

RENDERING ASSISTANCE TO BEST ADVANTAGE:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S ACTIVISM
IN KANSAS CITY, 1870 TO WORLD WAR I

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by
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University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2013

ABSTRACT

This study examines the rise of women's activism in Kansas City between the opening of the Hannibal railroad bridge in 1869 and World War I. Women's efforts over the course of nearly 50 years to emerge from the domestic sphere and claim space as full participants in the American polity through activism on behalf of benevolence, reform, and equality form the core of the study. The social construction of gender, class, and race, the effects of political philosophy in shaping responses to poverty, and the role of the political structure in shaping the interactions of local women with national organizations in an emerging Midwestern metropolis constitute its focus.

Before the Civil War, Kansas City grew rapidly in spite of regional tensions and a Southern population that often mixed uneasily with the growing number of Northerners

who passed through and often settled in the community. Both before and after the war, however, Kansas City business leaders championed a civic philosophy of unity over the divisiveness of politics and community development. The new, unformed frontier society provided an opening for women to found a single organization in the early 1870s that embraced the tripartite structure of women's activism - benevolence, reform, and sexual equality. By the late 1870s, the affluent members gained prominence and narrowed its scope to include only benevolence. As a result, the organization contracted its activities to the gender-approved role of serving women and children. With the founding of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and other national organizations with local chapters, women interested in the reform and equality found outlets activism that increasingly pushed the limits of the feminine sphere, involved women in public leadership roles, and built support for equality through suffrage.

Examining women's activism from the vantage point of an emerging Midwestern metropolis provides new ways to look at women's activism during this period. This study illuminates how women's activism in Kansas City was shaped by, and helped to shape, women's activism at the national level. It also informs the scholarly understanding of how activist women interacted with male-led organizations and political structures.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies have examined a dissertation titled “Rendering Assistance to Best Advantage: The Development of Women’s Activism in Kansas City, 1870 to World War I,” presented by K. David Hanzlick, candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BPW – Board of Public Welfare

CLA – Catholic Ladies Aid Society

CWL – Catholic Women’s League

GFWC – General Federation of Women’s Clubs

NACW – National Association of Colored Women

NCJW – National Council of Jewish Women

WCA – Women’s Christian Association

WCTU – Women’s Christian Temperance Union

YWCA – Young Women’s Christian Association

YWCAKCK – Young Women’s Christian Association – Kansas City, Kansas

YWCAKCMO – Young Women’s Christian Association – Kansas City, Missouri

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To Janee', Margaret, and Amelia

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the 50 years from 1871 to 1921, women in Kansas City left behind their hesitancy to enter the public sphere and actively claimed public space and political agency. Two newspaper articles – one from 1871 and the other from 1921 – demonstrate the magnitude of this transition.

On January 7, 1871, the minutes of the nascent Women’s Christian Association (WCA) encouraged the participation in charity work of women “. . . who would like to do the work of Christ . . .” but who were concerned about claiming public space for themselves and their sex. Women who “. . . have not the independence to brave public opinion and act with their sisters . . .” were encouraged to participate.¹ Fifty years later, by contrast, the *Kansas City Times* of July 14, 1921, reported that a long-time leading clubwoman and chairman of the Children’s Bureau of Kansas City, Mrs. Mary Harmon Weeks, participated in a public hearing on milk safety and posed pointed questions on the subject to leading medical authorities.²

This dissertation traces the change from apparent timidity to self-confident participation in public affairs among women in a burgeoning Midwestern city. In doing so, this study will review the vehicles by which women gained a political role as they expanded the feminine sphere ever further into the public realm. Charity was the first ostensible step in this process. Charity as an organizing principle was quickly followed by

¹*Daily Journal of Commerce*, January 7, 1871, 2.

²*Kansas City Times*, July 14, 1921, 2.

moral reform, agitation for sexual equality, and Progressive reform. Women organized themselves into purely local charities, as the WCA became, as well as local chapters of national organizations, including the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), the Catholic Women's Association (CWA), and the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), among others. As political scientist and historian Theda Skocpol described, the structure of these nation-spanning federations of women's clubs was highly effective in advocating policies that affected the women's sphere such as mothers' pensions, minimum wage, and the creation of the Children's Bureau at the federal level. This experience contrasted sharply with that of Europe in which well-established bureaucracies and programmatic political parties managed programs in the realm of civic betterment and developed welfare states that protected male workers and their dependents. Because, as Skocpol observed, the industrial class in the United States lacked class consciousness, national organizations with local chapters proved effective in their advocacy in policy domains that touched on the feminine sphere.³ The apogee of women's political effectiveness occurred during the second decade of the twentieth century when female activists of all persuasions were united in support of women's suffrage.⁴

During this period, the self-image of women evolved. Where moral reformers saw women as passionless and vulnerable to the evil male seducers, the later Progressive

³Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1992 paperback edition, 1994), 3, 50-52, 525. According to Skocpol, women's activism was particularly effective in the United States because 1) no established church existed to limit activism; 2) American women had better access to higher education; 3) American women reacted sharply to their exclusion from political participation.

⁴Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 30.

reformers acknowledged the sexual agency of women and tended to attribute undesirable female behavior to conditions in the family and in society.⁵ Following the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, women's political coherence became fragmented. Groups that were united for a common cause pursued separate agendas. While they could agree on the importance of the vote to women, they could not agree on how to use the vote to advance specific policies. As a result, women failed to achieve equal opportunity.⁶ The tripartite structure of women's activism in which different groups of women supported benevolence, moral reform, and gender equality helps explain the demise of women's unity after women obtained the vote.⁷

Consistent with the tripartite structure, scholars also frequently view female-led urban relief work in nineteenth century America in the context of large metropolitan areas and as a class- and gender-based enterprise. Economically elite Protestant women, primarily of the Episcopal and Presbyterian denominations, organized assistance for the poor, while reform-minded women affiliated generally with the Methodist and Baptist denominations organized to reform society and eliminate such ills as alcohol and prostitution and Quaker and Unitarian women advocated sexual and often racial equality. The conventional narrative traces ladies benevolent associations that functioned for a time, but became overwhelmed by a rapid increase in the demand for aid. A male-led charity

⁵Mary Odem, *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 97-98.

⁶William L. O'Neill, *Feminism in America: A History*, 2nd Revised Edition (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, Inc., 1989), xiii. Originally published by Quadrangle Books, 1969.

⁷Nancy A. Hewitt described this tripartite structure of middle and upper class white Protestant female activism in Rochester, NY. Nancy Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, NY, 1822-1872* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 40.

organization then stepped in to meet the growing need. This meta-narrative may hold true in Eastern cities. The unsettled character of rapidly growing Midwestern and Western cities, however, provides an opportunity to re-examine the Eastern thesis. That re-examination will take place in the context of the dynamism of the Midwestern urban environment, the social, economic, and political structures that shaped the response to poverty, the shifting philosophical underpinnings of relief, reform, and equality, and the changing cultural understanding of poverty and the poor. This study will examine the Eastern thesis in the context of a rapidly growing Midwestern metropolis – Kansas City – and will trace the effects of women’s activism on the city and its people from 1870 to World War I.

Because much of the study of the development of women’s activism took place in the East or West coasts or Upper Midwest, Kansas City, Missouri, provides an important case study of the pattern of female activism in a burgeoning city outside these areas.⁸

Located at the confluence of the Kansas and Missouri rivers, Kansas City also served as an important point of convergence for the streams of people, and the cultures and folkways they carried, who passed through the community on their way to somewhere else – whether Sante Fe, Kansas Territory, or points beyond but who sometimes settled in the city or its environs. Kansas City also served as a transshipment point for the supplies to outfit travelers on the great trails to the West and later for agricultural commodities produced in

⁸⁸The original name of the municipality was the Town of Kansas when it was incorporated by Jackson County on February 4, 1850. The 1853 chartering by the state legislature amended the name to the City of Kansas. The name was changed again to Kansas City in 1889. For the purposes of this discussion, Kansas City will be used consistently. See Roy Ellis, *A Civic History of Kansas City, Missouri*. Ph.D. Diss. Columbia University, 1930, 9.

the region and shipped to the North and East. As a result of the divergent views of the people who co-existed in the region, the city on the border of a slave and a free state became a simmering political caldron fed by the arrival of anti-slavery settlers from the East who often mixed uneasily with the pro-slavery population. Following the Civil War and the opening of the first railroad bridge across the Missouri River, Kansas City experienced a rapid economic and population expansion that began in the Gilded Age and continued through the Progressive Era. The population mushroomed from a mere 6,000 souls in 1866 to approximately 22,000 by 1870, had more than doubled within ten years to reach 55,785 by 1880, and grew to 324,410 by 1920.⁹ Hemmed in by the Missouri River to the north and the Kansas-Missouri border just to the west, the city moved to the south and east through the decades as affluent residents established housing developments at the city's southern-most edge and as immigrant communities, especially the Irish, as well as African Americans became concentrated in the north and northwest sections of the city.

⁹*U.S. Census, 1870*. Regarding the impact of the railroad bridge on Kansas City, see Louis W. Potts and George F.W. Hauck, "Frontier Bridge Building: The Hannibal Bridge at Kansas City, 1867-1869." *Missouri Historical Review* 89 (January 1995), 161. For information on the inflation of population data in the 1870 census, see Lawrence H. Larson and Nancy J. Hulston, "Through the Eyes of a Medical Student: A Window on Frontier Life in Kansas City," *Missouri Historical Review* 78 (July 1994), 433.

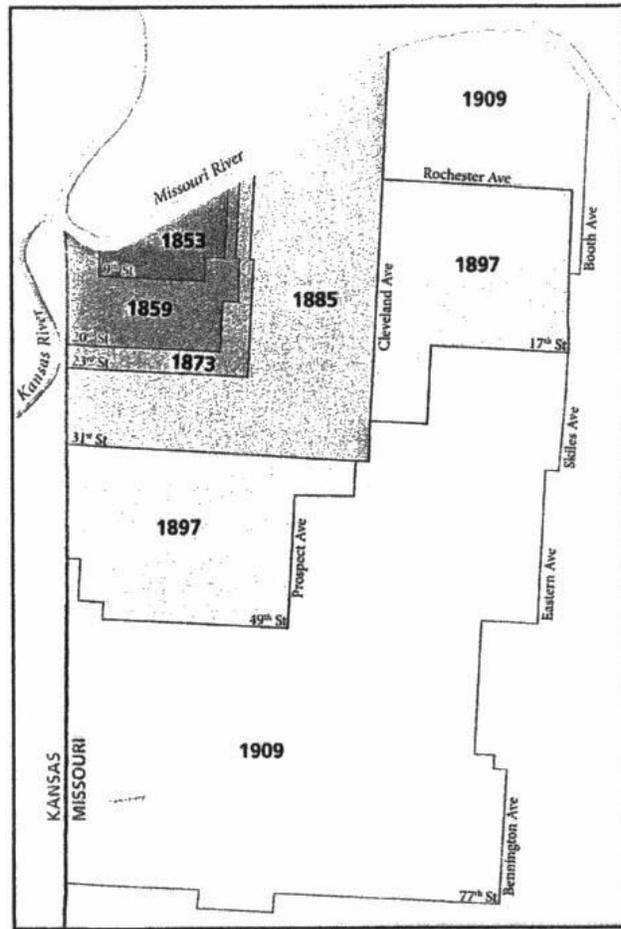


Figure 1. City Limits of Kansas City, Missouri, 1853-1909

Source: Thomas R. Shortridge, *Kansas City and How it Grew, 1822 - 2011* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2012), 78.

Kansas City is unique among Midwestern cities based on its geography, its blending of divergent populations, and its role at the center of the most profound period of political turbulence during the nineteenth century. At the same time, the community's position as a burgeoning Midwestern metropolis with an economy largely based on agriculture and subject to the depredations of weather and other natural phenomena will provide insight into the development of other cities in the region and beyond. As a consequence of these

factors, this case study will add to the scholarly understanding of the development of women's organizations and how their activities contributed to a deeper understanding of moral and Progressive reform during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era and how women influenced the development of the city and the structure of the city's social services. In addition, the work will illuminate how gender influenced the direction of moral and Progressive reform in a Midwest City. Moreover, the study will go beyond the existing body of scholarly work to examine how women's organizations interacted with the male power structure, male-led relief, and male-dominated religious structures to achieve the women's goals. Because Kansas City was at the geographic and transportation heart of America, this dissertation will illuminate how the arc of national trends in women's activism manifested themselves in a growing Midwestern metropolitan area.

To achieve these ends, this dissertation will examine the tripartite structure of female activism as it developed in Kansas City with the founding of the Women's Christian Association in December 1870. The dissertation will explore the factors that led to the formation of the tripartite structure and how it changed over time. It will also examine how those changes resulted from shifting philosophical views of the nature of poverty and shifting constructions of the gender within the context of larger societal trends and the development of national women's organizations with local chapters. In this process, the dissertation will illuminate how women's activism in Kansas City differed from the national experience and in what ways, if at all, the experience of activist women in Kansas City mirrored those of women across the country. The consideration of those questions will assist in answering the study's larger question, namely: What was the process that led

women in Kansas City to move from a position of timidity in addressing public issues such as poverty in 1871 to one of assertiveness in the public realm by 1921? Commonalities among the women's organizations in Kansas City included their efforts to grapple with the nature and causes of poverty, their desire to emulate the successful practices of Eastern cities, and their desire to assist in the development of good citizens. Yet the women in Kansas City also strove to exercise personal and collective efficacy in the public and political realms. The desire to be political actors in their community, state, and nation grew from a spark in the early 1870s to a firestorm with the advocacy of suffrage by a wide spectrum of women in the closing years of the Progressive Era.

This examination of women's activism will be informed by two theoretical approaches. The first approach is known in political science as structuralism and also referred to as the "structured polity approach" or "New Institutionalism." This approach, as Skocpol explained,

. . . views the polity as the primary locus of action, yet understands political activities, whether carried on by politicians or social groups, as conditioned by the institutional configurations of government and political party systems.¹⁰

In other words, structure – especially governmental structure – imposes a heavy influence on how groups organize themselves for political activities and how they affect desired outcomes. The women's organizations – as well as the male-led relief association – acted locally to address pressing individual and societal needs, yet did so within the larger

¹⁰Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1992 paperback edition, 1994), 41. See also James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, "The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life," *American Political Science Review* 78 (1984), 734-49.

national structure that was shaped by the federal structure of the American governmental system.

The framework of relief activities in the United States helped shape relief activities in the Midwest and was, in turn, shaped by the interchange of ideas between the United States and Europe about social welfare structures and ideas about the nature and evolution of society and the economy.¹¹ In addition, the work of historian Daniel T. Rodgers will assist in exploring the international connections that shaped approaches to social policy. Rodgers argued that United States did not operate in a social policy vacuum. Rather, the interchange of ideas on social policy between Europe and the U.S. helps explain how the relief organizations evolved and what they hoped to achieve.¹²

The second theoretical approach is gender. As historian Joan Wallach Scott argued, gender is “the social organization of sexual difference.” With this definition as a tool, Scott looked at the processes by which hierarchies like gender are constructed and legitimized. Scott advocated viewing gender as an aspect of social organization rather than as a category that can be compartmentalized and placed within the institution of family in the same way that class is associated with workplace and community. “Social and cultural knowledge about sexual difference is, therefore, produced in the course of most of the

¹¹Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979). See also, Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003); Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1944).

¹²Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

events and processes studied as history.”¹³ The conceptual thread of gender, then, runs through this study as it examines how women went about the process of organizing themselves, how they developed the city’s only general relief agency, how a male-led relief organization arose and interacted with the work of female-led relief, and how women organized themselves into a number of clubs that claimed public space for moral and Progressive reform in Kansas City and across the nation.

The structural and gender approaches dovetail with the overall orientation of the study within the subfield of Political Science known as American Political Development or APD. This subfield seeks to explain historical causation by examining how antecedents contribute to outcomes. The antecedent events are foundational concepts; outcomes may be the formation of new ideas, shifts in policy, or events. Shifting foundational concepts such as changing views of poverty and women’s place in society can be expected to culminate in these outcomes.¹⁴ Historical events will help to explain how women’s activism took shape and functioned in Kansas City.

The qualitative everyday life approach to historical inquiry complements the structural, APD approach. Everyday life shines a light on the often neglected nooks and crannies of “the family and household, the neighborhood, the school.” The everyday life approach provides this study with a different way to pose large questions of “process and structure”; incorporates politics through the posing of large questions that encompass both

¹³Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (1988; revised edition, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 2-6.

¹⁴James W. Ceaser, “Foundational Concepts and American Political Development” (Colloquium Paper delivered January 28, 2005), <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/colloquia/detail/3536>, 38.

the “public and private”; and recognizes the “otherness” of the past by emphasizing and exploring the “multiplicity of forces, actors, and voices” that had an effect on the larger process of change.¹⁵ By examining the everyday lives of men and women in Kansas City from 1870 to the eve of U.S. entry into World War I, the study will provide insight into the collective nature of the processes that brought change in women’s activism in Kansas City.

The dissertation uses a variety of primary sources to explore these themes. City directories and census data shed light on the place of residence, occupational category, and race/ethnicity, place of birth, and wealth of city residents. Newspapers report on the activities of the organizations. In the case of the WCA, newspapers published the complete minutes of the organization’s meetings and reported extensively on a variety of related events. Annual reports and event programs of the WCA and Provident Association allow the study to trace their development, leadership, finances, self-image, guiding philosophies, and activities. Church records and histories list the names of church members, activities, and concerns of these vital components of society’s larger fabric. Diaries, memoirs, and letters illuminate their writers’ thoughts and perspectives about how contemporary events affected daily life. Local histories written during the period by people who were familiar with the actors and events relate not only information, but also provide perspectives on how knowledgeable people thought about their worlds and the functioning of society.

Secondary sources include three bodies of literature that provide the grounding for this study: the mid- to late-twentieth century reaction to the Turner thesis of western

¹⁵Geoff Eley, Foreword to *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, ed. by Alf Ludtke, trans. by William Templar (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), vii-x.

development; women, reform, and social control of the poor, and the shifting philosophical outlook on poverty as the economy moved from entrepreneurial to corporate capitalism.

The nature of western expansion, the unsettled social and political structure of the emerging communities in the urban West, their desire to emulate and improve upon the cities of the East, and their desire for civic unity lead by social and economic elites provide a useful starting point for this discussion and a framework with which to view the development of such frontier communities as Kansas City. Richard C. Wade in his 1959 study shifted the perspective of frontier settlement from the view of an advancing line of settlement offered by Frederick Jackson Turner to one that embraced cities as the focal point of western settlement. Western urban leaders, including Benjamin Harrison, Henry Clay, and Thomas Hart Benton, looked to Eastern cities as models from which to draw solutions to urban problems, even as they envisioned surpassing those cities in prominence. The structure of society in the communities of the urban frontier developed within a generation and sharpened as the town grew, a finding consistent with the experience of Kansas City.¹⁶

Historians Charles N. Glaab in 1962 and Glaab and A. Theodore Brown in 1967 further advanced this non-Turnerian view. The first work argued that the deterministic theory of natural advantages in the location of cities passed from favor in the 1880s to an equally deterministic view that large cities arose every 300-400 miles as market centers. The rise of Kansas City, however, depended not on a deterministic process, but rather on the “fortuitous combinations of circumstance” which nonetheless was based on a positive

¹⁶Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790-1830* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 27-340.

ideology of organizing the community to support growth and development.¹⁷ The second work described in detail the influence of William Gilpin, an urban theoretician who spent many years in Kansas City. Reflecting the westward perspective of Kansas City, Gilpin's work reshaped the national view of the interior of the U.S. from that of a vast desert to that of a vast and fertile bowl that would tilt the nation in a westward direction and lead to a harmonious pattern of development.¹⁸

Historian Walter Stix Glazer's 1999 study of antebellum Cincinnati examined the evolving nature of the social structure of the frontier society and argued that the city had an open and evolving social hierarchy in 1840. Associational networks were strong and the strongest ties were among the bankers, the benevolent associations, and the city council.¹⁹

Historian Carl Abbott's 2008 study of four centuries of urbanization in the western North America echoed the work of Wade, Glaab, and Glazer in stating that the cities of the West were central and centralizing points that began in imitation of Eastern cities. Cities that imitated the East would come to be innovators of the urban experience. The prevailing view of the westward tilt of the continent led to the belief that the West would dominate the East.²⁰

¹⁷Charles N. Glaab, *Kansas City and the Railroads: Community Policy in the Growth of a Regional Metropolis* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1962), xviii-31.

¹⁸Charles N. Glaab and A. Theodore Brown, *A History of Urban America* (Toronto: The McMillan Company, 1967), 76.

¹⁹Walter Stix Glazer, *The Social and Functional Organization of an Urban Community During the Pre-Civil War Period* (Columbus, OH: The University of Ohio Press, 1999), 14-143.

²⁰Carl Abbott, *How the Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 15-25.

