particular manner by which the settlement community built consensus – neighborhood by
neighborhood, ward by ward, until gradually the public sympathy became accepting of its verdict of corruption and its programs for reform. It was an example of the settlement methodology taken to a larger dimension. Learn the neighborhood, understand its concerns, and address those concerns personally while at the same time stressing the values and goals to which the people should aspire. Build consensus, adapt the method to suit each contingency, encourage change, and expect evolution, that people become something more – but not necessarily something radically different or other than what they essentially were to begin with. The settlement methodology embraced democracy’s promise, promoting the qualities of humanity inherent in each of us individually but in need of encouragement to be realized by a society.
Notes


4 Editorial, *The Commons* VI:64 (November 1901): 13, NYSL.


7 Wade, *Graham Taylor*, 81, 100, 142.

8 Editorial, *Chicago Commons*, I:1 (April 1896): 1, NYSL.


16 Graham Taylor, “Is the Settlement a Charity?” *Chicago Commons* I:3 (June 1896): 6, NYSL.
notes, cont.


18 *Hull-House Bulletin* II:1 (January 1, 1897), Scrapbooks, HHAR. Quoting the Hull-House purpose referred to here: “To provide a center for higher civic and social life; to institute and maintain educational and philanthropic enterprises; and to investigate and improve the conditions in the industrial districts of Chicago.”


23 “Weekly Programme,” *Hull-House Bulletin* (March 1, 1892), Scrapbooks, HHAR.

24 “Hull-House Kitchen,” *Chicago Herald* (August 12, 1893), Scrapbooks, HHAR.

25 “Ten Years of Good Work,” *Chicago Chronicle* (October 13, 1899), Scrapbooks, HHAR.


27 McDowell, “Beginnings,” 33, CHS. She wrote, “The settlement tried out for the public school and the municipality many things that were at first considered experiments.”


notes, cont.


35 Beckner, Labor Legislation, 153.

36 Goldmark, Impatient Crusader, 45.


38 Ritchie v. The People 155 Ill. 106 (1895); Nancy Woloch, Muller v. Oregon: A Brief History with Documents (Boston, Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 93-96.

39 Goldmark, Impatient Crusader, 46.


42 Graham Taylor, “Between the Lines of Chicago’s Industrial Civil War,” The Commons V:1 (April 30, 1900): 3, NYSL.


44 John P. Gavit, “Chicago Commons and Free Floor Labor Discussions,” The Commons V:7 (October 1900): 9, NYSL.

45 Taylor, Pioneering on Social Frontiers, 313, 320.


47 Graham Taylor, “The Relation of Settlements to Politics,” The Commons VII (September 1902): 18, NYSL.

48 Davis, Spearheads for Reform, 165.

Conclusion:

The Objective Necessity

Reformers in general, and settlement workers in particular, wanted a unified populace and stabilized economic, political and social systems. America was to be modified, constructively altered, but not effectively changed in any fundamental way. Reform was not revolution. The emphasis within the Chicago settlement community upon class reciprocity and class interaction grew out of the claustrophobia inherent in any quickly emerging urban environment. In the tenement districts of Chicago, ideologies clashed, ethnic groups pressed in against each other, and civic policies that had been effective enough for a comparatively small and homogenous populace fell far short of the mark. The settlement programs fostered renovation, a rediscovering of democracy and the crafting of a more inclusive understanding of citizenship. However, Jane Addams’s affirmation of the immigrant people of the nineteenth ward and her support of their culture signified by the Hull-House Labor Museum was not an espousal of pluralism. As a matter of fact, the settlement community in general did not believe in the working classes per se. Overall, the attitude was less one of class-consciousness than of class-nullification. Addams and her colleagues strove to bring the urban immigrant and working classes of America into the fold, to extend the rights of democracy by conferring middle-class values and aspirations.¹

Robert Woods and Albert J. Kennedy summarized the basis of the settlement community’s view of the class issue in their book, The Settlement Horizon, published in
The immigrant classes were to be Americanized, principally through English language classes in which they gained a civic education as well as a general education in middle-class values. "Americanization, in settlement terms, is an evolution into national fellowship through mastery of our standard of living and of life," they wrote. "Each nation has its own such norm. Ours is richer at some points and thinner at others . . . ."