Within the context of the expanding western cities, the history of the three strains of women's activism – benevolence, reform, and equality – in nineteenth and early twentieth century America informs the context for the activities that women in Kansas City undertook. As early as 1808, for example, the first temperance society of more than local consequence – the Union Temperate Society – formed. The United States Temperance Union was founded in 1833.²¹ Women were deeply involved in reform from its earliest stages. Beginning in the 1830s, women began sending petitions for the immediate abolition of slavery to Congress. Over time, the tone of the petitions shifted from one of supplication to a demand for action based on citizenship.²²

While limiting his study to post-bellum feminism and reform, William L. O'Neill, in a 1989 revision of his 1969 study of feminism, rejected the effects of the industrial revolution, e.g., the separation of work from residence and the rise of free time, as an overly broad explanation of the genesis of feminism. Rather, he viewed feminism (and its reform orientation) as one reaction to the pressures that accompanied the emergence of the nuclear family. Feminism, he posited, was a response to the “sexual awareness deliberately inspired by Victorian society” to foster “oppressive domesticity.”²³

The western cities of the Gilded Age exhibited characteristics that set them apart from their Eastern counterparts. Unlike the communities on the advancing frontier of New York State as described by Mary Ryan and Nancy Hewitt, for example, the populations of

²¹Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900* (Temple University Press, 1981), 4.

²²Susan Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery & Women's Political Identity* (University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 1-5.

²³ O'Neill, 4.

these western cities grew at exponential rates and drew their populations from across the United States and from immigrant populations.²⁴ These rapidly growing, diverse, and transient societies initially lacked an established social structure. The social structure took time to develop and responded to the evolving economic conditions of the city within the larger national economic context. In addition, the transient nature of the population left people cut off from the support of their kin networks for assistance due to unemployment or illness. This lack of support networks created a need for a structure of relief in these communities. Moreover, the smaller populations of emerging Midwestern and western cities made them more like each other than like large urban areas, such as New York or Chicago. As Wood pointed out, more people lived in urban areas with populations of 12,000 to 75,000 people than in cities with populations of 500,000 or more.²⁵

What motivated women in Kansas City and elsewhere to organize to provide benevolent work to aid the poor? The desire of the middle and upper classes to control the behavior of the lower class, also known as social control, provides one answer. Scholars have engaged in a spirited debate over the nature and extent of the control exercised by the organizers of charities. Paul Johnson and Paul Boyer in the late 1970s, for example, embraced the notion of social control of the poor. Social control provided a substantial motivation for revivals of the Second Great Awakening and for the work of urban reformers as they sought to restore the moral order of the village in the urban environment. Later scholars take a less rigid view, starting in the late 1980s with Nathan O. Hatch who

²⁴Irwin, 368-377.

²⁵Wood, 9.

rejected social control as a primary impetus for the religious revivals. Peggy Pascoe argued that the social control argument discounts the historical agency of the clients of relief agencies. In the late 1990s, Elizabeth Hayes Turner posited that in the example of late nineteenth century Galveston, relief work was geared toward client independence, not social control. Social control, therefore, constitutes, at best, a minor, but important element among many in the complex motivations of relief workers and organizations.²⁶ The complex and shifting motivations of relief organizations in an urban Midwestern city will be compared with the analysis of motivations described by these scholars. Care and concern are interspersed with the modeling of middle class expectations and mores in the writings of relief organizations in the years under study.

A third body of scholarship addressed the societal view of poverty and poor people that evolved over the last four decades of the nineteenth century and first two decades of the twentieth century. The understanding of social, philosophical, and economic conditions of poverty in this period shifted gradually - and in fits and starts - from one that assigned blame to the innate character of the poor for their condition toward one that saw the poverty itself as the cause of social ills. Richard Hofstadter illuminated the pervasive influence of Social Darwinism's evolutionary thinking in the philosophy of Herbert Spencer and William Graham Sumner on American thought in the direction of classical liberalism, which was challenged by the 1880s through the work of the Social Gospel

²⁶Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815 to 1837* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1978); Paul S. Boyer, *Urban Masses and Social Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978); Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); See also, Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Elizabeth Hayes Turner, *Women, Culture, and Community: Religion and Reform in Galveston, 1880-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

movement led by such central figures as Walter Rauschenbusch, Washington Gladden, and Charles Sheldon.²⁷ By the late Nineteenth century, the harsh Calvinistic approach was tempered through the leaders of the Social Gospel movement to provide an understanding of the effects on individuals and society of the economic transformation to corporate capitalism from the earlier form of entrepreneurial capitalism. Frances Willard, as President of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), provides an example of this philosophical shift within her tenure in that position. In 1889, Willard reversed her stand that temperance would cure poverty. She replaced that view with the notion, influenced by the Social Gospel, that bad working conditions and long hours drove working men and women to drink.²⁸ Subsequent scholars took issue with the deterministic narrative of consensus historians such as Hofstadter and correctly so. These later scholars added substantial depth to the understanding of the impact of the economic, social, and political dislocations brought about by the rise of corporate capitalism and the diminution of entrepreneurial capitalism in the post-Civil War period. Scholars such as Robert Wiebe saw a "search for order," a "distended society" and "island communities" that led to the rise of middle class progressivism that sought to transcend the fragmentation of society. As later scholars, including Alan Trachtenberg, T. J. Jackson Lears, and Alfred Chandler, among others, demonstrated, the scope of change wrought by the corporate capitalist model in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century

²⁷Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought, 1860-1915*. Reprint, 1944 (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1962).

²⁸Ruth Bordin, *Women & Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 107.

profoundly reshaped the national economy and the nation's understanding of itself.²⁹ This literature helps explain and trace the impact of economic and social dislocation on the growing Midwestern metropolis and the uneven transition in thought from the Gilded Age through the Progressive Era and from Social Darwinism to the Social Gospel that is evident in public communications of relief organizations.

This study of the development of women's activism in Kansas City divides the topic into five chapters. The first chapter forms the introduction.

The second chapter will treat the growth of Kansas City in the years from 1856 through the opening of the Hannibal Bridge in 1869 – a formative event in the city's history. The chapter will argue that the transitory population of the area was vulnerable to natural and economic disasters and yet was not served by any organized relief organization. The chapter will also argue the city began a shift from a Southern orientation to a Northern outlook during this period, yet successfully maintained the consensus view that unity in the cause of economic development was the highest form of civic virtue. This consensus helps explain the rapid growth of Kansas City in contrast to other cities in the area and established a pattern that would serve Kansas City's development well over the next decades. These eastern, Protestant transplants were familiar with the relief structures that operated in their home towns or cities and brought that knowledge with them to their new homes.

²⁹Robert Weibe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967); Alfred Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1977); T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Anti-modernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1982).

Chapter 3 discusses the move by women to form the first relief agency in Kansas City at the end of 1870. The chapter argues that the founding members of the organization represent the three strains of female activism: benevolence, moral reform, and equality. These philosophical tendencies were consistent with the presence in the organization of benevolent women from high status denominations such as Presbyterians, reform-minded evangelicals such as Baptists and Methodists, and proponents of female equality such as Quakers and Unitarians. The group's early intention was to assist women of the city, but their activities expanded to include assisting men and families within a few months of the WCA's founding. The chapter further argues that the leadership and activities of the WCA became increasingly responsive to the needs, desires, and accepted gender roles of the elite benevolent women. In doing so, they departed entirely from the reform and equality agendas they had encompassed early in their history and experienced a decline in membership and effectiveness as a result. At all times, the women emphasized unity in civic affairs and avoided discussions of sectionalism and sectarianism as a means creating an identity as Kansas Citians, an identity that was no longer sectional, but rather was rooted in their present location. The chapter takes issue with the "Eastern Thesis" that male-led relief organizations formed in response to natural disasters or economic crises that overwhelmed the abilities of the female-led organizations to respond in an effective manner.

Chapter 4 examines the development of male-led relief efforts in Kansas City with the formation of the Provident Association in 1880 and the 1908 creation of the Progressive Board of Public Welfare (BPW). The BPW was founded to work in the area of relief and

societal improvement in the context of a rapidly growing community that was greatly affected by economic cycles, natural disasters, and the challenges posed by its status as a major railroad hub. The chapter again examines the applicability of the Eastern thesis in view of the fact that the need of a more vigorous response to relief than the WCA could provide was evident by the closing years of the 1870s. Yet the male business elite made no effective response until 1880 and at the urging of local newspapers. The class- and gender-based response that occurred clearly demonstrated the efforts of middle and upper class policy makers to impose their vision of class and gender on the city. This chapter will explore the philosophical underpinnings of the Provident Association and the larger structure of the Charity Organizing Society (COS) movement. This chapter will also argue that the impact of the nascent Social Gospel movement had an ameliorating effect on the attitudes and philosophies enunciated by the Provident Association. In addition, the chapter will examine the arrival of large numbers of transient workers in Kansas City, of whom many were active members of the International Workers of the World. The IWW members provided the only significant challenge to the structure of corporate capitalism or critique of its fundamental nature. This chapter will analyze the conflicting visions and approaches of the Progressive reformers, IWW, and the emerging political machines that developed and gained political influence in part because of the desperate needs that arose from the harsh winter of 1893 and the inadequate response to the crisis by the economic elite.³⁰

³⁰Lawrence H. Larson and Nancy J. Hulston, *Pendergast!* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1997).

Chapter 5 traces the expression of women's activism that developed in Kansas City following the retrenchment of the WCA. The chapter will follow the development of local chapters of national organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, General Federation of Women's Clubs, Young Women's Christian Association, National Association of Colored Women, and the National Council of Jewish Women, that provided avenues for women to shape their world and claim political space by expanding and rejecting the strictures of the woman's sphere. This claim of political space included successful activism for the achievement of civic improvement, a unified demand for suffrage, and determined opposition to voter fraud perpetrated by the political machines. In their activities, the women strove to make Kansas City more like the long-established cities of the East. The chapter further argues that the strains of female activism – benevolence, reform, and equality – are represented to some extent in the activities in each of these organizations. Each one, however, focused more heavily on some types of activities than on others. The chapter will pay particular attention to the sectarian affiliations and socio-economic status of the women who were active in the organizations. This comparison will allow for a determination of whether other women's organizations also reverted to appropriate, socially-constructed gender roles and the role of social and economic class of the membership in determining the activities of the organizations. The chapter will argue that women in Kansas City during this period viewed themselves as members of a larger world of national women's organizations. They sought to participate and conform to the expectations of that world. No longer did Kansas City women occupy the unique place of working on behalf of all three strains of women's activism within one organization.

The conclusion returns to the central argument that between 1871 and 1921 women gained a new place in society and new understanding of themselves as political actors. Yet, success in obtaining the vote did not prove to unify the three strains of women's activism on an ongoing basis. Rather, common cause proved to be a temporary phenomenon. As the 1920s progressed, women remained active, but their effectiveness declined. The WCTU lost credibility with the failure of prohibition. While women's groups continued to act locally for civic improvement in a city that had grown to a population of 300,000 people, they were no longer able stand up to the political machines or to shape national policy.³¹ The work begun by many of the organizations discussed in this dissertation continues, with varying levels of effectiveness, in Kansas City today.

³¹U.S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1924), 42.

CHAPTER 2

THE EXPLODING MIDWESTERN METROPOLIS: CARVING OUT A CITY ON THE BLUFFS, 1856 TO 1870

Never shall I forget the early morning on the 13th day of April 1856, when my husband and I stepped ashore from the steamer *William Campbell*, after four days and five nights of tedious travel on the ‘Big Muddy’ and the thirteenth day after our departure from Philadelphia. Weary and worn with travel, any kind of resting-place was a welcome sight. But alas! How my heart sank when the thought passed through my mind, ‘And this is to be my home!’ ‘Be brave,’ said the spirit within me, and instead of sitting down and weeping, as most women would have done, I immediately went to work to investigate my new and strange surroundings.¹

Sarah Coates, a newly married woman from eastern Pennsylvania, had left her well-established surroundings in the East to venture with her husband, Kersey Coates, to their new frontier home. The strange world Sarah W. Coates encountered when she stepped from the steamboat onto the landing at Kansas City was experienced by many thousands of people as they reached the city in the mid- to late 1850s. Coates would become a moving force in organizing women in her new hometown for the purposes of benevolence, reform, and equality in the decades ahead. Through her influence and that of many other women who engaged in civic activities, Kansas City became a more hospitable place and one that modeled itself after established cities in the East.

This chapter will treat the growth of Kansas City in the years between 1854 and 1870. During this period, the people of the region became embroiled in the Civil War, and at its end rebuilt the community. The rapid population growth sparked by the opening of the Hannibal Railroad Bridge in 1869 was accompanied by all of the attendant

¹Laura Coates Reed, *In Memoriam: Sarah Walter Chandler Coates* (Kansas City, MM: Hudson-Kimberling Publishing Co., 1898), 41.

opportunities and challenges. This chapter will argue that over the course of the 16 years from 1854 to 1870 the city's character began to shift from a largely Southern to a Northern orientation due to migration into the area from the Northern states. The transplanted Northerners assumed many positions of community leadership. Even in the face of this transition, the commercial elite of Kansas City held tenaciously to a consensus view, unique among its peer cities in the region, that economic progress should hold sway over political or sectional differences.²

To illuminate the transformation of the city during this period, the chapter also will trace the effects of the war in terms of the newness of the population and the relatively small number of people whose residence in Kansas City pre-dated the war. The chapter will examine the characteristics, employment, and housing patterns of the relatively few people – “consistent Kansas Citians” – who lived in Kansas City in 1860 and who were also present in 1870. These “consistent Kansas Citians” will broaden the understanding of the role of women and racial/ethnic minorities in the population. Finally, the chapter will argue that at least some Northern newcomers, as represented by Mrs. Coates, had participated in reform movements in the East and brought that knowledge to Kansas City and continued relationships with Eastern elite thought leaders after they arrived. These Protestant women, primarily of Eastern origin, were familiar with the relief structures that

²A. Theodore Brown, “Business ‘Neutralism’ on the Missouri-Kansas Border: Kansas City: 1854-1857,” *The Journal of Southern History* 29, no. 2 (May 1963), 229-233. Brown argued that the mainly Southern commercial elite allowed the New England Immigrant Aid Company to operate in Kansas City and to own the American Hotel because of the revenue the company produced locally including significant freight revenues. Charles N. Glaab had previously argued that the Eastern businessmen who arrived after passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act respected the consensus approach, which allowed Kansas City to grow, unlike rival Leavenworth, which was handicapped by divisive city politics. Charles N. Glaab, “Business Patterns in the Growth of a Midwestern City: The Kansas City Business Community before the Civil War,” *The Business History Review* 33, no. 2: 156-174.

operated in their hometowns and brought that knowledge with them to their new and emerging urban environment. These women provided the know-how that allowed them and the generations that followed to claim public and political space in the growing metropolis they inhabited. The chapter will be informed by the transformation of the society from one that was divided between Northern and Southern approaches to a fusion of the culture and sensibilities of the two regions.



Figure 2. Sarah W. Coates

Source: Missouri Valley Special Collections

This new city had a somewhat older past. The roots of Kansas City can be traced to the arrival of French trader Francois Chouteau, who arrived in the area in 1821 and established the first non-Native American settlement on the Missouri River at the base of

what is now Troost Avenue. In the decade that followed, John Calvin McCoy established Westport in 1833 as a trading post and city on the busy Santa Fe Trail four miles south and west of Choteau's settlement. McCoy later identified a rock landing on the river north of present day downtown from which goods were off loaded from steamboats and hauled to Westport for sale. In 1838, McCoy and thirteen other men formed the town company, which was incorporated as the Town of Kansas in 1850.³

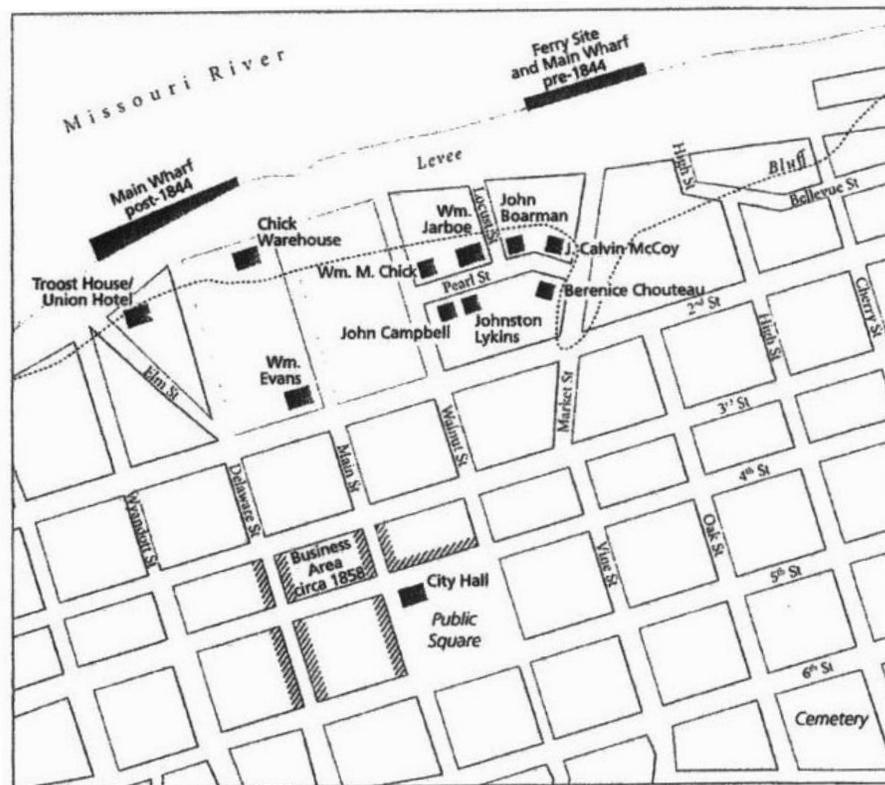


Figure 3. Town of Kansas, circa 1850

Source: Thomas R. Shortridge, *Kansas City and How it Grew, 1822 - 2011* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2012), 17.

³Kansas City Public Library, "A History of Kansas City," www.kcmo.org/kcmo.nsf/web/kchistory?opendocument (accessed April 14, 2006).

While the popular narrative of Kansas City history holds that the great period of growth in Kansas City occurred in response to the building and opening of the Hannibal Bridge in 1869, Kansas City, in fact, experienced an earlier period of explosive growth. By 1858, Kansas City began to overtake the complex of towns that had grown up along Missouri's western border in the 1830s and 1840s to serve the Western trade – Independence, Westport, Weston, and St. Joseph, among others. Kansas City outpaced the other communities as a commercial center after Kansas Territory opened for settlement after 1854.⁴ The population of the city grew from a mere 700 people in 1854 to 7,285 in 1858, just two years after the Coates' arrival, and to 8000 in 1859 for a growth rate of more than 1000 percent over six years.⁵ The population of Missouri grew more slowly than Kansas City, but faster than Jackson County with a growth rate of 73 percent between 1850 and 1860.⁶ That rate of growth in Kansas City would never be surpassed even in the post-bridge boom years when the city's population reached a new high of 32,260 people in

⁴Charles N. Glaab, "Business Patterns in the Growth of a Midwestern City: The Kansas City Business Community before the Civil War," *Business History Review* 33, no. 2: 156.

⁵ *City Directory* for 1870, 16. By contrast, the population of Jackson County, in which Kansas City was solely located at the time, increased by a comparatively glacial pace of 67 percent between 1850 and 1860 (from a population of 14,000 in 1850 to 22,913 in 1860)U.S. Department of Commerce, "Bureau of the Census, Population of States and Counties of the United States, 1790 – 1990, From the Twenty-one Decennial Censuses" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 1996), 93, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/pop1790-1990.html> (accessed September 24, 2012). Present day Kansas City is located in parts of Jackson, Clay, and Platte counties.

⁶Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1911, no. 34, Bureau of Statistics, Bureau of Census Library 1912, Table 23, 40.

1870.⁷ Kansas City's growth rate far outpaced that of other slave-state border cities. St. Louis grew 83 percent from 1850 to 1860, Louisville grew 58 percent, and Cincinnati grew 40 percent. Baltimore, a major port city in a border state, grew just 25 percent.⁸

The influx of strangers into emerging frontier communities such as Kansas City created an unsettled social and political structure. The structure of society in these urban frontier communities, such as Kansas City, developed within a generation and became more stratified as the town grew.⁹

Northerners Move In

The path from frontier outpost when the Coates arrived in 1856 to a regional commercial and industrial center by 1870 proved arduous for the city and its people. Years of political strife grew into armed conflict that profoundly altered the population of Kansas City and the surrounding region. With emancipation, the system of labor was reorganized and the newly freed people strove to improve their lot. Radical Republicans reshaped the government of Missouri in keeping with the norms of the industrial North while denying

⁷U.S. Census, 1870. Regarding the impact of the railroad bridge on Kansas City, see Louis W. Potts and George F.W. Hauck, "Frontier Bridge Building: The Hannibal Bridge at Kansas City, 1867-1869," *Missouri Historical Review* 89 (January 1995), 161. For information on the inflation of population data in the 1870 census, see Lawrence H. Larson and Nancy J. Hulston, "Through the Eyes of a Medical Student: A Window on Frontier Life in Kansas City," *Missouri Historical Review*, Vol 78 (July 1994), 433.

⁸Campbell Gibson, "Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States, 1790-1990," *Population Working Paper*, no. 27. Compiled by the U.S. Bureau of Census June 1998. Tables 8, 9 and 10. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/twps0027.html> (accessed September 24, 2012).

⁹Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790-1830* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 27-340. See also Walter Stix Glazer, *The Social and Functional Organization of an Urban Community during the Pre-Civil War Period* (Columbus, OH: The University of Ohio Press, 1999), 14-143.

the franchise to the freedmen. Relatively few Kansas Citians who had lived in the city in 1860 remained in 1870. Those who stayed gained a commercial advantage over newcomers through their networks of personal acquaintance as the city welcomed new residents largely from the North into a city that remained highly integrated by socio-economic level and race. In addition, the city's leaders continued to embrace civic unity as a matter of commercial advantage and strictly eschewed sectional division. This philosophy, among other factors, positioned the city to grow and prosper while its regional rivals atrophied.

In this fledgling community with mud streets, wooden buildings, and high bluffs that ascended almost immediately from the river's edge, Kersey Coates, like many of his fellow Easterners, saw opportunity. In the highly deterministic tones of history written long after the fact, his wife, Sarah Walter Chandler Coates, shared that he passed up Lawrence, which was his first choice, and Leavenworth. Rather, he favored the struggling river town at the junction of the Kaw and Missouri Rivers because he determined that it held possibilities the others lacked. She described him as visionary – “. . . with his far-seeing eye he discerned . . . that this point possessed superior advantages.”¹⁰

The Coates were confronted by the tumultuous political situation along the Kansas-Missouri border soon after their arrival. This struggle would mark the next decade as people from the East who supported the Free State cause poured into Kansas City on their way to settle in the newly-opened Kansas Territory as the fight over the status of

¹⁰Reed, 41.

slavery in the territory eventually led to armed conflict. The American Hotel that served as lodgings for the Easterners could barely accommodate the new arrivals and was forced to set up beds in the parlor when they had filled their fifty or sixty private chambers.¹¹ On the very day of the Coates' arrival, the Congressional Committee investigating the so-called "bogus Legislature" of the Kansas Territory, comprised of William A. Howard of Michigan, John Sherman of Ohio, and Mordecai Oliver of Missouri, also arrived.¹²

The peaceful co-existence of people with varying identities, loyalties, and views proved tenuous. Just over a month after the Coates arrived, pro-slavery forces sacked Lawrence on May 21, 1856. The recent Eastern transplant, John Brown, responded three days later with the so-called Pottawatomie Creek Massacre in which he and eight other men murdered five unarmed pro-slavery men. These incidents were a turning point in the violence on the border.¹³ Sarah Coates observed how the conflict played out on the streets of Kansas City shortly after her arrival. She recounted that a Free-State man from the Territory was loading his wagon at the levee. He was "rudely accosted by a band of ruffians, who gave him orders to leave in less than an hour's time or they would hang him 'as high as Haman' This treatment was in consequence of their suspicions that he was one of Brown's party" The second incident occurred not long after and involved 75 Free-State men from Illinois who were disarmed at Lexington while on their way to Kansas. "A spy on board the boat landed some fifteen miles below Lexington, procured a

¹¹Reed, 106.

¹²Ibid., 107.

¹³Jeremy Neely, *The Border Between Them: Violence and Reconciliation on the Kansas Missouri Line* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2011), 55-56.

horse, and rode him to death in order to give notice to Lexington's pirates . . . some three or four hundred men being assembled there by the time the boat arrived." Mrs. Coates related that the Free-State men surrendered their arms.¹⁴

Clarina Nichols, a Vermonter and reformer who came to northeast Kansas as a middle-aged widow in the 1850s, serves as a second example of Eastern ideas and influence in the region at the time. From her home in Quindaro, now part of Kansas City, Kansas, Nichols worked for her vision of Free State womanhood when she declared that "woman's sphere is out of doors." By that she meant not just the heavy daily work of establishing a farm on the prairie, but also moving into the public realm to help shape the opinions and institutions of a free state.¹⁵

The border between Missouri and Kansas Territory by the mid-1850s became violently contested as pro-slavery and Free State forces clashed over which system of labor – slavery or freedom – would control the Western territories. The influx of Northerners changed the complexion of Kansas City from one dominated by families of Southern origins such as the Wornalls, the Harrises, the McCoys, and the Johnsons, who were primarily associated with the separate, Southern city of Westport, to those from the North, such as the Coates and Van Horns. Despite their differing political loyalties, the business

¹⁴Jeremy Neely, 44. Some of the material from Reed's work is drawn from Coates' diary. Other materials are taken from memoirs. Neither source is in existence except in Reed's work. Materials from the diary and memoirs are identified as such.

¹⁵Marylyn S. Blackwell and Kristen T. Oertel, *Frontier Feminist Clarina Howard Nichols and the Politics of Motherhood* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2010), 144-145.

elite comprised of the differing factions maintained civic unity to advance the economic development interests of the city. As a result, the city grew.¹⁶

Southerners and slave-holders were nonetheless present and remained active in Kansas City and its Missouri environs throughout this period and well beyond. Of the list of city council members and city officials in the 1860 city directory (sixteen in all), three were slave holders. Councilman Lot Coffman was one of them. He was born in Ohio and married a woman from Kentucky. The Coffmans were people of considerable wealth as they owned ten slaves and real property valued at \$20,000 in the 1860 census.¹⁷

Councilman John S. Campbell and Police Chief Jonathan Richardson, neither of whose birthplaces could be identified, each owned slaves as well; Campbell owned two slave and Richardson owned one.¹⁸

¹⁶Neely, 3. Glaab, *Business Patterns*, 169-170. Northerners, drawn by rapid industrial growth in the 1870s continued to populate Kansas City after the war. By the 1880 Census, Kansas City's growth was dependent more on migration from other states than from for immigrants. Kansas City was surpassed only by Denver in the percentage of residents from other states, most commonly New York, Illinois, and Ohio. McKerley, 216-217.

¹⁷1860 Census, www.ancestry.com (accessed November 29, 2011).

¹⁸Annette W. Curtis, *Jackson County Missouri in Black and White: Census of Slaves and Their Owners and 'Free Colored' 1850 and 1860* (Independence, MO: Midwest Afro-American Genealogy Interest Coalition, 1995).

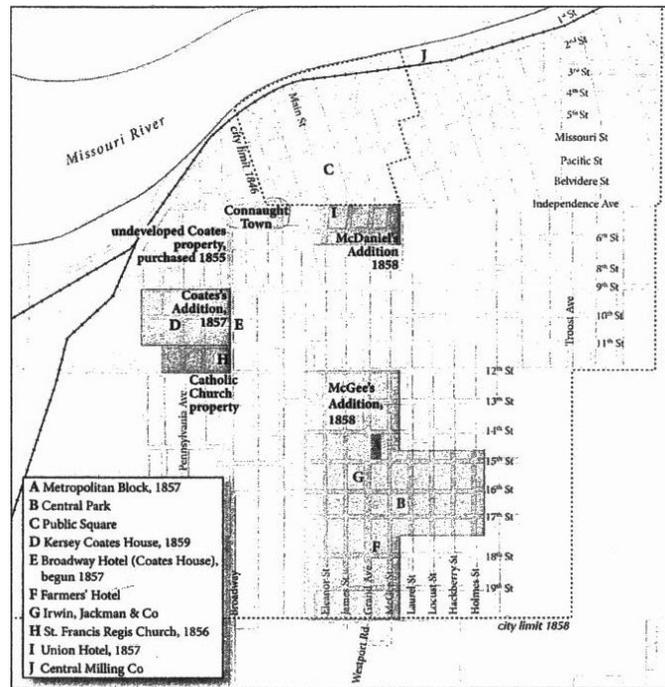


Figure 4. City of Kansas, circa 1860

Source: Thomas R. Shortridge, *Kansas City and How it Grew, 1822 – 2011* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2012), 22.

Mr. M. T. James provides another example. Born in Virginia, Mr. James arrived in Kansas City in 1853.¹⁹ The city directory for 1870 described Mr. James as:

one of Kansas City's oldest citizens He linked his destiny to [Kansas City's] when young, rising and falling with her fortunes, till [sic] at length he came out triumphantly, and is now one of her wealthiest merchants. He keeps on hand every description of queensware, and does a very extensive business, both wholesale and retail It is only proper to remark here that queensware is retailed by almost every grocery in the city.²⁰

¹⁹1870 Census.

²⁰*City Directory*, 1870, 19.

In the logic of the nineteenth century city directory, the esteem in which the community held Mr. James, then, allowed him to prosper in the sale of queensware even in face of ubiquitous and intense competition.

By 1860, Kansas City appeared poised for permanence and growth based on the wide range of the descriptions of its residents' occupations. They included musicians such as Daniel W. Bantie who lived on James (present day Walnut) between Mabillon (present day 15th Street) and Milton (present day 16th Street); artist George Caleb Bingham whose residence and studio were on McGee; T. J. Brant, a marble carver, who boarded at Mrs. Mahathy's; Leonard Bronk, an ambrotype artist (an early form of photography similar to daguerreotype), who maintained an office at 3rd and Main and boarded on Walnut between 5th & 6th streets; as well as numerous carpenters, stone cutters and stone masons, and the other professionals needed to build a city on bluffs. Kansas City boasted at least three newspapers: the *Daily & Weekly Western Journal of Commerce* published by D. K. Abeel, the *Kansas City Enquirer*, edited by Joseph Hodgson, and reflecting in particular the Northern influence in the city, the *Free State Republican* of N. T. Doane. Other societal accoutrements included churches of many denominations, separate male and female seminaries, several breweries, and numerous drinking establishments that were variously described simply as saloons, lager saloons, saloon and billiards, a bowling saloon, and restaurant and saloon, among other permutations. In keeping with Kersey Coates' vision, Kansas City grew rapidly.²¹

²¹*City Directory*, 1860.

Just as the proportion of people from Northern and Eastern states increased between 1854 and 1860 with the opening of Kansas Territory, so too did the population ebb and flow throughout the period from 1860 to 1869. The cataclysmic events of the war – guerilla activity, the extra-legal administration of justice, and General Order No. 11, among others – drove much of the population to leave the city. As the City Directory for 1870 described the effects of the war on Kansas City:

Few places suffered from the war as Kansas City did Leavenworth being made the depot of supplies for the army operating in the West, the business was substantially transferred from this place to that. Even the Santa Fe trade which has so long been confined almost exclusively to this place went in a great measure to Leavenworth. Kansas City grew dull and spiritless many of her citizens finding nothing to do were compelled to seek homes elsewhere; property found no purchasers, and became almost valueless; men were out of employment, and grass grew in the streets The war continued for four years there was [sic] nothing but dark days for Kansas City.²²

This description, while illustrative, fails to capture the full magnitude of the loss and suffering experienced by the people of the region during the war. The attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861, the failed attempt by Governor Clairborne Fox Jackson to lead Missouri out of the Union, the federal capture of Camp Jackson near St. Louis, the Union army's pursuit of Governor Jackson through Missouri and the resulting skirmishes, the Southern sympathies of many Missourians, and the question of secession or Union colored the mayor's race that year. Robert T. Van Horn, a solid Unionist, defeated the incumbent pro-secessionist mayor, G. M. B. Maughs, who was subsequently elected to the state legislature. In light of the city's need for security, Van Horn's request that Captain W. E. Prince of Fort Leavenworth occupy Kansas City with two companies of infantry and three

²²*City Directory*, 1870, 16.

of cavalry. Van Horn's Battalion of United States Volunteer Reserve corps relieved these troops on June 24, 1861. The battalion consisted of three companies – the American, the German, and the Irish companies. Among his subordinate officers were Captain George Caleb Bingham and second lieutenant Theodore Case. On August 10, 1861, at the Battle of Wilson's Creek near Springfield, Missouri, Union and Confederate forces participated in the first major battle in the trans-Mississippi West.²³ Secessionist guerilla activity and cross-border raids resulted in death, destruction, and theft on a scale that terrorized rural families. In June, 1863, General Thomas Ewing was ordered to Kansas City and established the district of the border that included the border counties in both states for about 100 miles south of the Kansas City.²⁴ The city also experienced encampments by General Lane's brigade at 20th and Wyandotte.²⁵

In spite of the presence of federal forces, Kansas City and the region endured extreme violence. Residents had divided loyalties, not just because of the differing loyalties between Kansas Unionists and Missouri Confederates, but also within the state of Missouri itself between those who supported secession and those who supported the Union, many of whom were slave-holders. Raids of Union soldiers from Kansas led by Jim Lane and Charles Jennison, often derisively known as Jayhawkers by Missourians, destroyed homes and farms throughout the western Missouri countryside. Slavery began to disintegrate due to the Union army's protection of slaves within their lines and the close

²³Neely, 101-104.

²⁴Carrie Westlake Whitney, *Kansas City, Missouri: Its People and History, 1808-1908*, vol 1, 193-195.

²⁵Reminiscences of Daniel Geary, Native Sons Collection, KC0395, Box 16, Folder 6, *Western Historical Manuscripts Collection*, March 8, 1906, 9-10.

proximity to free Kansas and the eventual enlistment of formerly enslaved men into Union forces after late 1863. The high level of guerilla violence in western Missouri was partly fueled by a financial conspiracy instigated by the state's secessionist leaders that resulted in the dispossession of their farmland. The conspiracy failed and left the pro-confederate population of many areas in Missouri highly indebted. The result was the sale of thousands of acres of farmland to satisfy the debts. Guerillas from counties most affected by the land sales belonged in disproportionate numbers to these secessionist families. The most heavily affected counties were the western counties of Jackson, Clay, Lafayette, Saline, Johnson, as well as Pettis, Ray, Henry, St. Clair, and Greene. But anger over the Union army's presence in the Missouri countryside, emancipation, and the enlistment of enslaved Missouri men were additional motivations for joining the guerillas, who were aided by disloyal citizens. The sisters of guerillas Bill Anderson and Bill McCorkle were among a group of disloyal women who were held in a makeshift, three story brick jail in Kansas City. They were killed when the jail collapsed on August 13, 1863.²⁶

Partly in response to the jail's collapse, the violence escalated on August 21, 1863, when William Clark Quantrill and more than 400 guerillas raided Lawrence and killed nearly every male resident. In response, General Ewing issued General Order No.11 that required all residents of Jackson, Cass, Bates and northern Vernon counties (except residents of Kansas City) who could not prove their loyalty to leave the district. Loyal residents could move to within one mile of military installations at Independence, Hickman Mills, Pleasant Hill, or Harrisonville or relocate to Kansas beyond the Eastern tier of

²⁶Mark A. Geiger, "Indebtedness and the Origins of Guerilla Violence in Civil War Missouri," *Journal of Southern History* 75, no. 1 (Feb 2009), 49-82. Neely, 121-124.

counties. All other citizens had to leave the district within fifteen days. Some families returned to the places from which they had come; others went west to central Kansas, California, or Colorado, or south to Texas. Union forces confiscated grain and hay in the area to reduce the guerillas' ability to sustain their activities and burned crops and homes.²⁷

In spite of the internecine tumult and bloodshed, Northerners succeeded in maintaining a measure of order amidst the chaos. Among those Northerners, Daniel Geary served as a commissioned captain and adjutant of the 77th Regiment of the Missouri Militia in 1862 and also acted as provost marshal and commissary of exemptions from military service.²⁸ Geary provided an evenhanded assessment of the violence of the era. He recalled, for example, Col. Jennison's regiment shooting and killing a well-respected Clay County farmer in the back of the neck on Main Street, just south of the levee and taking his two mules. Another man was "wantonly" shot down at 5th and Main. A young man accused of being a spy was arrested, tried, convicted, and executed by hanging at the southwest corner of 11th and Wyandotte. Geary also shared the story of the murder of Thomas Johnson, founder of the Shawnee Mission, at his home in Kansas City.²⁹

Geary further recounted the intriguing story of George Todd, a noted guerilla from Kansas City, whose parents were immigrants from Scotland and had arrived in Kansas City from Canada just a year before the war began. Obviously puzzled by Todd's motivations

²⁷Neely, 121-124. For more information on the effect of General Order No. 11 and its effects, see Mutti Burke, 278. On the role of political generals such as Ewing, see James M. McPherson, "Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era," *The Oxford History of the United States* 6 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 401.

²⁸Daniel Geary, Exemptions from Military Service, Native Sons Collection, KC0395, Box 16, Folder 6, *Western Historical Manuscripts Collection*, March 8, 1906, 1.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 11-17.

for joining the guerillas, Geary described an unsuccessful raid on his parents' home to capture the outlaw. In all, Geary viewed the war in Jackson County as "organized assassination modified by theft . . . [in which men] were bushwhacking one day and farming the next . . ." ³⁰ Geary's concluding assessment, while intended to characterize the behavior of the Southern sympathizers, applies equally to the actions of Union loyalists such as Jennison, James Lane, and many other Kansans and Kansas Citizens of contemporary and future note.

The injustices visited upon the citizenry in Kansas City were mitigated in some instances by the bravery of people such as Van Horn and Kersey Coates, whom Geary credited with ". . . protecting the lives of law abiding citizens suspected of Confederate sympathies, thus endangering their own lives and detracting from their standing as Union men . . ." Standing up for just treatment of suspected Confederate sympathizers was risky. Geary recounted one instance, not otherwise confirmed, when feelings against Coates were running high. "I went to his house to warn him . . . but, possessing great moral courage and will power, with a thorough hatred of injustice, he simply defied the lawless soldiery and continued to act his part." ³¹

In a less somber vein, and one not lacking irony, Geary told of the banishment by the Union military authorities of Mrs. Lykins for disloyalty "during the war." Lykins, a

³⁰Geary, March 8, 1906, 11-17. McPherson places Todd in the triumvirate of confederate guerilla leaders along with Quantrill and "Bloody Bill" Anderson. See McPherson, 292. Gienapp found that a staggering number of civilians were arrested for disloyalty in Missouri – far more than in any other loyal state. Mark E. McNeely, quoted in William E. Gienapp, "Abraham Lincoln and the Border States," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 13 (1992), 28.

³¹Ibid., 12A.

“ . . . talented and accomplished woman, a writer of short stories for the press in those days” took her passage to the distant shore of Clay County. As the boat left the wharf, Lykins “. . . was telling the Doctor where he could find his underclothes and to be sure they were quite dry when he put them on. She bore her exile quite philosophically.”³² Many years later, Sarah Coates provided insight into Lykins exuberant and perhaps overly candid personality when she said that Lykins became “. . . so progressive in the last years of life. She grew liberal on the same broad scale that distinguished her in everything.”³³ This insight informs us that no doubt Dr. Lykins was committed to a view of community development that placed economic progress ahead of politics and, as a result, self-censored his public remarks. Mrs. Lykins was perhaps less committed to that approach and, as a woman, was better able to speak her mind without fear of losing her life. Yet even as a woman, she faced repercussions. She was forced to leave Jackson County, though not the state.

In her diary entry of March 9, 1862, Elvira Scott, a well-educated woman of the propertied, slaving-owning class and a resident of Miami in Saline County, Missouri, wrote of the elite refugees that were arriving from Jackson County due to their refusal to affirm their loyalty to the Union:

Their houses, winter stores, and in many cases cattle, horses, and servants were left in the possession of the enemy. Many of them have never borne arms or taken any

³²Geary, September 6, 1910, 8. Geary did not specify a date for her banishment.

³³Reed, 63.

active part in the existing troubles. It was enough that they were men of property, who sympathized with the Southern cause and owned Negroes.³⁴

The depredations continued through the summer of 1862 with murder of Judge Robert G. Smart, a former judge of the Circuit Court of Jackson County.³⁵ Because of his Southern sympathies, he resigned from professional life rather than take an oath of loyalty to the Union. He, like others in his position, was not safe even as a noncombatant because of his well-known views. He left Jackson County only to be shot down in Saline County by Union forces even after he surrendered to them. In another instance, Scott spoke of two women who were banished from Independence. She met them during their passage through Saline County on a boat. Mrs. Parrish and her husband had both been arrested. Mr. Parrish had been falsely accused of supplying ammunition to Quantrill. While in prison, Mrs. Parrish and Mrs. Tillery refused to sew flags (presumably Union flags). Mrs. Tillery escaped and found her way to Lexington. Scott observed that “Men are shot or hung every few days on the most trivial of pretexts it excites no remark Military

³⁴“A Diary the Civil War on the Missouri Border: Diary of Elvira H.W. Scott, 1860-1887,” *State Historical Society of Missouri, Manuscript Collection*, Columbia, MO, 98. Suffering before and during this period was certainly not limited to the Missouri side of the border. In 1859, for example, the housekeeper for the well-known reformer, Clarina Nichols, was kidnapped in Kansas by Missouri “wretches” who sent former slaves back to Missouri and collected monetary rewards for their efforts. Marylyn S. Blackwell and Kristen T. Oertel, 203.