In order to make the immigrants American – and to retain among the citizenry that national character considered historically, traditionally, and biologically American – "assimilation, in minimalist terms, included learning the language in its living quality . . . attainment of a level of personal and household cleanliness, (and the) gradual appreciation of moral idioms . . ."2

When Hilda Satt Polacheck, a young Russian Jewish immigrant, came to Hull-House and felt the warmth and welcome of the settlement’s embrace, it was for her a moment of epiphany. Entering into an environment where the intermingling of ethnic groups was for the most part a given, Hilda realized "that different nationalities and beliefs could be tolerated rather than feared." She could discard her immigrant identity and become an American by learning to speak, act, and think as one – by purposefully adapting to the middle-class norms set before her by reformers, as she perceived them. By accepting Hilda into the settlement, Hull-House ushered her into the social life of the community. Hilda dedicated her autobiography to Jane Addams, "whom she credited with making her an 'American.'"3 Other neighborhood children likewise benefited from the settlement’s gifts of assimilation and Americanization. Philip Davis, who became the assistant head resident of the Civic Service House settlement in Boston, had emigrated as Feivel Chemerensky from a Russian shtetl. He “attend(ed) English classes at Hull-House
and, with financial assistance provided by Jane Addams, went on to the University of Chicago," later "completing his undergraduate work at Harvard." This "former garment worker and labor organizer" had been Americanized, to some extent as a product of his association with Hull-House. Participation in settlement programs, education gained through classes offered by the settlements and in conjunction with the University of Chicago Extension, and small but memorable gestures of faith and camaraderie translated for many into the opportunity for a quality of life that might otherwise not have been attainable.

The settlement community in Chicago did not limit itself to social uplift and civic reform. Many of Chicago’s reformers lent their energies toward efforts to further the larger liberal Progressive agenda at the national level. Key on that list were movements fighting for protective labor legislation and promoting the growth and efficacy of trades-unions. In 1905 Mary McDowell was named the chair of a committee urging the Congress of the United States to authorize, subsidize, and publish an investigation into the conditions of women workers. "The proposal of this project," read an editorial in Charities and Commons, "has been taken up by the industrial committee of the Illinois Federation of Women’s Clubs." The campaign was actively supported by the Women’s Trade Union League, the National Consumers League, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, the National Child Labor Committee, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, and the Daughters of the American Revolution. In addition to such a broad range of encouragement in this matter, Anna Nichols wrote, "Miss Jane Addams, who with Mrs. Florence Kelley and others, is acting in an advisory capacity to the
committee, has received President Roosevelt’s hearty endorsement, and offer of assistance.”

Sophonisba Breckenridge, a volunteer at Hull-House associated with the University of Chicago’s Department of Sociology, carried on a letter-writing campaign over the course of 1906 on behalf of McDowell’s committee. Beginning in January, she wrote to Charles P. Neill in Washington, D.C., requesting that he bring his influence as Commissioner of the Department of Commerce and Labor to bear upon the members of Congress. He replied that any viable investigation would “require weeks of careful study to prepare.” Breckenridge next turned her sights toward James A. Tawney, Chairman of the Appropriations Committee in the House of Representatives. Representative Tawney advised Breckenridge that any legislation requesting funds “must originate with the Secretary of Commerce and Labor through Mr. Neill.” About that same time it was reported by Mary McDowell in *Charities and Commons*, “The Committee on Labor of the House (has) . . . voted to report a bill providing a joint investigation (into the working conditions of both women and children) to be made.” The legislation would come up for vote in December of that year. In June, Jane Addams received word from the Speaker of the House, Joseph G. Cannon, informing her of his objections to that legislation, which in his opinion fell short of providing a “complex and modern inquiry into the matter.” He concluded by saying, “There is much of valuable suggestion, as it seems to me, in it. I have called the attention of the press to it.” In the end, Roosevelt signed a different bill, approved and funded by Congress, in January 1907, which called for an investigation into the working conditions of both women and children. The report was published in
nineteen volumes during the years 1910 to 1913, titled in part, "The Report on the Conditions of Women and Child Wage Earners in the United States."\(^{14}\)

The reformers, relatively speaking, had risked nothing; they had no vital stake in the issues at hand. The response provoked by their sympathy with the working classes, though passionate, was limited, in that for the most part it was merely intellectual. The two groups had different agendas, values, and methods. The "labor problem" threatened a way of life in which middle-class Americans held a vested interest, and at the same time afforded the reformers, principally the women among them, an opportunity to venture deeper into the public sphere and to gain a beachhead in government. The settlement method of association, investigation, and action applied to reform on a national scale reaped greater rewards than the pioneer leadership of the nascent movement could have imagined in the 1890s. The American public's appreciation of social issues, of the meaning of democracy, and of the parameters of citizenship was transformed in the Progressive Era. By asking questions and informing the public of the answers it found, the settlement community helped create a new environment of expectation, in which soil the seeds of the New Deal and American liberal thought were sown.