³⁵No family relationship has yet been established between T. A. Smart and R. G. Smart. The former served for one year (1858) as a judge of the Jackson County Court. He was a grocer, developer, and prominent citizen, who opened the first trading house owned by an American in what was to become Kansas City in 1839. He also filed several plats for three Smart additions in Kansas City. In 1851, he married Mary J. Smart, a Northerner, who owned a grocery store that she had started with her brother. The store was said to be the principal stopping place for Free State men on their way to Kansas. Union Historical Company, *The History of Jackson County, Missouri, Containing its Cities, Towns, Etc.* (Kansas City, MO: Birdsall, Williams & Company, 1881), 178, 439, 845.

despotism is complete.”³⁶ In another instance, the Scotts were visited by marauding Kansas redlegs. Scott described them as “about the lowest, most desperate looking specimens of humanity it has ever been my lot to witness.”³⁷ The violence was, of course, not visited exclusively on the Southern sympathizers in Missouri by forces from Kansas, but rather included longstanding and persistent violence against Unionists in both Kansas and Missouri by secessionist guerillas.

The effect of the war on enslaved people was evident by December of 1862. On December 22, Scott observed that: “Many Negroes have run off and many have returned home. They are regarded with suspicion. They are dying in Lexington, several a day. General Vaughn has given orders for masters to come for them if they want them.”³⁸ By April 1863, a Kansas City newspaper reported large numbers of newly free people passing through the city, most likely in transit to Kansas. Their wagons carried the “necessities of life” and many items removed from the homes of the former slaves’ owners.³⁹ By August of that year, Scott reported, “About three o’clock a procession appeared. It was headed by 11 six mule teams drawing wagons filled with Negro women and children. Behind them was a large precession of two hundred and forty Negro men, besides women and children.”

³⁶Scott, 163-164. Smart, with his law partner, William Chrisman, had served as administrators of the estate of Jabez Smith, the owner of the largest number of enslaved people in Jackson County in 1850. He owned 244 slaves at that time. See Annette W. Curtis, *Jackson County in Black and White, vol 2: Jabez Smith: His Slaves, Plantations, and Heirs* (Independence, MO: Two Trails Publishing, 1998), 213.

³⁷Ibid., 197.

³⁸Ibid., 169.

³⁹Diane Mutti Burke, *On Slavery’s Border: Missouri’s Small-Slaveholding Households, 1815-1865* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 297-298.

Mrs. Scott also noted that the procession had an escort of soldiers.⁴⁰ Some of the African American men found work building the railroad line heading west from Kansas City. The *Western Journal of Commerce* reported that “No man is refused work on account of his color, and we yesterday saw a large number of Negroes in one gang industriously at work, and were informed that they have good satisfaction.”⁴¹

Slaves left their places of bondage in large numbers during the war in an effort to escape their owners and the violence that plagued western Missouri. Lawrence, Leavenworth, Wyandotte, and Quindaro attracted the most freed slaves. By 1863, slavery was a severely compromised institution in Missouri with some counties losing as many as one-fourth of their slaves in the first four months of the year. The situation was greatly exacerbated by the start of the official Union recruitment of African American men in Missouri in the late fall of 1863.⁴² By 1865, the freed people were concentrating in towns and garrisoned places in Missouri to protect themselves from gangs of bushwhackers who often lynched and shot them and harassed the people who hired them. Some of the freedmen who had not gone to Kansas began to drift back into the countryside during the winter of 1865-1866, because the towns could not support them.⁴³ Evidence indicates that free people became a smaller portion of the total population in rural areas.

⁴⁰Scott, 220.

⁴¹*Western Journal of Commerce*, August 19, 1863, 2.

⁴²Kristen Kimberly Epps, *Bound Together: Masters and Slaves on the Kansas-Missouri Border, 1825-1865*. Diss. University of Kansas, 2010, 236-240.

⁴³Parrish, 107-109.

The records of the Provost Marshal, the authority responsible for maintaining order within the military district, provide insight into the actions of these office holders during the war. Twenty-four men served as city, county, and Kaw Township officers according to the 1860 city directory. Of those men, seven had records on file with the Provost Marshall. In 1862, County Surveyor Martin O. Jones took the loyalty oath; John W. Summers, the city recorder, was accused of disloyalty, but many people swore to his loyalty; and City Councilman W. J. Jarboe provided the Provost Marshal with a list of goods that were stolen from him. In 1864, J. M. Jarboe was listed as “reporting self”; Dan Geary, Clerk of the City Council, was listed as going to Liberty to obtain a letter requesting the revocation of his appointment as Commissary of Exemption; and “Cravens,” perhaps E. B. Cravens, a justice of the peace in Kaw Township, accused Dan Geary of taking livestock; Cravens was arrested for defrauding the government.⁴⁴ Clearly, issues of loyalty, position, and property predominated in the Provost Marshall’s office.

John C. McCoy, a prominent Westport businessman, slaveholder, and Confederate sympathizer, left Jackson County during this time and went to Glasgow, Missouri, located in Howard County, well beyond the reach of General Order No. 11. The gravity of his life in exile is conveyed by the letter, dated November 11, 1863, that he sent to attorney P. J. Brown in Kansas City. In reference to a debt, he wrote:

I expect to start up in a day or two to Liberty, and will send for you to meet me on this side of the river either at Liberty or Harlem [Clay County just across the river from Kansas City]. I suppose it might not be safe for me to go to Kansas City and if you think I

⁴⁴*Provost Marshal Database*, www.sos.mo.gov/archives/provost (accessed November 29, 2011).

would not be safe at Liberty or in Clay be pleased to notify me by letter You had better not mention that I will be in Clay to any one [sic] – perhaps I might be molested.⁴⁵

With the conclusion of the war, many families returned destitute to rural Jackson County and the so-called “Burnt District” consisting of Cass, Bates, and Vernon counties – all areas that had been emptied of population by General Order No. 11. Returning residents returned to find that substantial taxes had accumulated on their property. Tax auctions dispossessed many long-time residents of their land.⁴⁶ The situation was not unique, however, to the border counties. John and Elvira Scott returned to their home in Saline County after spending the last part of the war in St. Louis. Mrs. Scott wrote that, “About the first of May the Assessors distributed orders for taxes to be paid. There were several new taxes imposed during the war, one, among others an Income Tax.”⁴⁷

Not only were secessionists such as the Scotts responsible for back taxes at the war’s end, but, through the efforts of the Radical Republicans who sought to control the government, disloyal men and those who served the Confederacy were also disenfranchised. In addition, individuals who chose not to swear allegiance to the so-called Ironclad Oath, were prohibited from voting and practicing professions, including teaching, law, or preaching, or serving in public office or as a juror. This oath was the last of a series of oaths that had been employed since the start of the war to define loyalty and inclusion in the political and social system. Earlier oaths included the offer by the provisional

⁴⁵John C. McCoy, *John C. McCoy Collection*, KC0296 (Letter of November 11, 1863), Folder 1.

⁴⁶Neely, 136-137.

⁴⁷Scott, 251.

government in 1861 to protect loyal citizens who were willing to pledge loyalty to the Union and the requirement to prove loyalty in the wake of General Order No. 11.⁴⁸

Population loss and disfranchisement were reflected in the fact that 52,000 fewer people voted in the state-wide elections of 1864 than had voted in 1860. The restrictions on voting advantaged the Radical Republicans who governed Missouri from 1865 to 1870. The Radicals believed that future prosperity for themselves and the state was based on the inflow of Northern capital to build industry and Eastern immigrants to provide labor and votes for the Radicals. Without these two elements, the Radicals believed that progress would bypass the state.⁴⁹

The Radicals left in place the disenfranchisement of African Americans. After initially considering enfranchising African American men, the Radicals backed away. They feared that enfranchisement would threaten the approval of the new 1865 constitution and would then lead to the rejection of the disenfranchisement of disloyal people. This desire to gain approval of the constitution by appealing to the broadest base of the electorate is reflected in the irony that the constitution provided that a vote by both houses of the state legislature after January 1, 1871, could end the disloyal disenfranchisement.

⁴⁸Neely, 113-14, 122, 157-61. For more on the Ironclad Oath, see McKerley, 80-82.

⁴⁹William E. Parrish, *Missouri under Radical Rule, 1865-1870* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1965), 139-205.

A constitutional amendment was needed, however, to approve suffrage for African American males.⁵⁰

Toward the end of reshaping Missouri society in an attempt to bring the state into conformity with Northern norms, the Radicals implemented a system of public education in the state. Free, quality public education ran contrary to the so-called Southern attitude toward education, which viewed public education as being for poor children and as a form of public philanthropy. More affluent families sent their children to private academies.

The population data from before and after the war years reflects the overwhelming difficulty of remaining in Kansas City during the war. A careful comparison of the city directories of Kansas City for 1860 and 1870 reveals that of the approximately 2015 individuals/households listed in the 1860 directory, only about 220 individuals or households from 1860 remained in the city by 1870. The other 1795 individual/households left the city because of the ongoing strife or were forced out by Order No. 11. The consistent Kansas Citians were, by contrast, people who had weathered the conflict and either agreed with or adapted to life in the Union military occupation.

The composition of the city councils of 1860 and 1870 reflect the effect of migration out of the city in response to the Civil War and the subsequent migration into the city in the post-war years. The members of a city council might well be assumed to have deep roots in a community with family, social, and business connections and, therefore,

⁵⁰McKerley, Diss., 83. See also, Parrish, 139-205. Aaron Astor argued that the votes of African American men were not needed by the radicals as they could count on votes from St. Louis, the German population throughout the state, and the Ozark Unionists. Aaron Astor, *Rebels on the Border: Civil War, Emancipation, and the Reconstruction of Kentucky and Missouri* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2012), 171-178.

may reasonably be predicted to return to the city following the cessation of hostilities. The city council of Kansas City did not meet that prediction. Only two members of the 1860 council – William Jarboe, a wholesaler of dry goods and groceries, who lived at the corner of Locust and Pearl (1st Street) and his brother, D. M. Jarboe, who was a forwarding and commission merchant agent and resided at 4th and Delaware – were listed in the 1870 city directory. Of the 1870 city council, only two members – Jas. H. McGee, a real estate dealer of a prominent lineage who had moved from Wyandotte and Mabilion (15th Street) to Grand between 13th and 14th, and J. W. Cook, a merchant who moved from south of Boulton and Kings’ addition to south of Thomas’ addition – are listed in both the 1860 and 1870 city directories.⁵¹

This comparison also reveals that the residents from 1860 who were in the city in 1870 differed substantially from the rest of the population. Well over half (166) were members of the professional and merchant class (69) and the skilled labor class (97).⁵² Kersey Coates numbered among the professional and merchant class. In 1860, he was

⁵¹The identities of 23 of those 220 “consistent Kansas Citians” is open to question due to several factors. The first is the slight changes that may have occurred in the names of the same person over that period. For example, it is uncertain whether Jeremiah Hennessey who was listed as a laborer in the 1860 directory and resided on Delaware between 5th & Spring streets is the same person as Jerry Hennessey whose occupation was unknown in the 1870 city directory and who lived on William Street between 4th & 5th streets. A second is the use of common names--Is John Smith the laborer in 1860 who lived on Grand between 3rd & 4th the same laborer who lived at 11th & Jefferson in 1870? A third factor is the inconsistent use of middle initials--Is John D. Anderson, a brick moulder [sic] who lived at 5th & Cherry in 1860 the same person as John Anderson, a carpenter in 1869, who lived on Walnut between 18th & 19th streets? *City Directory*, 1860 & 1870.

⁵²Distinguishing among the three classes – professional and merchant, skilled labor, and unskilled labor requires some subjective interpretation. A small shop owner, for example, is considered to be a member of the merchant and professional class along with more substantial merchants. His social and economic status may have more closely approximated that of a member of the skilled labor class. Individuals who provided skilled labor in 1860 and became merchants by 1869, such as Michael and Timothy Mulverhill (tanners who became merchants) were considered skilled labor for this analysis.

listed as a real estate dealer living on Main between 2nd & 3rd streets. In 1870, he was the president of a railroad and lived at 10th and Pennsylvania streets. The wholesale and retail grocery merchant Michael Dively, who boarded at the Union Hotel in 1860, is also included in this class. By 1870, Mr. Dively had moved into the real estate business and resided at 10th & Pennsylvania, the city's most prestigious neighborhood, very near the Coates. A total of nine of the 220 consistent Kansas Citians boarded at the Union Hotel. All whose occupations are identified were of the professional and merchant class. In 1860, they included: S. W. Bouton, secretary of a railroad and of an unknown occupation, perhaps retired in 1870; Frank Foster, a deputy postmaster who became postmaster by 1870 and lived at the City View House; James Gray whose profession was not listed, but who became a planning mill owner and lived at William (Holmes) and East Levee in 1870; John R. Griffith, an agent for U.S. Express who joined the hardware firm of H. W. Cooper by 1870 and lived on Independence Avenue between Oak and High streets; Louis Hammerslough, a merchant with the Hammerslough Brothers clothing merchant firm, who lived at 13th & Laurel (Oak) in 1870; H. H. King, who was in the real estate business throughout the period and boarded at the Pacific House at the corner of Delaware and 4th streets in 1870; E. W. Pierce, an agent for the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad in 1860 and an insurance agent in 1870 lived at Walnut and Court streets; Henry Thomas, a clerk who became a saloon proprietor in 1870 and whose business and residence were on Grand between 14th & 15th streets. While the total number of boarders at the Union Hotel is not known, the high incidence of consistent Kansas Citians among former boarders indicated that significant relationships and personal networks developed that, with the

professional/merchant status, may have allowed this group of former boarders to survive in, or return to, Kansas City. The elevated status and skills of this group also empowered them to change professions as at least of five of the nine did during these years.

The Gillis House, formerly the American Hotel, served as the lodgings of four consistent Kansas Citians. The four appear, however, to have been far less homogeneous in terms of social class than the boarders at the Union Hotel. The Gillis boarders included two representatives of the merchant and professional class: James C. Kevill, who was an auction and commission merchant in 1860 as was his business partner, James P. Turner. By 1870, the firm of Kevill and Turner had become a merchandise house for home furnishings. Kevill moved to a residence on Main Street near the Levee and Turner to Main and Commercial Street Alley (a street near the levee). The other two boarders were stage drivers, James Thompson and George Rhodes. By 1870, Thompson worked as a teamster and lived in West Kansas (the West Bottoms); Rhodes was a clerk and lived at 26 Main Street. This seeming divergence of socio-economic class among the boarders may indicate that Turner and Kevill were not particularly prosperous merchants in 1860, a fact that led them to find lodgings among laborers. Their 1870 addresses were quite close to the Gillis House and may indicate that they had not found prosperity by 1870. Both Thompson and Rhodes shifted occupations due to the disappearance of stages as the railroad developed. Thompson moved to the West Bottoms while Rhodes continued to reside near the Gillis House at 26 Main Street.

Skilled workers among consistent Kansas Citians included James Mansfield, a boot and shoemaker in both 1860 and 1870 who moved his place of residence from Grand

between 2nd & Front streets to 3rd between Oak & High Street; William Holden, a tailor at both points, whose residents may have stayed the same (listed in 1860 as “the west side of McGee” and in 1870 as McGee between 8th and 9th streets); and Charles Barger, a brewer in 1860 with the Kansas City Brewery who became a bar-room keeper by 1870, with no residence listed, to living on 7th Street between Pennsylvania and Jefferson streets. To a much greater extent than the merchant and professional class, members of the skilled labor class remained in the same field of endeavor over the period. Those who changed jobs generally moved to a different sector within an industry, such as Mr. Barger’s move from working as a brewer at the Kansas City Brewery to bar-room keeping or Joseph Haefner who made what was a presumably upward move from being a baker whose shop and residence were located on Grand between Milton and Mabillon to being a grocery store proprietor with a residence in the Metropolitan Block on Grand. Similarly Thomas Charles advanced from tinsmithing to being a merchant in stoves and tinware. In the process, he moved from 3rd and Main streets to 14th and Main streets. But there were exceptions. William W. Morrison shifted from clerking for T. B. Hale, a seller of drugs and medicine, with an unknown address in 1860 to working as a porter of local goods, an unskilled category of labor, who lived at Walnut & the Levee in 1870. Similarly, John Walsh, who boarded at the Garden City House on Grand between Allen and Manard, worked as a stone mason in 1860, but as a laborer in 1870 when his address was at 11th & Wyandotte.

Six consistent Kansas Citians did not list an occupation. Forty-eight were classified as unskilled workers. The majority were listed simply as laborers. Thomas Tobin was one of them. In 1860 and 1870 he lived on Delaware between 5th & 6th streets and then on

Central between 10th & 11th streets. Owen Hogan was another. In 1860, he resided on Cherry between 5th & 6th streets and in 1870 at Washington and Orchard Streets. Others laborers received a more specific description of their work. John Quinlan held the title of laborer in 1860 when he lived on Grand near 3rd Street; by 1870, he had become a teamster and lived at the same address. Thomas Shea made an identical shift of occupations when he became a teamster by 1870. He lived on Delaware between 4th and 5th streets in 1860 and on High (between Oak and Cherry) between 2nd and 3rd by 1870. Patrick Cassidy moved from laborer to omnibus driver and from Laurel (Oak) between Mabillon (15th Street) and Milton (16th Street) to Westport in the span of the decade. Some of the laboring class had to shift jobs as their occupations were made obsolete by advancing technology. Stage driver John T. Miles, who boarded on Delaware between Cumberland (9th Street) and 7th streets in 1860, appears to have taken a step or up the occupational ladder by becoming a blacksmith in 1870 when he boarded at the Pennsylvania House, which does not have an address listed. John Blake moved several more steps upward – from being a laborer living at 4th & Walnut in 1860 to serving as an Assistant U.S. Assessor and living on New Delaware (now known as Baltimore) between 11th and 12th in 1870. William A. Pickett appears to have moved down that same ladder. In 1860, he was a harness maker who boarded south of Bouton and King's addition; in 1870 he was a milkman with no stated address.

Only eleven of the consistent Kansas Citians owned slaves, three on average. Holdings ranged from as few as one slave to as many as six slaves. All but one of these slave owners—J. G. Hayden, a city marshal—belonged to the business and professional

class. Three slave owners were physicians, two were real estate dealers, others categories included a banker, a trader, a judge, and a contractor. From the age and sex of the slaves, most of them appeared to have been household servants. Emaline Boullt, a widow who was in the Coates' social circle owned a 30-year-old female slave and a 4-year-old male slave, for example. In all likelihood, these enslaved people were a mother and her son. In a similar situation, Johnston Lykins owned a 30-year-old female, an eight-year-old female, and a four-year-old male. D. L. Shouse, by contrast, owned one slave, a 45-year-old male. James H. McGee owned three children who were slaves from ages 6 through 12 years old.⁵³

Marital status provides insight into whether the community had gained stability or remained a place for young, single men to settle. On that measure, the record is mixed, but indications seem to support the view that Kansas City appears not to have been the singular province of single men. That view is bolstered by the fact that one of the prominent members of the community, Kersey Coates, brought his wife to live in the burgeoning city by 1860. Both of the Jarboe brothers who served on the city council in 1860 were married. Of the fourteen members of the professional and merchant class listed above, however, only one additional member, Kersey Coates, can be confirmed as married. He had established himself in Kansas City before returning to the east and marrying in 1856. Seven of them were single, while the marital status of the remaining six cannot be confirmed. The marital status of none of the six skilled workers can be confirmed, and

⁵³Curtis, 104-108.

only one can be confirmed as married, one as single, and the marital status of the balance was not confirmed.

Nationality correlates strongly with the resident's occupational category, although region of origin does not. Men from both the North and the South were well represented. In general, the merchant and professional class was dominated by individuals with Anglo-Saxon surnames like Kersey Coates, Theodore Case, Frank and Matthew Foster, T. A. Smart, Jas. P. Turner, a commission and auction merchant who boarded at the Gillis House in 1860 and lived at Main and Commercial Alley in 1870. Exceptions existed. Edmund O'Flaherty, a surveyor and civil engineer who was born in Ireland. He lived on Chandler (west of Wyandotte) between 8th Street and Cumberland (9th Street) Street in 1860 and on May between 9th and 10th in 1870. Louis A. Schoen, born in Bavaria, worked as a physician and druggist in 1860 and lived on McGee between Mabillon (15th Street) and Milton (16th Street) in 1860. By 1870, he was listed only as a physician. His office and residence were at 5th and Wyandotte streets. Skilled workers tended to possess Anglo-Saxon and German surnames. They included Richard T. Ferguson – no place of birth identified – a carpenter who became a clerk and moved from Grand between 2nd and 3rd to Grand and 12th over the decade; Edward Fair (born in Maine), a brick mason who moved from Cumberland & Pennsylvania to 8th and May; and August Stansch, a carpenter who was born in Germany and who lived on McGee between Manard (14th Steet) and Mabillon (15th Street) in 1860 and at 18th & Peery (presumed misspelling of Perry, now known as Charlotte) in 1870. Irish names predominated among laborers. They included Patrick Kelley who was born in Ireland and who lived at Broadway and 8th Street in 1860 and on

6th between Sante Fe and Mulberry streets in 1870; Thomas Nolan (no place of birth identified), listed as a drayman in 1860 and as a laborer in 1870, who lived on the Wyandotte side of the alley between 5th & 6th streets in 1860 and at Pennsylvania and Lykins in 1870; and Richard Ryan who was born in Ireland and who lived on Hubbard between Wyandotte and May streets in 1860 and on Jefferson between 11th and 12th in 1870. Anglo-Saxon and at least one Germanic name also appeared among laborers and included William Moore, who lived on Walnut between 4th and 5th in 1860 and near State line house in West Kansas (the West Bottoms) in 1870; John Smith, who was born in Ireland and lived on Grand between 3rd and 4th streets in 1860 and at Jefferson and 11th Streets in 1870; and John Fritz, who was born in Baden, Germany, and who lived at the same location, which was denoted by different street names at the two times - James (Walnut) Street between Manard (14th Street) and Mabillon (15th Street) in 1860 and on Walnut between 14th and 15th in 1870.⁵⁴

A walk down a major thoroughfare of the city in 1860 revealed that the three classes of consistent Kansas Citians lived in close proximity to each other. At Main and the Levee stood the Gillis House that served at least four boarders of modest means, two of whom were laborers. Two skilled workers lived on the 100 block: Samuel Gilham, a carpenter, and Conrad Schaefer, a blacksmith and wagon maker. Skilled worker Henry Gill, a book binder, shared the 200 block with members of the merchant and professional class, including: S. P. Seely, a furniture store owner; Kersey Coates, a real estate dealer; George A. Daggett, a bookkeeper; and Matthew Foster, a postal clerk. The business and

⁵⁴Places of birth identified through www.ancestry.com (accessed November 29, 2011).

residence of a saloon proprietor, Charles M. Kendall, were also located on the block. The 300 block of Main boasted the residence of one member of the professional and merchant class, J. B. Drinkard, a bookkeeper with the firm of Alexander Majors. The block was also home to three skilled workers: Joseph Sprink, a barber; Louis Daenzer, a seller of fruit and confections; and F. F. Bedow, a saddle and harness maker. The 400, 500, 600, and 700 blocks of Main Street housed two skilled laborers, blacksmith Henry Kauffmann and brick mason William Smith. The members of the merchant and professional class who boarded at the Union Hotel, Henry Huhn, a co-owner of a hardware and grocery store, and Daniel L. Shouse, a clerk and notary at Mechanic's Bank. T. A. Smart, a prominent businessman and a judge of the county court lived at Main near Lancaster (10th Street). E. M. McGee, a real estate dealer lived on Main between Mabillon (15th Street) and Gertrude (17th Street). Baker Henry Rieke lived in the 700 block. These blocks were also home to two unskilled laborers: Thomas Sheehy and William Stone. Sheehy was listed simply as a laborer. Stone's occupation was not listed in 1860; in 1870, however, he was an agricultural worker. In general, the professional and merchant classes were clustered along Main and Delaware. Skilled workers were concentrated from Delaware Street to the east. Unskilled workers tended to locate in the 600 and 700 blocks of Delaware and Main with other groupings in the 400 block of Walnut and the 300 and 400 blocks of Grand.

By 1870, the people and the street had changed. Some members of each class had moved elsewhere. Other members of the merchant and professional and skilled worker classes had moved in to replace them. No unskilled consistent Kansas Citians continued to live on Main Street. Some members of the merchant and professional class had moved

elsewhere. S. P. Seely relocated to Cherry between 6th Street and Independence Avenue. The Coates moved to Quality Hill, an exclusive neighborhood that Kersey Coates developed. His Quality Hill neighbors were wealthy people with roots in the East and who had a record of support of the North during the Civil War. Few, if any, Methodists or Baptists lived on Quality Hill or West of Main Street, which Pierre R. Porter noted was termed the Mason-Dixon Line of the city during this period. In fact, the only churches west of Main, were the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches and the Roman Catholic cathedral, which Father Bernard Donnelly had built there long before the so-called Mason Dixon Line was established.⁵⁵ Even the Congregationalists, generally people with roots in the North and East, who lived west of Main had to cross the line to attend the First Congregational Church. Housing patterns in Kansas City, then, continued in the case of the Quality Hill denizens such as the Coates and the Nettletons, to reflect regional origins, wealth, and influence. While the Quality Hill families clearly associated with residents of other parts of the city, they lived in a highly homogeneous neighborhood.

George A. Daggett moved to Walnut between 6th and 7th Streets. Matthew Foster became a bookseller and moved his residence and business into the 600 block of Main. J. B. Drinkard died and his widow took up residence on Wyandotte and 6th streets. The grocer, Henry Huhn, became a cashier with the German financial institution and moved one block farther north on Main. Daniel L. Shouse moved up to the position of cashier at Mechanic's Bank. His home address, however, was not listed. T. A. Smart, a former judge of the county court and now president of the Kansas City Savings Bank, moved to the 1000

⁵⁵For an extensive discussion of Quality Hill in this period, see Pierre R. Porter, *The Missouri Historical Review* 35, no. 4 (July 1941), 562-569.

block of Main from Main near Lancaster. E. M. McGee moved to Main between 16th and 17th from Main between Mabillon and Gertrude. Among skilled workers in 1870, Samuel Gilham relocated to 604 Main, Mr. Gill to the 1200 block of Main, Charles M. Kendall to 15th and Walnut, and Mr. Schaefer to the 1200 Main. Louis Daenzer's address was not listed, F. F. Bedow moved to 1016 Main, blacksmith Henry Kaufmann (formerly spelled Kauffmann) moved to the 1400 block of Main and former stone mason turned painter, William Smith, moved to the 800 block of Main. Barber Joseph Sprink moved to 719 Main from the 300 block of Main. Former baker, now confectioner, Henry Rieke moved to the 800 block of Main from the 700 block. Among unskilled workers, George Rhodes, a clerk formerly a stage driver, continued to reside at the top end of Main (No. 26), and Thomas Sheehy, a teamster formerly a laborer lived on Main between 6th and 7th Streets lived in 1860, lived at Washington and 8th streets in 1870. By 1870, the merchant and professional class most often resided from Main to Pennsylvania with some members living to the east and south, including five members of the class who resided from the 800 through the 1400 block of McGee.

Consistent Kansas Citians who moved to Main Street in this period continued the interspersed nature of the classes, yet the consistent Kansas Citians were now spread from the top of Main all the way to 16th Street. New members of the merchant and professional class were J. Q. Watkins, a banker whose home and business were located at 2nd and Main; his former address was not listed. J. P. Shannon, a merchant relocated to 3rd & Main from Charlotte between 4th and 5th. William Redheffer, a stove dealer, relocated to 314 Main from Grand near 7th. Long-time merchant Thomas M. James moved his store and residence

to 632 Main; he previously boarded on 5th between Delaware and Wyandotte. Among skilled workers, John M. Newman, a former dry goods clerk who was listed as a grocer in 1870, moved to the 600 block of Main from Walnut and 7th. H. R. Holman, a watchmaker, moved to the 600 block of Main from the 500 block of Chandler. Carriage trimmer John Ingler moved to the 1000 block of Main from Grand between Allen and Manard. Charles Rollert, a carpenter in 1860 who lived on Delaware between Allen (13th Street) and Manard (14th Street) relocated to the 1300 block of Main where he was listed as a carpenter and builder. Wagon maker Alois Gres relocated from James (Walnut) between Manard (14th Street) and Milton (16th Street) to the 1400 block of Main. In 1870, he owned a saloon. Tinsmith Charles Thomas lived at 3rd and Walnut in 1860; by 1870, he was a merchant in stoves and tin ware and lived in the 1400 block of Main. The new residents of Main Street in 1870 made the street more homogenous than it had been in 1860 with only two members of the upper class represented from among the consistent Kansas Citizens.

What remained constant throughout the war and the next five years of Radical rule was that the structure of the business elite of Kansas City stayed very much intact. Robert T. Van Horn, now a Radical Republican member of Congress, helped lead Kansas City into the future through his success in obtaining the railroad river crossing, known as the Hannibal Bridge, among other accomplishments.⁵⁶ Kansas City emerged as the regional

⁵⁶Parrish, 139-205. B. Gratz Brown, a former Democrat, led the Liberal Republicans in opposition to the Radical Republicans and received support from Democrats. Brown became governor in 1870 with a voter base that was comprised of three-fourths Democrats. The Democrats promptly repealed the Iron Clad Oath and thereby ended the disenfranchisement of 75,000 Missourians. Brown soon returned to the Democratic Party. The Drake constitution ended with the adoption in 1875 of a new constitution. Waldo P. Johnson, a former U.S. and Confederate senator who served under Confederate General Sterling Price, chaired the constitutional convention. Paul C. Nagel, *Missouri: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1977), 139-143.

leader positioned to use its railroad link and proximity to the agricultural heartland to full commercial advantage. City leaders maintained unity rather than permitting the very real, bitter divisions of the period to hamper economic growth as the Gilded Age progressed. The shift to a fusion of Northern and Southern influences continued, although the Northern influence was substantially greater. Northerners increased in number while many prominent people with Southern sensibilities remained. Consistent Kansas Citians provided a nucleus of leadership that guided the community even as new arrivals were integrated into the community.

The Role of Women and Racial/Ethnic Minorities in the Emerging City

Women and African Americans numbered among the new arrivals in the growing community. Owing to the unsettled nature of the city, some of the women were able to achieve a higher level of economic autonomy than was characteristic of women in more established cities. The women, like the men, assiduously avoided discussion of religion and politics as a precondition for social harmony. At the same time, some African Americans were able to establish businesses and enter professions. An African American middle class began to emerge even in the face the poverty that afflicted the majority of black Kansas Citians. Both women and minorities emerged from this period with expanded opportunities and substantial, socially-constructed impediments to their participation as equal members of society.

Information about women and minorities in the city directories of 1860 and 1870 demonstrates that both groups engaged in a variety of occupations. Women in Kansas City

were not restricted, as the prevailing scholarly view holds, to working only as milliners or dressmakers without sullyng their sexual reputation by living without the protection of a man.⁵⁷ This flexibility in the standards of respectability reflected the pragmatic approach of the unsettled society, which operated with less well-established gender norms than those of well-established cities. Consistent Kansas Citians included households led by women in other occupational categories or without an occupation. Many other women, without doubt, were also in Kansas City during the two times. They, however, were listed by their husbands' name. Some of the women were simply listed by the title "Mrs." and the last name. Others were listed with Mrs. and their first and last names. In 1860, Mrs. Mary Kelley lived on Walnut between 2nd and 3rd Street. In 1870, she lived on Oak between 2nd and 3rd streets. The directory listed no occupation for Mrs. Kelley in either year. Mrs. Emaline Boullt (also spelled Emeline and Boult in census records) lived at Allen (13th Street) and Laurel (Oak) in 1870. Like Mrs. Kelley, she was not listed as a widow or with an occupation. In 1860, however, Mr. Theodore Boullt, also without occupation, was listed as boarding in the same location. By 1870, Mrs. Boullt lived at 18th and Laurel (Oak).

⁵⁷Sharon E. Wood, *The Freedom of the Streets: Work, Citizenship, and Sexuality in a Gilded Age City* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 9 & 16-49. Clarina Nichols found employment with the federal government in Washington, D.C., from 1864 to 1866. The keys to maintaining her respectability were that she was a middle aged widow and the mother of a soldier. Yet, paid employment placed her in a new, uncomfortable position. Blackwell and Oertel, 213.

Mr. Boulton was not listed in the 1870 directory.⁵⁸ Mrs. Bridget Smith, a widow, lived at Lykins and Pendleton in 1860 and at Lykins and Little Milton in 1870. Mrs. Soldani, was listed as a French dress maker on East Levee in 1860 and simply as a dressmaker in 1870 on Grand. Mrs. Kelley was not the only woman who is listed in the 1860 directory without being a widow, a milliner, or a dressmaker. Other women who were not widows and had no occupation listed included: Mrs. Margaret Lysett, who lived on High near Second Street; Mrs. McDowell, who lived on the same block with Mrs. Kelley on Walnut between Second and Third; and Mrs. Hannah Seewald who lived on McGee between Ottawa ([sic]; later renamed 12th Street) and Allen (13th Street). It is highly probable that to be listed in the directory, these women enjoyed an acceptable reputation, yet the source of their maintenance is unclear.⁵⁹

Other women in 1860 and 1870 engaged in occupations that fell outside the narrow limits of acceptability prescribed by society. Yet these women were listed with the honorific term “Mrs.” and were viewed as acceptable at both times. For example, Mrs. Sophia Fleiger, who lived on Delaware between Ottawa ([sic]; 12th Street) and Allen (13th Street), and Mrs. H. Hartwig, who lived at 4th and Walnut, were both listed as mid-wives in

⁵⁸Census records provide a much more complete record of the Boulton family. The family is recorded in the 1850. In that census, Mr. and Mrs. Boulton are listed as having been born in New Jersey; Mr. Boulton in 1810 and Mrs. Boulton in 1811. Two older children, Mary Benjamin (born 1831 in New Jersey) and Theodore Benjamin (born 1834 in New Jersey) as well as two younger daughters (Helen and Jesse born in 1843 and 1847 respectively in Kentucky). By 1860, Mr. Boulton may have died. Theodore Benjamin, now referred to as Theodore Boulton, as well as “Ellen,” Jesse, and ten year old Hary, who was listed as having been born in Kentucky are also in the household. By 1870, only Mrs. Boulton, Helen and Jesse reside in the household. In spite of their New Jersey birth, but perhaps owing to their residency in Kentucky for at least three years, Mrs. Boulton owned two slaves in 1860: a twenty-four year old woman and her four year old son, www.ancestry.com (accessed December 2, 2011), and Curtis, 105.

⁵⁹*City Directory*, 1860.

1860. Mrs. E. Miller was listed as the proprietor of the Great Western Hotel. Mrs. Nealus was the proprietor of a grocery store on Market between 2nd and 3rd streets. By 1870, more women without widowhood or occupations were listed in the directory; Mrs. Scully replaced Mrs. Nealus as the female grocery store proprietor in town. Mrs. Scully's husband, William, had owned a grocery store and tailor shop on Main between Court (7th Street) and Ross (8th Street) in 1860. Mr. Scully may have been disabled by the war. He was alive at the time of the 1870 census. The grocery store was located on Grand between 15th and 16th. Other consistent Kansas Citians of the skilled working class lived near her, including R. M. Boyles, a plasterer, on Grand between 14th and 15th and John Gosser, a carpenter on block west at 15th and Walnut. D. A. N. Grover, a consistent Kansas Citian of the merchant and professional class, lived one block east and two blocks north at McGee and 14th. Jennie E. Caylor, a clairvoyant, lived on Grand between 11th and 12th streets. The lack of the honorific Mrs. in front of Caylor's name may indicate the disapprobation of the directory's editors and the larger society for the respectability of her occupation.⁶⁰

⁶⁰*City Directory*, 1870. The marital status of Fleiger, Hartwig, and Nealus cannot be identified using census data.

Table 1

Slaves Owned by Slaveholders in Jackson by Number of Slaves Owned, 1850 and 1860

Number of Slaves Owned	1850 – Number of Slaveholders	1860 – Number of Slaveholders
1	166	239
2	91	157
3	69	106
4	66	89
5	51	54
6	40	55
7	15	41
8	24	29
9	18	37
10	7	20
11-15	39	44
16-20	11	14
21-30	7	5
31-40	1	2
41-50	0	1
100-200	0	1
200+	1	0

Source: Curtis, Annette W. *Jackson County Missouri in Black and White: Census of Slaves and Their Owners and “Free Colored” 1850 and 1860*. Independence, MO: Midwest Afro-American Genealogy Interest Coalition, 1995.

Slavery in Jackson County mirrored the small slaveholdings of Missouri. The development of this small slaveholding culture has been attributed to Missouri’s proximity

to Free states, a factor that discouraged the migration of large slaveholders and the immigration of people of more modest means. In addition, Missouri lacked the large scale cultivation of cotton that was highly labor intensive and the migrants came from the Upper South where small-slaveholdings predominated.⁶¹ As shown in Table 1, the vast majority of slaveholders owned ten or fewer slaves. Only one slaveholder owned more than 100 slaves in either 1850 or 1860. As a result, the government and society of Jackson County were not dominated by large slave holders as they were in other slave states.

In 1860, only two free people of color were mentioned in the city directory. As stated above, 70 free people of color lived in Jackson County and 24 in Kansas City. James M. Maloney and John H. Morris were both listed as “colored” and as barbers in the city directory. Their shops listed as Mahoney & Morris was located in the Union Hotel and the Gillis House. Both men boarded at Walnut and 6th Street – Mahoney on the southeast corner of the intersection and Morris on the southwest corner. These self-employed African Americans, the only African Americans listed in the directory, were skilled workers and entrepreneurs.

The 1860 census, however, listed only Mahoney, who was described as being from Pennsylvania and a mulatto. He was a master barber, while his wife, Mary, an Ohioan by birth and also mulatto, was a housekeeper. The couple had four children. The oldest, James R. was six years of age and was born in Louisiana. Caroline, four years of age, and Robert, two years of age, were both born in Pennsylvania. The youngest child, Charles,

⁶¹Mutti Burke, 5.

was four months of age and was born in Missouri.⁶² Given the varying birthplaces of their children, the family had clearly moved from the North to the Deep South, back to the North, and then west to Missouri.

Other free Kansas Citians of color included Kentuckian Clarinda Crump, age 30. She was the mother of four children who were all born in Missouri. Her occupation is listed as a housekeeper. Also among the free Kansas Citians of color were four other barbers (William S. Kunly, Tolever Trusty, George Randolph, and Robert Robinson), three housekeepers (Crump, Mahoney, and Charlotte Johnson), a teamster (Manuel Points), three employees of the Union Hotel (Lewis Thompson, a pantry man and two cooks – Mohegan Hill and Thomas Tyler), and three employees of the Clairborne House Hotel (two porters – William Hater and Manuel Champ – and a cook, Henry Kinley). Of the 24 free people of color, only four (or seventeen percent) were described as black with the balance termed mulatto. Six of them (or 25 percent) were born in free states. Of the nineteen adults, only four were born in free states, and fifteen adults appear to have either purchased their freedom or were manumitted.⁶³

Given that Mahoney and Morris were barbers at the Union Hotel and the Gillis House and that Lewis Thompson, Mohegan Hill and Thomas Tyler also worked at the Union Hotel, it is highly probably that consistent Kansas Citians, such as Frank Foster, James A. Gray, John R. Griffin, Louis Hammerslough, H. H. King, E. W. Pierce, William P. Twyman, Thomas Henry, S. W. Bouton, Michael Dively at the Union Hotel and Jas. C.

⁶²Curtis, 3.

⁶³Ibid.

Kevill, Jas. P. Turner, George Rhodes, and James Thompson at the Gillis House,⁶⁴ may well have known these free African American men and some of them quite probably were customers of the barbers.

The free people who migrated from Missouri to Kansas also concentrated in the urban areas. More than one-third of the state's African American population lived in one of four cities: Atchison, Lawrence, Leavenworth, and Fort Scott. Approximately one-third of the population of Fort Scott was African American. This urban concentration in Kansas can be ascribed to General Ewing's encouragement of freed slaves to settle in Kansas, the availability of employment in the urban areas, and the former slaves' lack of resources to move elsewhere or to set up independent farming operations. The relative safety of living in a town, as well as opportunities for educational, social, and cultural activities cannot be discounted as a cause of the urban concentration of the African American population in Kansas. At the same time, nearly half of the African American population in the border counties of the 1870 census lived, most likely as servants and laborers, within a mostly white household.⁶⁵ The decline of the black population is also evident in the data reported by historian Kristen Epps. While the black population in 1860 was 14,544 in Vernon, Cass/Van Buren, Bates, Clay, Buchanan, Platte and Jackson counties, the black population in these counties in 1870 was only 10,519.⁶⁶

⁶⁴*City Directory* 1860.

⁶⁵Neely, 152-154.

⁶⁶Epps, 285.

The city directory of 1870 contained many listings for African Americans, most of whom, no doubt were former slaves, who had rather recently gained their freedom. These listings provide useful insight into the occupations, status, and place in society of these men and women who were listed with various occupations that included unskilled work such as laborer – the most common occupation – gardener, porter, stableman, teamster, cook, waiter, bartender, boarding house proprietor, servant, washerwoman, and laundress, among others. Alfred Harris carried the dual distinction of a laborer who was both “colored” and “blind,” the only reference to a disability identified in the directory. Skilled labor included blacksmiths, butchers, barbers, pressmen, and carpenters. The occupations that could be considered of the merchant and professional class were those of preacher, an occupational title held by at least two men, ice cream saloon owners, and a chiropodist, a profession that treated ailments of the feet. The merchants and professionals of the African American community are deemed to be of the same class in the same way that white merchants and members of the professions are grouped together as members with similar socio-economic status.

No African American was recorded among the consistent Kansas Citians. By 1870, however, many African Americans of all classes lived in close proximity to members of the white unskilled, skilled, merchant and professional classes. There is little doubt, however, that many people lived in the city as slaves in 1860 who also lived there in 1870 and were then recorded in the city directory. John Logan may have been one of them. In 1870, he was listed as a “colored” laborer who resided on Delaware between 5th and 6th. Consistent Kansas Citians and skilled workers Michael and Timothy Mulverhill, merchants in tin ware

and stoves, and formerly tanners with the firm of William Morris, lived on that block in 1870 as well. So, too, did laborer-turned-contractor Jeremiah (or presumably “Jerry”) Dowd. Harry Ellis, an African American, operated a boarding house for African Americans on the block. One block east, on the 500 block of Main, Mr. Logan’s and Mr. Ellis’ neighbors were Mr. James, the dealer in queensware and Henry Huhn, the owner of a grocer and hardware in 1860 and the cashier of the German Savings Association in 1870. On the next block to the east, 5th Street between Main and Walnut, skilled African American workers, Messrs. T. J. Brown and William Andress, worked as barbers and Brown maintained his residence on the premises. A second African American laborer was Charley Green, who resided on Walnut between 16th and 17th at the Southern edge of the city. Green’s close neighbors among consistent Kansas Citians included E. M. McGee, a real estate dealer and member of the merchant and professional class, who lived one block west on the 1600 block of Main, and Mrs. William Scully, widow of the grocery store owner and tailor, who lived one block to the east on Walnut at 16th. Laborer John Fritz lived two blocks north on Walnut between 14th and 15th streets.⁶⁷

By 1870, an entrepreneurial class appeared to have taken root in Kansas City among African Americans with the skilled trades and the professions represented. Isaiah King was listed as a “colored” fruiterer at No. 5 West Levee. Perry and Hightower, a second barber shop owned by two African Americans, operated at 906 Main and one of the proprietors, Mr. Hightower, resided at 916 Main. Daniel Orr repaired boots and shoes on Grand between 12th and 13th. Harnes Cooper practiced as a chiropodist at the Saint

⁶⁷*City Directory*, 1870, 211.

Nicholas Hotel (Main Street one door south of 4th).⁶⁸ John Loving of West Kansas and Clarke Moore who lived on Gay between 9th and 10th were listed as colored preachers, a high status profession within the African American community. Andrew Hubbard and William Rhodes of the 1500 block of Locust, operated Hubbard and Rhodes, an ice cream saloon located at Delaware and 6th Street. Mr. Hubbard also lived on the premises. This area was highly integrated with African Americans of all three classes as well as white consistent Kansas Citians of the skilled worker and merchant and professional class laborers who lived in close proximity.⁶⁹

African American women held several different occupations, most of them unskilled. Rachel Whales was described as a “colored” washerwoman who lived on Grand between 6th and 7th. Like all of the African American women in the directory, her status was clearly considered inferior to that of white women, who generally carried the title of Mrs. or Miss as long as their occupation was respectable or they were widowed. Mrs. Mary Link, for example, was a white woman who worked as a cook – a low status occupation – at the Missouri House on Grand near the Levee. Miss J. B. Tilton was a dressmaker, a respectable occupation for women, who lived on Main between 6th and 7th, yet an African American, Annie Mehaffey, also a dressmaker, a respectable occupation for women, was listed without either a Miss or Mrs. in front of her name. At the same time, the term laundress was often applied to white women who did laundry. Ellen Beatty, who lived at the corner of Grand and 6th, was a laundress. She was not, however, listed as Mrs.,

⁶⁸*City Directory*, 1870, 55.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

most likely owing to her Irish surname. No African American woman was identified as a laundress. Another unskilled worker, Dicey Lewis, was a colored nurse tender, who lived at the corner of Gay and 11th streets. Like Annie Mehaffey, other African American women had the more skilled position of seamstress. Lizzie Hawkins was a “colored” seamstress who lived on Bank Street between 6th and 7th streets as was Mary Morton who lived on Elizabeth between 11th and 12th. Other African American women were listed without occupations and without the title of Miss or Mrs. that accompanied white women in similar circumstances. Mary K. Smith was yet another resident of Delaware Street between 5th and 6th Streets. Nellie Burns resided on Gay (Charlotte) between 9th & 10th, and Nancy Inman lived on Walnut at 18th street.⁷⁰

African Americans lived in Jackson County throughout the period, though their status had changed considerably by 1870. According to the 1850 census, the total population of the county was 14,000. Of that number, 2969 were slaves (21 percent of the population) and 41 were so-called free colored. By 1860, the population of the county had grown to 22,913 people. The slave population had increased by one-third with 3944 slaves (seventeen percent of the population) with 70 free people of color and 17 people of Indian descent. By 1870, the total population of the county exceeded twice its 1860 level. The 1870 population of 55,041 people included 5223 African Americans, the great majority of whom were formerly enslaved people (9.4 percent of the population). The 1860 census for Kansas City proper indicates a total population of 4418 people, of whom 4228 were white

⁷⁰*City Directory*, 1870.

(96 percent of the population), 166 were slaves (four percent of the population), and 24 were free people of color (0.5 percent of the population).⁷¹

The Latino population of Kansas City in 1860 numbered only two, based on the Spanish surnames identified in the 1860 directory. John Sandoval was a tinner who boarded on the east side of Oak between 2nd and 3rd and Jose Sandoval was listed as a porter at the W. H. Chick Company with no residence identified. No Latino surnames were identified in the 1870 directory.

The relative economic freedom that women experienced and the ability of some African Americans to make economic progress does not mask the societal strictures women faced or the effects of the discriminatory treatment the African Americans experienced. They do, however, indicate that Kansas City differed dramatically from the expectations of the South where many of the region's residents had their roots and from those of more established cities of the North and East, the home regions of a growing number of Kansas Citians. While the culture of the emerging frontier city was not bound by those of other regions, Northern norms did increasingly had a far greater and growing influence on this Western community.

Eastern Ideas

As Northerners arrived in Kansas City in the mid-1850s, they brought with them ideas about how societies should be organized and how people should interact socially. They also enjoyed a rich web of connections to the norms and folkways of everyday life and knowledge of the ideas, organizational principles, and influential people of the age.

⁷¹Curtis, ii.

Kansas City residents with roots in the North, often in cooperation with people of Southern heritage, had a major influence in shaping the culture and response to the less fortunate residents of the emerging metropolis.

Sarah Coates serves as an exemplar of the transplanted Northerner who brought Northern perspectives and important personal connections to bear on the formation of Kansas City society. Her example illustrates the openness of the new city to progressive ideas; at the same time, she was not a typical example of a Northern woman, but rather was at the vanguard of progressive social thought. The accumulated experiences of her life to that point, her disciplined Quaker upbringing, and her association with people of prominence no doubt account for her perception of herself as not like “most other women,” but rather hardier, more disciplined, and more willing to meet any contingency with calm and equanimity. Born on March 10, 1828⁷² to a prosperous Quaker family in Chester County, Pennsylvania, not far from Philadelphia, Coates’ personal philosophy was shaped by her Quaker heritage and upbringing.⁷³

The residents of her home town of Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, a Quaker community in Chester County, were actively engaged in the issues of the day. As a young woman, she participated in a Lyceum meeting and opened the discussion on the topic, ‘Whether or not the welfare of the human race would be promoted by the Rights of Equal

⁷²Gravestone, Elmwood Cemetery, Kansas City, MO.

⁷³Reed, 61-76.

Suffrage.” Of the experience, Sarah Coates recalled in her diary, which was compiled and edited by her daughter, Laura Coates Reed:

I opened the discussion . . . on the affirmative, and although that side was much smaller in numbers than the other, yet I am induced to believe the arguments given by those who supported it were stronger than those of the negative side. I have always entertained the opinion that woman should be placed upon an equality with man both from a political and intellectual standpoint . . . Many persons express their surprise at my entertaining these views, as they are out of the woman’s sphere. But I take a very different view of the matter, and however strange these doctrines may now seem, I doubt not but that in a few years woman will enjoy this privilege.⁷⁴

Coates’ progressive spirit and that of the community extended as well to Native American education, women’s property rights, and slavery. Kennett Square was a stop on the Underground Railroad. Her relative, the noted poet and anti-slavery advocate Elizabeth Margaret Chandler, was the first American woman author to make slavery the principle theme of her writing. A composition from Coates’ childhood makes clear the influence of the community and her personal commitment to the anti-slavery cause: “Does that flag speak of freedom? Its stars may point upward and uncontrolled fancy dream not of shackles; but ah! its stripes bring you back to earth, and you hear the groan of the suffering bondsman.”⁷⁵

These issues gained greater prominence in public discussion and Coates’ commitment to them deepened as a result of the so-called Longwood Meeting of May 1853

⁷⁴Reed, 77.

⁷⁵Ibid., 78. See also, Marcia J. Heringa, *Mason, Remember the Distance that Divides Us: The Family Letters of Philadelphia Quaker Abolitionists and Michigan Pioneer Elizabeth Margaret Chandler, 1830-1842* (East Lansing, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004), xxviii. Mason refers to Chandler having been credited with being “perhaps the most widely read female writer in the anti-slavery ranks.”

at the Kennett meetinghouse in Chester County, Pennsylvania. Just three years before relocating to Kansas City, the Quaker meeting split from their more conservative brethren over the appropriate aggressiveness of the response to such questions as slavery, sexual equality, the treatment of Native Americans, abstinence from alcohol, the injustice of war, and other matters. The members of the newly-minted Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends placed human reason as the central approach to determining positions on issues. Lucretia Mott numbered among the participants in the meeting.⁷⁶ Mrs. Coates sided with the progressive faction.⁷⁷ She brought this commitment on these issues with her to her new home in Missouri.

Coates' acquaintance with influential people of the day was rooted in the influence of the Kennett Square community. Ann Preston, an early graduate of the Philadelphia Women's Medical College, was a cousin of Kersey Coates and close friend of Sarah Coates.⁷⁸ Dr. Preston was the first woman to achieve professorial status in the United States and the first woman to become the dean of a medical school.⁷⁹ Coates' female relatives and close friends from Kennett Square who also were prominent in medicine

⁷⁶Albert J. Wahl, "The Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends," *Pennsylvania History* 25, no. 2: 122.

⁷⁷Reed, 79. Sojourner Truth attended the three day founding meeting of the Longwood Meeting of Progressive Friends in May of 1863. For more information, see Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1996), 143-144.

⁷⁸Reed, 76.

⁷⁹Mary Louise Marshall, review of "History of the Women's Medical College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1859-1950, by Gulielma Fell Alsop," *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* 39, no. 3 (July 1951), 235.

included Dr. Susan Hayhurst and Dr. Hannah Croasdale.⁸⁰ Another friend, unnamed, of Coates sought and gained admission to Oberlin College in the late 1840s. Coates recalled “. . . the great sensation her courage and independence caused.” Coates shared with evident chagrin the uncertainty that surrounded the founding of Vassar, a single sex college for women. “Even as late as 1861 very many doubted the wisdom of the founder of Vassar and the possibilities of the college’s success.”⁸¹

Through her familial and activist networks, Coates enjoyed long-time association with such luminaries of the suffrage movement as Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mary A. Livermore, and Bayard Taylor. Communication with Anthony, in particular, continued over a lifetime. Mrs. Coates held a luncheon in Kansas City in 1892 in Anthony’s honor.⁸² By the account of her daughter, Laura Coates Reed, Coates was also acquainted with such influential people as “. . . Hawthorne, Sumner, Webster, and Edward Everett Some of these people [she] knew personally, some by correspondence, and all through mutual interest in the progressive propaganda of the new era.”⁸³ Unfortunately, Reed did not indicate which of these individuals fell into which category of acquaintance. It suffices to say that Mrs. Coates knew and was known by many members of the intelligentsia of her time.

As a result of her Quaker background and upbringing in the close-knit Quaker community, Coates brought a commitment to the equality values of gender and racial

⁸⁰Reed, 76.

⁸¹Ibid., 74.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid., 76.

equality and pacifism as well as a reserved lifestyle, an inquisitive intellect, and a broad circle of influential relatives and friends with her when she came west with her husband in 1856. As her daughter wrote, Coates evidenced a conscientiousness borne of her individual temperament, ancestral discipline, and Quaker simplicity. She viewed economy not as “. . . the bastard of necessity, but always as the legitimate offspring of duty and refinement.” Her personal motto, like that of her parents, was “Let your moderation be known unto all men.” Within the social milieu of her new home she also eschewed extravagance. Rather, she “. . . always tried to set an example by having fewer things.” This combination of qualities also made her unlike “most women” and enabled her, with other women, to leave a trail of record of civic achievement in her adopted home of Kansas City.⁸⁴

Yet Coates straddled two worlds unlike any other prominent woman in Kansas City. While she was committed to the values of equality, she and her husband possessed a level of wealth throughout their years in Kansas City that far surpassed that of other residents. Like other women who arrived at this time, she contributed to the creation of a society in the new city by using the outlook she possessed, the organizational tools she had acquired, and the personal connections she had made over the first 28 years of her life. She used those attributes over the ensuing years as she and her husband amassed a fortune in Kansas City based on real estate and other investments.⁸⁵

⁸⁴Reed, 45, 61, 63.

⁸⁵Ibid., 106-107. Shalor Eldridge was the proprietor of the American Hotel and then built the Free-State Hotel in Lawrence, which was burned on May 10, 1856, along with other properties by pro-slavery forces. See Martha B. Caldwell, *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (November 1940), 347-370.

Coates remained committed to sexual equality and the opening of educational opportunities for women. She continued to support and work for women's suffrage. She also followed with interest the opening of each girls' school and the opening of the doors of men's schools to women. Equally prominent in her life was her advocacy of teaching physiology to women since they are "makers and moulders [sic] of human lives."⁸⁶ Her interest in a topic theretofore deemed inappropriate for the "frail natures of women" was no doubt borne of her own experience as a woman and mother and of her kinship and friendship with women who were physicians.

Coates demonstrated her leadership and organizational skill during what Mrs. A. L. Carpenter, in a letter to Laura Coates Reed, referred to as the battle of Westport or Brush Creek. Mrs. Carpenter, a former resident of Kansas City, and not a member of the consistent Kansas Citians group, recalled that the upper story of Lockridge Hall (at the southeast corner of 5th and Main streets) was used as a hospital for the Union and Confederate soldiers. Coates and "many of the noble women of Kansas City" assisted the surgeons in treating the wounded. According to Mrs. Carpenter's description, Mrs. Coates was in charge of the activities. Mrs. Carpenter shared that: "Among those who assisted her [Coates] were Mrs. E. W. Pierce, Mrs. Van Horn, Mrs. Guinotte, Mrs. H. W. Cooper, Mrs. D. M. Jarboe, Mrs. Millett, the Misses Helen and Jessie Boullt, Miss Vina Salisbury, Mrs. J. P. Griffen, Mrs. Dr. Hopkins, Mrs. E. B. McDill, and a number of others."⁸⁷ While

⁸⁶Reed, 31, 72.

⁸⁷Letter from Mrs. A.L. Carpenter to Laura Coates Reed, 57-58.

most of these women were Northerners and most likely Unionists, Mrs. Guinotte and Mrs. Boullt, the mother of Helen and Jessie, both owned slaves.

Mrs. Carpenter described how these same women, perhaps led again by Coates, organized a charity fair to raise funds for the benefit of the soldiers. The funds were used to “. . . buy delicacies for the wounded soldiers in the hospitals.” Mrs. Carpenter related that nearly all of the citizens in Kansas City participated in the militia and attended the charity fair. The townspeople “. . . contributed liberally to the fund.”⁸⁸

The women who participated in the work at the hospital and the charity fair represented both consistent Kansas Citians and residents who were not in the city in both 1860 and 1870. Among the participants who have been identified, a common thread among them is social and economic prominence. Consistent Kansas Citians included Mrs. E. W. Pierce, Mrs. R. T. Van Horn, Mrs. D. M. and Misses Helen and Jessie Boullt. Helen and Jessie were the daughters of Mrs. Emaline Boullt and were members of her household in the 1860 city directory. It is unclear why Mrs. Boullt did not participate at the hospital and the charity fair.

Women who participated in both events and were not consistent Kansas Citians included Mrs. Guinotte, who is referenced as “the mother of Judge E. Guinotte.” Neither was listed in either the 1860 or 1870 city directories. Mr. Joseph Guinotte, however, was listed in the 1860 city directory as real estate dealer with a residence in an addition by the same name. Mrs. Guinotte, Aimee, was a native of Belgium and her husband was of

⁸⁸Letter from Mrs. Carpenter, Reed, 58. The account does not specify which soldiers the funds assisted. Circumstances indicated, however, that Union soldiers were the beneficiaries.

Belgian stock. Jules Edgar Guinotte presided over the probate court in Kansas City.⁸⁹ Mrs. H. W. Cooper, whose husband was a dealer in hardware in 1870, was also listed. They resided on Wyandotte between 11th and 12th Streets in 1870. Mrs. Millett was not listed in either city directory. Miss Vina Salisbury may have been the daughter of one of two men listed in the 1870 city directory: A. D. Salisbury, who resided on Wyandotte between 5th and 6th streets; or S. W. Salisbury of the North American Insurance Company who lived on 12th Street east of city limits in 1870. Mrs. J. P. Griffen was found in neither directory. Neither Mrs. Dr. Hopkins, nor her husband, was listed in either directory. Mrs. E. B. McDill's husband was listed in the city directory in 1870. He was the superintendent of the Kansas City and Fort Scott Telegraph. They resided on Quality Hill on Pennsylvania Street between 9th and 10th streets – the same block as the Coates' residence.⁹⁰ Thus, these women, at least those whose economic status has been identified through the city directories or other sources, appear to have been economically prominent and no doubt well known through business and social connections with Coates.

In the aftermath of the war, Coates, according to her daughter, “never stopped to question the somewhat formative condition of society that existed . . . , but brought every energy to bear upon its possible advancement.” Coates took part in society and social functions with the caveat that all participants were absolutely respectable. She also insisted that they refrain from the divisive subject of politics, which would have re-opened Civil War-era wounds and exposed ongoing differences of opinion. Coates' primary concern

⁸⁹Whitney, vol 2: 115-116. Joseph Guinotte was also a holder of three slaves in 1860 – a 21 year old woman, a seven year old girl, and a five year old boy. Curtis, 105.

⁹⁰*City Directory*, 1860 and 1869.

was that the people with whom she associated shared her allegiance to the welfare of the Kansas City.⁹¹

The people of the Coates' circle clearly met her standards and were included in frequent entertainments in the years immediately following the war. This group incorporated some of the same people and families who worked with Coates at the hospital and on staging the charity fair. A favorite activity was holding impromptu surprise parties in the Coates' unfurnished parlor. Participants included Jessie and Helen Boullt (previously spelled Boulton), who were known as the Boullt girls, and consistent Kansas Citians as well as Mort, Rob, and Emma Salisbury, who were perhaps related to Miss Vina Salisbury. Rob and Mort would often provide music by playing the violin and flute respectively. Consistent Kansas Citian Colonel Foster, who later married Helen Boullt, was often present. In 1860, he lived at the Union Hotel. In the years from 1860 to 1870, he progressed from deputy postmaster to postmaster. Hardware merchant, Fred Flagler and his wife, Mary, also participated in these gatherings. They lived at the corner of 8th and McGee streets, according to the 1969 directory. May Wilson, not further identified, was named as the "ringleader of all the parties." Consistent Kansas Citian D. W. Banta also

⁹¹Reed, 62. It is highly likely that Mrs. Coates was aware of and perhaps active Women's Suffrage Association that had its national convention in St. Louis in 1868 with Susan B. Anthony and Julia Ward Howe in attendance and the attendant agitation for female suffrage in Missouri. See Parrish, 275-278. Mrs. Coates was also no doubt aware of the 1867 statewide referendum in Kansas to enfranchise women, a topic that has been widely discussed during the state constitutional debates, and African Americans. Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, and other prominent speakers toured the state in support of this measure that failed by a wide margin at the polls. See McNeely, 163-168. In spite of Susan B. Anthony's alliance bargain with the racist Democrat Charles Francis Train, Nichols remained loyal to Anthony. As did Sarah Coates, Nichols opposed "class legislation" which favored men and disregarded women's interests. For example, men had control over the couple's community property. Nichols advocated an equitable system of common property. While embracing women's moral superiority, she also demanded citizen status equal to that of men. See, Blackwell and Oertel, 232-238.

sometimes provided the music.⁹² He is listed in the 1860 city directory as a bandleader by the spelling of D. W. Bante and resided at on the west side of James (Main) between Mabillon (15th Street) and Milton (16th Street). By 1870, his name was changed or corrected to Banta with the title band master and his residence was listed on Laurel (Oak) between 15th and 16th streets.⁹³

The modest entertainments proceeded in spite of harsh economic realities. As Coates recalled, “At the end of the war every cent we had in the world was tied up in real estate, but it never seemed to bother him [Mr. Coates] in the least when it came to a surprise party.” Refreshments were causal, “. . . I’d send and buy some fruit and pound cake, just to do my share, for everyone would bring a little something.” In comparison with later events, Coates looked back fondly on the simple surprise parties: “No, indeed, with all the stylish balls, teas, and receptions of the present day, there isn’t one of them that can begin to compare for out and out fun with our old-fashioned surprise parties.”⁹⁴

The Coates had a second set of friends, no doubt also compliant with Coates’ standards of respectability and polite discussion that eschewed the divisive subject of politics. The Coates participated in dinner events with these people, all but two of whom were consistent Kansas Citians. Consistent Kansas Citians included the Van Horns as an important element of this group. Mr. and Mrs. J. R. Balis were as well. In 1860, Mr. Balis was in the insurance business and boarded on Walnut between 2nd and 3rd streets. By 1870

⁹²Reed, 62-63.

⁹³*City Directory*, 1860 and 1869.

⁹⁴Reed, 62-63.

Mr. Balis was a principle in the firm of Balis and Case. Mr. and Mrs. Balis lived on Pennsylvania between 9th and 10th streets on the same block with the Coates and Mrs. and Mrs. McDill. Lykins, presumably the wife of physician Johnston Lykins, is referred to by Mrs. Coates as “whole souled” and “big hearted.” Colonel (Dr.) Case and his second wife, Julia, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Lykins, were included. Dr. Case served as the Coates’ family physician and was their friend. Mr. and Mrs. Michael Dively, Mr. and Mrs. Pierce, and the Jarboes rounded out the cast of consistent Kansas Citians. Mr. Dively boarded at the Union Hotel in 1860 when he was a wholesale and retail grocer. By 1870, he was in the real estate business. He and Mrs. Dively were neighbors of the Coates at 9th & Pennsylvania. Mr. and Mrs. Pierce lived at Walnut and Court (7th Street) in 1870. Mr. Pierce had boarded at the Union Hotel. At that time, he was a railroad agent. By 1870, he was in the insurance business. It is difficult to pinpoint the reference to the Jarboes. Four members of the Jarboe family were listed in the 1860 and 1870 city directories. William J. Jarboe was a merchant in dry goods and groceries. In 1860, his store was located at No. 7 east levee. Fred H. Jarboe and John C. Jarboe worked for William J. in 1860. D. M. Jarboe, a brother of William J., was also a merchant whose store is located at No. 3 east levee. He also served on the city council in 1860. The Jarboes referenced by Coates may be either William J. or D. M. or both. Because Mrs. D. M. Jarboe assisted Mrs. Coates at

the hospital and the charity fair, it is most likely that the reference was to Mr. and Mrs. D. M. Jarboe.⁹⁵

The two friends of the Coates who were not consistent Kansas Citians were “Martin Dickinson’s dear old mother” and Thomas B. Bullene. Martin Dickson worked for Matt Foster & Company, booksellers and stationers in 1870, and Bullene was a principle in the merchant firm of Bullene Brothers & Emery. His residence was located on New Delaware (Baltimore) between 9th and 10th or just one block from the residence of Mr. and Mrs. D. M. Jarboe.⁹⁶

When the Coates and these prominent friends gathered for dinners, the repast was a sumptuous as the surprise party fair was simple, a fact that bothered Mrs. Coates. At the dinners, she said:

We had everything that could be thought of – everything piled on the table at once until it fairly groaned beneath its burden – at least almost every one [sic] did. I didn’t approve of such extravagance, and always tried to set an example by having fewer things. I had been brought up so differently.⁹⁷

Mrs. Coates also brought with her the notion of ecumenicalism. As her daughter recounted:

In the absence of any opportunity for outward expression of her own creed, she did not isolate herself from other forms of worship, but, with the broad, religious

⁹⁵According to the 1850 Census, D. M., William J., Frederick and John were sons of Joseph and Lydia Jarboe, both of whom were born in Maryland. William, Fred, and D. M. were born in Kentucky. John was born in Missouri. D. M. Jarboe was drafted into the Union Army, www.ancestry.com (accessed December 1, 2011).

⁹⁶*City Directory*, 1870.

⁹⁷Reed, 63.

tolerance that emphasized her character, identified herself and children with whatever denomination seemed best calculated for their advancement.⁹⁸

In this way, Reed was “. . . a Baptist in the morning and a Methodist in the afternoon.” Reed recalled with fondness two consistent Kansas Citians who provided her with religious instruction: Mrs. Thomas M. James of the Baptist Church and Mrs. D. L. Shouse of the Methodist Church.⁹⁹ James was married to the prominent queensware and glass retailer, long-time Kansas Citian, and native of Virginia. Mr. James had boarded on 5th Street between Delaware and Wyandotte streets in 1860. In 1870, the James lived on the premises of their store at 632 Main. Mr. D. L. Shouse was a clerk and notary at the Mechanics Bank when he lived in Kansas City in 1860 on Main between Court (7th Street) and Ross (8th Street). By 1870, Mr. Shouse was the cashier for the same bank. The couple lived at 11th and Wyandotte.¹⁰⁰ Coates’ ecumenical approach was a part of her heritage and a trait that she brought from her home in Pennsylvania.

Kansas City was a starkly different place in 1870 than it had been in 1854. The population had exploded from 700 residents in 1854 to 8,000 by 1860, before contracting during the war and increasing rapidly to 32,000 by 1870 in response to the opening of Hannibal Bridge that provided a railroad crossing over the Missouri river. In that time, the population had shifted to a largely Northern composition because many Southerners left in large numbers during the war. The mostly Northern consistent Kansas Citians, such as

⁹⁸Reed, 64.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰*City Directory*, 1860 and 1870.

Kersey Coates, prospered in their absence, holding positions of economic and social prominence while cooperating with formerly pro-slavery Southerners. Through this cooperation a fusion of the Northern and Southern cultures resulted, yet the Northern culture held greater sway. The Northerners, who had held the community together during the war, brought with them friendship and kin networks that connected Kansas City to the larger world of social thought and action. Yet, Southerners remained and made their presence felt in the decades ahead. In the face of great change, the Kansas City consensus remained as the economic elite placed civic unity above politics in matters of economic development and city building.

The city directory for 1870 captured the zeitgeist of the rapidly emerging Kansas City of its publication year, 1870:

This city is almost constantly filled with strangers, either on their way to seek their fortunes in the mines, on the plains, in the mountains, in western cities, or, in cultivating the soil, or also returning from these places to their homes back east [sic] The emigration for the year just ended is larger than that of any previous year, being estimated at 260,000, of which 150,000 arrived by wagon or private conveyance, 70,000 by railroad, and 40,000 by river. Within the last year, 1100 wagons having each a family, household goods and cattle have passed through the city on their way to settle Neutral lands in the Indian Territory.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹*City Directory*, 1870, 25.

CHAPTER 3

THE QUALITY AND EQUALITY OF MERCY IS STRAINED: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE FEMALE-LED GENERAL RELIEF AGENCY, 1870-1879

Two applicants for assistance appeared at the December 1870 monthly meeting of a relief agency that had been formed just eleven months earlier for the sole purpose of helping women in the community. As the minutes printed in the *Kansas City Daily Journal of Commerce* indicated:

One was a lad of about fourteen years, a cripple, entirely deprived of the use of the lower limbs by a spell of sickness. After obtaining from him all the information respecting his case as he was able to give, it was considered advisable to appoint a committee to visit his mother near the Novelty Mills, and ascertain in what manner [the association] could render assistance to the best advantage. Upon motion, Mrs. M. S. Doggett and Mrs. A. Crider were constituted said committee.¹

With the approval of that motion, this women's relief organization expanded its activities – beyond assisting only women – to helping children, and subsequently men and families. The all female organization suddenly became a general relief agency. It dispensed aid through an application process. A committee of volunteer visitors verified the need. The larger body then reviewed the appropriateness of the committee's recommendation.

This chapter will examine the everyday life of women and men as they negotiated the meaning of gender and activism as they provided assistance to Kansas City's poor in

¹The proceedings of this meeting, like those of most regular and special meetings of the Women's Christian Association were reported by the *Kansas City Daily Journal of Commerce*. Women's Christian Association, "Proceedings of the Regular Monthly Meeting," *Kansas City Daily Journal of Commerce*, December 4, 1870, 4.

the 1870s.² An examination of the frontier society provides insight into the ways that newcomers strove to create community in the burgeoning urban environment that had not existed just a few years earlier. In contrast to the historical literature about female relief and activism in the late nineteenth century which argues that women formed separate organizations to advance the goals of benevolence, reform, and equality, this chapter will argue that the only relief organization providing assistance to the general population in the city during this decade – the Women’s Christian Association (WCA) – was founded by a group of women that included members representing the benevolent, evangelical, and equality strains of women’s activism. Historian Nancy Hewitt’s definition of benevolence – an expression of value in relief efforts outside the home – provides a useful approach to understanding the interests of benevolent women. Reformers, by contrast, took their inspiration from the evangelical desire to rid the world of vice, rather than ameliorate social ills. Equality embraced activities to bring about social, sex, and race equality.³ While most of the women acted as members of only one of the three groups, Sarah W. Coates was the rare woman who took part in both benevolent and equality activities. In general, benevolent women belonged to the upper socio-economic class and to a high status faith such as the Presbyterians or Episcopalians. The Evangelicals were generally middle class Methodist and Baptist women. The women

²While Kansas City lacked a general relief organization until the WCA expanded into that role, benevolent associations provided assistance to members of specified religious and ethnic groups. These organizations included the Albion Benevolent Society that was “established for the relief of distressed Englishmen;” the Ancient Order of Hiberians and the Irish Benevolent Society; St. Joseph’s Roman Catholic Mutual Benevolent Society; the Caledonian Society of Kansas City “established for the relief of distressed Scotchmen;” the B’nai B’rith Society; and the Young Men’s Christian Association. *City Directory*, 1873, 47-48.

³Hewitt, 44.

who embraced equality were also primarily of the middle class and adhered to one of the liberal religious philosophies, such as the Quakers or Unitarians. Women of all three groups gained space to speak and act on behalf of causes in ways that were less open to their husbands, whose livelihoods would have been threatened by a similar level of activism.

The women acted within their assigned sphere across a range of religious affiliations and economic circumstances to perform as agents of rescue, opponents of female poverty, and advocates for gender equality. Within a year of its founding, however, the WCA was forced by necessity into a new role as the provider of general relief services in a community without other relief organizations. By the last few years of the 1870s, however, the organization had contracted and returned to its gender-defined role of providing relief to women and children. The increasingly elite nature of the membership as social classes solidified over time, the accompanying return to less contentious gender roles, and the increased demands of rapid population growth and accompanying relief needs that overwhelmed the organization's diminished membership numbers contributed to this retrenchment.

The chapter will argue further that a male-led relief organization became necessary not because of economic tumult that overwhelmed the women's organization or due to a male effort to assert control as the literature suggests, but more pragmatically, because the women's organization was simply unable to meet the relief needs of the growing population. By the late 1870s, the WCA had evolved into a smaller, more elite organization that focused solely on benevolence, rather than continuing to embrace the

founding values of equality and reform in addition to benevolence. The structure of relief in Kansas City in the 1870s, therefore, directly influenced approaches to relief in the community in the 1880s and beyond. In addition, the shift toward a Northern dominated fusion with Southern culture, which tended to eschew collective enterprises for the public good such as quality public education for the masses and held tight to a sectional view of the recent War, reached completion during this period.⁴ Moreover, native-born residents of the city gain an identity of themselves as Kansas Citians, rather than as transplanted natives of other states and regions.

The relief work of the Kansas City women is a part of the long history of women's involvement with relief work in the United States. A rich and deep literature provides context for this work. Within the setting of feminism and reform, scholars frequently view female-led relief work in nineteenth century America in large urban areas as a class- and gender-based enterprise. Economically elite Protestant women, primarily of the Episcopal and Presbyterian denominations, organized assistance for the poor. The conventional historical narrative describes "ladies' benevolent associations" that functioned for a time, but became overwhelmed by a sudden increase in the demand for aid caused by an economic crisis or natural disaster. Male-led charity organizations then took over relief services to meet the growing need. This meta-narrative may hold true in Eastern cities. Unlike the East, however, the unsettled character of rapidly growing Midwestern and Western cities provides an opportunity to examine the Eastern thesis within the dynamism of the Midwestern urban environment and the social, economic, and

⁴Parrish, 148-178.

political structures that shaped the response to poverty. An examination of a female-led relief association and the subsequent development of a male relief organization in a developing Midwestern community will illuminate changes in gender construction and provide a point of comparison with other, similarly situated communities. It will also provide insight into the effect of evolving socio-economic hierarchies and the relationship between female- and male-led relief efforts.

The early scholarship of women's activism and the motivation for the formation of nineteenth century female relief organizations rested in large part on the exploration of the separate spheres ideology. Barbara Welter and Ken Melder argued that women were able to negotiate the boundaries of gender roles within the context of the separate spheres ideology. Within this construct, women could extend their activity beyond the domestic sphere of the private home and into the public sphere primarily within the context of church and religion. Women were, thereby, able to assert influence on topics in the public realm that related to their supposed natural domestic role and moral superiority. Welter's landmark 1966 article argued that a woman was judged by her husband, neighbors, and society according to her adherence to the four cardinal virtues of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Possession of these virtues constituted "True Womanhood." As Welter pointed out, this ideology contained the seeds of its own destruction as women saw the logic of extending the superior moral character that was so often ascribed to them into the larger world.⁵ Melder's 1967 article also argued that the separate spheres ideology provided the justification for women to organize relief services

⁵Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Summer, 1966), 152-153, 174.

in the early nineteenth century. Unlike Welter, Melder emphasized that social control of the poor motivated the activities of these benevolent women, who progressed from involvement in their churches to engagement with social issues in a linear and deterministic fashion. Melder also denied some portion of historical agency to women by crediting male clergy with encouraging women to form voluntary societies.⁶ Neither the linear progression model nor the clergy involvement model explains the rise of women's activism in a way that reflects the reality of the experiences of activist women. Rather, women themselves, as Welter argued, saw the logic of extending their moral superiority into the world. While these historians shaped historical arguments about separate spheres ideology, these articles do not explain the operation of the spheres in the context of a specific community. In addition, these scholars take this narrative only through 1860. They do not address the application of the separate spheres ideology in the post-war context of rapid urbanization in the Midwest, where three groups of women with different motivations for activism formed a single organization – the WCA.

A second group of historians sought a literature that provided a deeper and more precise understanding of the operation of the separate spheres, a concept that has been termed “. . . as grandiose as it was vague.”⁷ Beginning in the late 1970s, second wave feminist scholars focused on the impact of the separate spheres on women's activism in the context of community studies. Nancy F. Cott in her 1977 study argued that the co-

⁶Keith Melder, “Ladies Bountiful: Organized Women's Benevolence in Early 19th-Century America,” *New York History* (July 1967), 332-352.

⁷Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790 -1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 190-191.

existence of the divergent ideologies of domesticity and feminism within the female world by 1830 required an explanation. Cott's careful tracing of the elements of female reality as expressed in the writing of women in New England led to a cohesive view of the concept of womanhood among the women she studied. The work fails to explain the central question it poses – through what process did this concept of female solidarity develop?⁸ Cott's focus on the changes to the domestically-focused household brought about by the separation of the location of labor from the location of residence provided the opening for Mary P. Ryan's 1981 study of Oneida County, New York. Ryan argued that the American middle class was molded in the early nineteenth century through its developing identity of domestic values and family practices. Ryan's exploration of the inter-related transformations of the economy, religion, society, and family in this newly settled city revealed the assignment of religion to the feminine sphere. Ryan argued that spheres were vague and overlapping, not rigid and beyond negotiation.⁹ Ryan, however, focused only on the interior workings of the upper-middle and upper class families.

Scholars followed the lead of Cott and Ryan by producing community studies that explored the nature, extent, and limits of women's activism and efforts to test, negotiate and reshape the boundaries imposed by the ideology of separate spheres. Nancy A. Hewitt's study of Rochester, New York, added theoretical depth to Ryan's work by arguing that activist women in Rochester fit within a tri-partite framework comprised of elite benevolent women, evangelical perfectionist women, and ultra or radical women.

⁸Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: Women's Sphere in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 5-195.

⁹Ryan, 123, 240.

Denominational affiliation served as a marker for class and predicted the area of women's involvement in Rochester, whether benevolence, temperance, abolition, or suffrage.¹⁰ Suzanne Lebsock's 1984 study of the Southern community of Petersburg, Virginia, moved beyond separate spheres to argue that men and women lived in separate political cultures.¹¹ Lebsock found that by the 1850s, the women of Petersburg had lost their primacy in poor relief and their ability to claim public space. The shift toward male-directed charity was precipitated in large part by the panic of 1857 and the need for relief that was occasioned by difficult economic times that far exceeded available resources. In the re-ordering of gender relations, women no longer spoke in public ceremonies or signed their own names. This shift from the practices of earlier years is reflected in a new sense of women's deference. For example, women began to identify themselves as "Mrs." followed by their husband's name.¹² The use of "Mrs." with the husband's first and last name was a controversy that extended well beyond Petersburg.¹³ These works sharpen the understanding of how separate spheres and separate political cultures operated within communities to encourage women's activism on behalf of less fortunate people. At the same time, this literature focuses on women's activism that takes

¹⁰Nancy A. Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, NY, 1822-1872* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 21-23.

¹¹Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), xiii-xiv.

¹²*Ibid.*, 226-230.

¹³The members of the WCTU and the Missouri Non-Partisan WCTU in Kansas City insisted on the use of the wife's "Christian" name rather than her husband's name as a means for the wife to retain her individual identity. See *The Kansas City Star*, September 14, 1894, 7, and November 2, 1894, 8.

place only within the context of male approval and benevolence conducted only by women of elite status.

The third wave of separate spheres scholarship adopted Lebsack's argument that men and women lived in separate political cultures. These scholars centered their work away from the Eastern United States and focused particularly on the Midwest and West. They employed a narrative that embraced a high level of separation and autonomy for women and rejected the interdependence of the sexes that typifies earlier scholarship. Peggy Pascoe provided an early glimpse of the third wave approach that placed women at the center of the narrative with the capacity for autonomous action within the bounds of separate spheres and the female moral authority and reform that derived from it in the western United States. Pascoe argued that women's assertion of moral authority allowed them to turn familiar, culturally-approved ideas about female nature into tools to challenge male power.¹⁴ Mary Ann Irwin traced the rise of elite women in San Francisco as effective public activists for state-level funding of women-led charities for poor relief from the 1850s through the 1880s. As a new city with a rapidly growing population, San Francisco offered a space in which women could influence the shape of welfare programs to alleviate the suffering caused by boom-and-bust economic cycles in the absence of

¹⁴Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* 18 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 6, 191.

public social welfare programs. As a consequence, the city came to rely on women to provide relief to the population, in particular to women and children.¹⁵

Sharon E. Wood's 2005 study of Davenport, Iowa, expanded the separate political cultures argument by studying a group of women who asserted the respectability of paid employment in a growing Midwestern city in the late 1880s and early 1900s. The prevailing gender ideology placed women who moved into the paid labor force as outside the reciprocal obligations of marriage and implicitly compromising their sexual reputations.¹⁶

Unaccompanied, working class women faced the double challenge of not only being a stranger, but also of placing themselves outside the protection of a man and, thereby, compromising their reputations.¹⁷ The need for work, the separation of home from work, and the reduction of manufacturing processes from a skilled trade to unskilled labor, also known as deskilling, prior to the Civil War created a female labor market that was squarely at odds with the ideal of domesticity and resulted in the creation of two classes of women as Alice Kessler-Harris argued.¹⁸ The very real concern that arose

¹⁵Mary Ann Irwin, "Going about and Doing Good: The Politics of Benevolence, Welfare, and Gender in San Francisco, 1850-1880," *Pacific Historical Review* 68, no. 3: 365-366. This point is also made by Hewitt and appears to be consistent with the experience in Kansas City, where the WCA quickly dropped its focus on female equality as well as moral reform to focus exclusively on benevolence.

¹⁶Sharon E. Wood, *The Freedom of the Streets: Work, Citizenship, and Sexuality in a Gilded Age City* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 9, 16-49.

¹⁷Wood, 16, 49. Stansell goes even further to state that ". . . the working girl who made known her independence or even her aloneness could still be interpreted as issuing a sexual invitation." Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 97.

¹⁸Kessler-Harris, Alice. *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States*. (New York: Oxford University Press, republished 2003, originally published 1982), 23, 53.

about prostitution in U.S. cities provided middle class women with the opportunity to define the problem in their own terms. As Christine Stansell argued, reform-minded women saw prostitutes as victims who had been either preyed upon or were abandoned by men. The bourgeois response, then, was to enforce middle class virtues by opening settlement houses, as well as making school attendance mandatory for children and in other ways to induce the working class to emulate the patterns of middle class life.¹⁹ The narrative of prostitutes as victims carried with it a corresponding narrative of male dominance and a sexual double standard and the need to control male behavior, as Hobson argued.²⁰ Yet, where Kessler-Harris saw conflict between the benevolent class and the working class that was rooted in low wages²¹, and Barbara Meil Hobson noted a shift among reformers in the 1860 to 1900 period that lost sight of a challenge to class and gender justice in favor of a focus on a loss of female influence and domesticity²², the Kansas City experience in the early years of the 1870s, also referred to by Pascoe as the Church women's decade, saw the emergence of an activist organization of middle and upper class women who organized, at least in part, to challenge male power in culturally-approved ways such as providing relief, visiting the poor, and rescuing prostitutes.²³

¹⁹Stansell, 191, 219.

²⁰Barbara Meil Hobson, *The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. Originally published Basic Books, 1987), 49-56.

²¹Kessler-Harris, 91.

²²Hobson, 124.

²³Pascoe, xxi.

In each of these works, women in their reform and benevolent activities claimed autonomy from men and, in Pascoe's and Wood's studies, worked in opposition to what they saw as the baser nature of male sex and the disadvantaged position of women in the urban environment. Moreover, elite women benefited from the support of the community for their benevolent work within the assigned feminine sphere. Women's activism on behalf of suffrage, however, received little financial or moral support from the community.²⁴

This chapter draws inspiration from community studies of Davenport and Rochester, among others, that place the events in those places within the context of larger societal developments. The chapter, however, moves beyond them to study the actions of the women's organization in the context of the interdependence of the women's relief organization with prominent men in the community and with an ecumenical base of support. In addition, the chapter argues that unlike the literature, the WCA in its founding decade drew its support from women who subscribed to all three strains of activism, a fact that was reflected in the organization's varied activities.

The Quality and Equality of Mercy – 1870 to 1877

The small, new society that had emerged in Kansas City by 1870 provided the opening for women who subscribed to any one of the three streams of thought – benevolence, reform, and equality, to coalesce into a single organization that reflected all three viewpoints, rather than form separate groups as occurred in more established Eastern communities such as Rochester. To assist poor women, fallen women, and all

²⁴ Irwin, 376-377.

women who lacked rights on an equal footing with men, a group of charitably-inclined Protestant ladies met at the Young Men's Christian Association during the week of January 15, 1870, to form the Women's Christian Association.²⁵ The actions of the founding members of the WCA reflected the willingness and even the desire to extend the hearth into the street, the bordello, and the legal and electoral sphere. These women reflected three different points of view, yet coalesced to form a single, city-wide organization of Protestant women, where none had existed. According to the *Kansas City Daily Journal of Commerce* (henceforth referred to as the *DJC*), the organization was founded for the expressed purpose of exercising Christian benevolence and "saving charity towards our suffering sisters in this vicinity." The organization issued, "an earnest invitation" to "all ladies desirous of extending charity to the needy to be present at the next meeting." Among their members were counted, "ladies of influence and wealth," yet "all the members are earnest in the cause and will do noble work for 'sweet charity's sake.'" The newspaper editorially intoned that these women deserved the encouragement and support from all benevolent and philanthropically-inclined citizens.²⁶

By December 1870, the WCA looked toward the founding of a "Home for the

²⁵The Young Men's Christian Association began in 1860 when the Rev. W. M. Leftwich of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, called a meeting of men in Kansas City from various Protestant churches to discuss the establishment of a Kansas City branch of the organization that was founded 16 years earlier in London. The Kansas City branch survived the Civil War intact. Following the war, D. L. Shouse, a local banker, allowed the YMCA to use several rooms in one of his office buildings located on Missouri Street, between Main and Delaware streets. Among the churches that participated during this period were the First Baptist, Calvary Baptist, the Northern and Southern branches of the Methodist Church, Episcopal, Lutheran and "Old School" Presbyterian churches. Young Men's Christian Association, *More than a Building: A Story of the Kansas City Missouri Young Men's Christian Association* (Kansas City, MO: Western Baptist Publishing Company, 1934).

²⁶*DJC*, January 15, 1870, 4.

Friendless” to assist single women in the unwelcoming urban environment.²⁷ The goals of the WCA in its first two years of existence embraced a philosophy of assistance to women in the newly-forming urban center and the rescue of women who had fallen victim to male depredation. The stated object of the WCA in its earliest published announcement was to “. . . exercise . . . saving charity towards our suffering sisters in the vicinity.”²⁸ By the end of that year, the minutes reflected both the expansion of and adherence to this purpose.²⁹ The relationship between WCA members and the applicants for assistance from 1870 to 1876 provided evidence of the organization’s shifting priorities and approaches to relief in a period of rapid change. The demands on the WCA for expanded relief to the general population increased as the population of the city grew and as natural disasters and man-made disasters – including a grasshopper invasion, drought, and economic depression – created widespread hardships. Through this process, the tripartite structure of the WCA began to unravel.

²⁷*DJC*, December 4, 1870, 4.

²⁸*DJC*, January 15, 1870, 4. The female-led relief structure, sometimes referred to as a maternalistic structure, empowered women within their appropriate sphere of assisting women and children appeared in Kansas City, San Francisco and other cities to address relief. The rise of these female led relief organizations may well have been influenced by the experience of women as volunteers in the United States Sanitary Commission (USSA) during the Civil War or by having read newspaper coverage of the work of the sanitary commissions. The USSC had empowered women by enabling them to work beside men near the battlefield and in other venues and had shown that organized and coordinated work by volunteers could educate the masses. Through this experience, the Sanitary Commission gave women a new self-image and a new set of expectations about their roles. These factors were significant, because women provided the volunteer work of relief. Through newspaper accounts and perhaps firsthand accounts, the women who founded the WCA of Kansas City would certainly have been familiar as well with the work of the Western Sanitary Commission that was founded in September of 1861 to meet the needs of the Trans-Mississippi and Western theaters of the war that had been ignored by the USSC. See Irwin, 373 and Trattner, 79.

²⁹*DJC*, December 4, 1870, 4.

Prior to the founding of the WCA, Kansas City had struggled to address relief. The first efforts in Kansas City to deal with the poor took place through the police. As early as 1853, a workhouse was erected for people without the means to pay city fines. The institution was more penal than charitable.³⁰ This experience of meager public welfare offerings was not unique to Kansas City. Taxpayers in Kansas City, as in San Francisco, expected very little by way of city services beyond levying taxes, maintaining public order, maintaining streets and building an occasional public building.³¹ City dwellers expected only the bare necessities from city government, which was all they generally provided.

Yet, poverty was a gnawing reality of the urban experience. The people of Kansas City felt poverty keenly as a result of the national depression of 1873 as well as poor crops, severe weather, and grasshopper plagues during the 1870s that caused an influx of vagrants into the city. In addition to the non-denominational, Protestant relief provided by the WCA, religious sectarian relief was also very much in evidence in Kansas City, beginning in the mid-1860s with the arrival of Roman Catholic Father Bernard Donnelly and nuns from the Convent of Saint Joseph arrived as early as 1866 to serve the rapidly growing Catholic community. Saint Theresa's Academy, which instructed both boys and girls, opened in 1866. Saint Joseph's Hospital opened in 1874 to aid the poor and ill of the city just as an orphanage opened to shelter children and address destitution in 1880. These institutions were formed primarily to meet the needs

³⁰Ellis, 181.

³¹Irwin, 370-371.

of the Irish Catholic community that grew in response to Donnelly's call for Irish men to serve as workers to grade Kansas City's bluffs. Donnelly encouraged Irish immigrants already in the United States to relocate to Kansas City and recruited 300 workers to come to America and settle in Kansas City. The charities that served this immigrant community, however, extended their services to people of other faiths as well. The presence of the sisters helped to heighten the early importance of women's education in the area, for example.³²

Jewish settlers of German origins began Jewish charities in 1865 with the founding of the Hebrew Benevolent Society. These migrants had relocated to Kansas City from their previous places of residence in the Eastern United States. Like other people relocating from the East to the West, they sought increased economic opportunity. The German Reform Jews founded a chapter of B'nai Brith in 1868 and were associated with Temple B'nai Jehudah. The Hebrew Ladies Relief Society was formed to promote relief for the newly arrived Eastern European Orthodox population that began arriving in Kansas City directly from Eastern Europe in the 1880s as a result of pogroms in Russia.³³ In a significant clash of cultural expectations, the Orthodox community found the approach to assistance of the German Reform Jews, which required investigations of aid

³²Carol K. Coburn and Martha Smith, "City Sisters: The Sisters of St. Joseph in Missouri, 1836-1920," in *Women in Missouri History: In Search of Power and Influence*, eds. LeeAnn Whites, Mary C. Neth, and Gary Kremer (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 85-97. See also "How the Irish Laid the Groundwork for Downtown Kansas City," <http://www.kclibrary.org/blog/kc-unbound/how-irish-laid-groundwork-downtown-kansas-city>.

³³Howard F. Sachs, "Development of the Jewish Community of Kansas City, 1864-1908," *Missouri Historical Review* 60 (1966), 356.

applicants, demeaning and heartless. In reaction, the Orthodox Jews soon founded their own relief agencies and houses of worship.³⁴

Following in a tradition of home visits that originated at least as far back as 1829 in New York City,³⁵ the WCA used the friendly visiting model of home visits that was employed in Eastern cities and refined by the Charity Organization Society (COS) that arose in London in 1869. The charity organization movement based its work on three broad assumptions. First, the roots of poverty lay in an individual's moral deficiency and flawed character. Second, the eradication of the urban slums depended on helping the poor and remedying their individual deficiencies. Third, achieving that goal required a high degree of cooperation among charity organizations with overlapping purposes. In line with these ideas, the WCA of Kansas City used friendly visitors – middle and upper class female volunteers – to visit the homes of aid applicants to determine whether the supplicants were worthy to receive assistance and to identify and correct the cause of the household's poverty. These visitors offered, in the expression of the day, “not alms, but a friend” and sought to employ scientific philanthropy.³⁶

³⁴Bella E. Schultz, “The Highest Degree of Tzedakah: Jewish Philanthropy in Kansas City, 1870-1933,” in *Mid-America's Promise: A Profile of Kansas City Jewry*, ed. Joseph P. Schultz (Kansas City, MO: The Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Kansas City, 1982), 202-205.

³⁵Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 64. Boyer, 144. Trattner, 90-93. In contrast to the term as used to describe the wholesale interventions in society by Carnegie, Rockefeller, Rosenwald, scientific philanthropy as used in connection with relief work meant the application of scientific principles to social problems – known at the time as the science of social therapeutics which evolved over time into the profession of social work.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

The formal COS structure and methods were brought to the United States in 1877 by the Episcopal clergyman Stephen Humphrey Gurteen of Buffalo, New York. Up to this time, the friendly visiting process had been used, but the organizational structure had not been systematically employed in the United States. The formal COS model, which spread rapidly across the U.S. sought to bring a higher level of order, coordination and effectiveness to the existing collection of agencies and approaches that already existed in many U.S. cities.³⁷ Gurteen emphasized the need to avoid the taint of Protestant sectarianism in relief efforts. He realized that explicitly Protestant relief workers might not be effective in gaining the cooperation of people in need of relief, many of whom were not Protestant, but were rather Catholic or Jewish.³⁸

Although explicitly Protestant, the WCA encompassed women from diverse Protestant backgrounds unlike benevolent organizations formed by the elites in other cities. According to Sarah Coates' diary, its founding was inspired by a visit to Mrs. J. W. L. Slavens from "two devout Quaker women from Kansas." Coates described the organization as rooted in practical Christianity:

Relying upon faith in the virtue of the cause, and believing that those who trust in the Lord and invoke His aid in every good word and work will be sustained, we went forth with bold hearts and willing hands to carry out our ideas of practical Christianity.³⁹

The religious diversity is evidenced through an examination of the characteristics of WCA founders. Of the twenty-eight women who were mentioned at least once among

³⁷Stansell, 92.

³⁸Boyer, 145.

³⁹Reed, 83.

the newspaper accounts of the monthly and annual meetings during the organization's founding period, at least one, Coates, was a Quaker, and at least one, Mrs. James, was Baptist. At least two – Mrs. Holden and Mrs. Irwin – were Presbyterian. Mrs. Irwin's husband served as the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church. Mrs. Bushong, whose husband was the pastor of the Grand Avenue Methodist Church was the only person identified as a Methodist. Mrs. J. G. Roberts' husband, the Reverend J. G. Roberts, served as pastor of the First Congregational Church. According to the occupations listed in the 1870 census and the 1870 city directory, the husbands' occupations varied in level of prestige and presumed wealth with merchants, real estate/insurance brokers, and bankers constituting seven of the seventeen husbands with identifiable occupations. Three husbands were Protestant ministers. One husband was a physician (Dr. Porter); another was the publisher of a newspaper – *The Bulletin* (Mr. Householder). At the less remunerative end of the occupational scale were a bricklayer (Mr. A. H. Brown, according to the 1877 city directory), a railroad conductor (Mr. Silkworth), a carpenter (Mr. Marlatt), and a newspaper editor (Mr. Hicks), who worked for the publisher of the *Kansas City Bulletin* owned by Mr. Householder. While definitional challenges may impair our understanding of whether “carpenter” and “bricklayer” meant perhaps a contractor in those trades, the clear indication is that the women referenced in the newspaper as active with the WCA were not exclusively of the wealthy classes. No husband is listed for Mrs. Branham, who was most likely a widow; she had a relative who owned a hominy mill.⁴⁰ In contrast to the women profiled in Hewitt's and Irwin's studies

⁴⁰U.S. Census, 1870 and 1880; *City Directory*, Kansas City, 1870, 1877, 1880.

of Rochester and San Francisco, the occupational status of the husbands of the WCA members ranged from high status professions – bankers and merchants – to the upper range of the skilled worker trades and crafts – a bricklayer and a carpenter.

As with religious and occupational status, the place of birth of these women, their wealth, their religious affiliation, and their ages reinforce the conviction that the nascent organization had a relatively egalitarian membership. Of the ten women whose place of birth can be identified, eight were born in Northern states – New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York (Marlatt, Coates, Hicks, Holden, Roberts, McKnight, and Thacher). With the exception of Coates, who arrived in the 1850s, they were relative newcomers. One woman, Mrs. James, was born in Virginia and also constituted the one confirmed member of a Baptist congregation. One report mentioned that people named Branham attended a Baptist event, but there was a third, apparently unrelated Branham family in town, making confirmation on this point difficult. James' husband was a consistent Kansas Citian. Mrs. Shouse was also married to a consistent Kansas Citian, D.L. Shouse, who was born in Kentucky and owned slaves in Kansas City in the 1860 census. Her birthplace has not been identified. Mrs. Shouse was a Methodist. One woman was born in Indiana (Mrs. Epperson) and another in Missouri (Mrs. Crider). These women, like the general population, came to a new city. Though not exclusive, the Northern women predominated, yet accepted participation by non-Northern women, such as Mrs. James who came from Virginia. None of the women whose birthplace was identified was foreign-born, a fact that reflects the origins of the Protestant population of Kansas City at the time. The 1870 census recorded the wealth of individuals in terms of the value of real

property and personal property. Of the nine women who were identified in the 1870 census, wealth ranged from a low of \$500 in personal property for Mrs. Hicks who was married to the newspaper editor, to a high of \$175,000 in combined wealth, \$150,000 in real property and \$25,000 in personal property, for Coates, whose husband was an entrepreneur of note with varied interests in the community. The ages of the women reflected the newness of the city and ranged from 21 years (Mrs. Crider) to 43 years (Mrs. Porter). The relative youth of the group speaks to the fact that younger people were attracted to the new and growing urban environment. Youthfulness is evident in the distribution of ages by decade: only two women were in their forties; four were in their thirties; and three were in their twenties.⁴¹ The variations in wealth, the inclusion of a small number of women who were not from the North, husbands' occupations, and their age suggest that these benevolent women were not drawn from a single elite economic, religious, social, or professional tier of society; rather, they reflected a melding of backgrounds that may be expected in a relief organization that was founded to assist women in a Western frontier community. By the end of the first year of its existence, the WCA had garnered 70 members.⁴²

Location of residence is the final indicator that demonstrated variation in the status of the WCA membership during the first two years of the organization's existence. While residence in the Quality Hill neighborhood in the northwest corner of the city is a

⁴¹U.S. Census, 1870 and 1880; *City Directory*, Kansas City, 1870, 1877, 1880. The age of the wives is an imperfect measure of the "settledness" of the community in that the age of the husband in this period is commonly ten years or more older than the wife according to the census data. For biographical information on these prominent early Kansas Citians, see Carrie Westlake Whitney, *Kansas City, Missouri: Its History and Its People, 1808-1908* 1 (Chicago: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1908).

⁴²*DJC*, January 18, 1871, 1.

certain indicator of wealth, the wealthy also lived in places that were less easily identified as pockets of affluence. By this measure, only three of the fifteen women for whom addresses have been identified – Mrs. Coates, Mrs. Branham, and Mrs. Orrison – lived in the elite Quality Hill location. The other twelve women lived in what is today referred to as the City Market area, or the core of downtown (Central to McGee and 6th to 12th streets). Mrs. Bushong, wife of the pastor of the Grand Avenue Temple, lived as far away as 8th and Harrison streets. By this measure, then, the residential living pattern suggests that women from various strata of social and economic prestige formed the WCA.

At the same time, presumed high status in society does not predict participation in the WCA. Of the Coates' close friends and acquaintances, who are presumed to be of high status, very few joined the WCA. Of the consistent Kansas Citians who assisted in the hospital during the Battle of Westport in 1864 and with organizing the charity fair (Mrs. Pierce, Mrs. Jarboe, Mrs. Van Horn, and Mrs. Boullt), only Mrs. Pierce was mentioned as a member late in the decade when she served as the WCA vice president. Of the balance of the women (Mrs. Guinotte, Mrs. Cooper, Mrs. Millett, Miss Salisbury, Mrs. Dr. Hopkins, and Mrs. McDill), none was listed among the members of the WCA at any time. None of the participants in Mrs. Coates' surprise parties (Mrs. Boullt, Mrs. Flagler, the Salisburys, the Wilsons) participated in the WCA. Only one member of the dinner parties group, Mrs. Pierce, participated. The other highly influential members of the group (Mrs. Van Horn, Mrs. Balis, Mrs. Case, Mrs. Lykins, Mrs. Dively, Mrs. Jarboe, Mrs. Dickinson, and Mrs. Bullene) did not participate. Two wives of consistent Kansas

Citians who provided Laura Coates Reed with religious instruction, Mrs. Shouse, a Methodist, and Mrs. James, a Baptist, were mentioned in connection with the WCA and are presumed to have been members early in the organization's history. Mrs. Shouse's husband was listed as having made remarks at the WCA annual meeting in January of 1871 along with Messrs. Steck, Maple, Marsh, Coates, Bushong and others.⁴³ Because her husband spoke, as did the husbands of other known members of the WCA, including Mr. Coates, this author assumes she was a member of the organization. Mrs. James is mentioned in the minutes of the regular meeting of December 8, 1871:

Mrs. T. M. James offered as a donation the amount due from the Society for breakage, &c., of queensware loaned at the time of the Fair (the Dining Hall at the Commercial Fair), amounting to several dollars. For both of which favors many thanks were expressed.⁴⁴

Because Mrs. James loaned these items and was at the meeting, this author assumes that she was a member of the organization. Neither woman was mentioned again as participating in the activities of the WCA. The lack of participation in the WCA by the Coates' high status friends and participation of high status women outside the Coates' circle, indicated that women's participation in the organization was motivated by a desire to effect positive change in the community through collective action. The lack of participation also signals that high social status did not necessarily equate to involvement in the WCA. Among the friends that did not participate were former slave owners, including Mrs. Lykins, who had been exiled for anti-union speech, Mrs. Boullt and Mrs.

⁴³*DJC*, January 18, 1871, 4.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, December 9, 1871, 4.

Guinotte. Some Northerners such as wife of the Congregational minister, Dr. Hopkins, also elected not to participate. Clearly no sense of obligation was implied nor was WCA membership *de rigueur* for female members of the social and economic elite.

Comparing the members of the WCA on measures of status with the members of the Chamber of Commerce provides insight into the relative status of the members of the two organizations. The *Daily Journal of Commerce* announced the formation of the Chamber in its edition of February 3, 1871. Of the 25 Chamber founders, only four – Marsh, Epperson, James, and Branham – appear to have had a wife or another female family member who participated with the WCA. Among this group, we know that Mr. James was Baptist. Because Messrs. Callahan and Bigger were born in Ireland, they were most likely Roman Catholic. They are the only two foreign-born founders of the Chamber that have been identified, among the eight whose origins were identified. Of those eight, two were born in Ohio (Conwell and Charles), two were born in New York (Bainbridge and Pierce), and one member was born in each of Indiana, Kentucky, and Missouri. Of the thirteen members with identifiable occupations, the largest occupation was meat packing (Slavens, Nofsinger - also a physician, Epperson, and Bigger). Two were wholesale grocers (Threlkeld and Ferguson); Callahan was a wholesale grocer and liquor dealer; Pierce was an insurance agent; Branham ran a hominy mill; Cooper was a hardware wholesaler and retailer; James retailed glass and china; Conwell sold ice; and Charles was a commission merchant. The seven founders whose ages could be identified indicated an older group of men than the WCA age range indicated for women. Because husbands were often ten years older than their wives in this period, the wives of Chamber

members may have been comparable to the ages of the WCA members. Four of the men were in their forties; three were in their thirties. Of the six founders whose wealth was identified, Threlkeld (the wholesale grocer) had the greatest assets (\$25,000). Conwell, the ice merchant, had only \$2,000 in assets. Nofsinger, a meat packer, was the second wealthiest with \$16,000 in combined personal and real property value. Others were Callahan with \$9,500, Pierce with \$9,000, and Charles with \$8,000. Similar to the members of the WCA, four (Branham, Dively, Nofsinger, and Slavens) lived on Quality Hill. The rest of these businessmen lived in the central city and east side of town. Mr. Callahan lived at Campbell and