This progress was by no means inevitable. The communities, and those who lived in them, did not have to accept, much less to welcome, the activities of the reformers. The immigrant peoples were not forced to accept Americanization to the extent that they did. If there had been resistance to the policies, practices, and values of the reformers, the reform movements and their processes would have developed along different lines. The evolution of reform throughout the Progressive Era, which laid the foundations for
the sweeping changes of the New Deal, was a result of the confluence of time and opportunity.

Whatever their hopes for the future, the settlement movement in Chicago during the years 1890 to 1910 was at heart an evolving series of experiments in social salvation, as public as they were personal. Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr established Hull-House out of their own subjective necessity to find some avenue of public service that would allow them the fullness of life they had come to expect for themselves while at Rockford Female Seminary. Chicago Commons granted Graham Taylor the opportunity to extend and to shape his ministry according to the tenets of the Social Gospel, and so to bring the world closer to the Kingdom of God on Earth. Mary McDowell, through the wide reach of settlement work from the ward on into the municipality, and also her exposure in the wider realm of civic and national reform efforts, found her own sense of completion. Settlement life created an atmosphere of cooperation and acceptance that provided opportunity for the men and women residents and volunteers. For the neighbors who visited and shared in the variety of programs and services the settlement method afforded, that climate was one of empowerment and grace.
Notes

1 Rivka Shpak Lissak, *Pluralism and Progressives: HullHouse and the New Immigrants, 1890-1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). Lissak emphasized that as a country, America welcomed individuals, not ethnic groups, and had no patience for non-conformers. (2) She rejected the myth that “Hull-House was the place not only where immigrants were treated as equals, but also where their cultures were respected and cultivated.” (6) Instead, the settlement community’s policy of absorption and assimilation —Americanization— meant “the gradual elimination of ethnic-cultural segregation” and “the absorption of immigrants and their contributions into a common fund,” (8) which she believed worked to the detriment of the immigrants and for the benefit of the middle- and upper-middle class reformers. Lissak accepted Hofstadter’s “sense of guilt” thesis, (182) but allowed, “Hull-House leaders did not have a pluralist view of society... Yet their concept of humanitarian social democracy and their benign policies of assimilation created a dynamic that unintentionally paved the way for a more pluralist view of society in the 1930s.” She thus admitted that the reformers’ “opposition to the compulsory eradication of differences, (and) their insistence that immigrant cultures be tolerated” canceled out such seemingly culturally imperialistic attitudes. Taken together, “the inner logic of these attitudes... advanced the cause of pluralism” in America. (184)


9 Sophonisba P. Breckenridge to Jane Addams, November 6, 1906, Correspondence, Jane Addams Memorial Collection, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL (hereafter cited as JAMC).

10 Charles P. Neill to Sophisba P. Breckenridge, January 30, 1906; Correspondence, JAMC.

11 James A. Tawney to Sophonisba P. Breckenridge, February 1906, Correspondence, JAMC.
notes, cont.

12 Mary McDowell, "The Need for a National Investigation into Women's Work," *Charities and Commons* XVII:14 (January 5, 1906), 634, NYSL.


Bibliographic Essay

The primary sources for this thesis were taken from a variety of original manuscript collections and supplemented by first person published accounts. In the summer of 1998 the following collections were visited on-site:


University of Chicago Service League Records. Regenstein Library, Special Collections, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.


The bulk of Jane Addams' correspondence was viewed on microfilm provided by UMI Services, Ann Arbor, Michigan, obtained through the Inter-Library Loan Department of Western Kentucky University. Included on the microfilm were documents from the following collections:


Haldeman, Mrs. Sarah Addams. Manuscripts. Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.


Smith, Mary Rozet. Correspondence. Schlessinger Library Archives, Radcliffe University, Boston, Massachusetts.

*************

The entire text of the journal produced by the Chicago Commons settlement, known over the course of the progressive era as *Chicago Commons, The Commons*, and *Charities and Commons*, was reproduced onto microfilm from originals contained in the collection of the New York State Library in Albany, New York, and is listed under its fourth and final name, *The Survey*.

*************

The following includes first-person accounts of the settlement movement and reform in the progressive era, secondary source biographies and autobiographies, in addition to contemporary writings relevant to an understanding of the background of the progressive era. In particular, articles and books published as the result of social investigations or in response to specific incidents were extremely helpful in understanding the scope of the period and the place of settlement workers within it.


***************

Secondary Sources:


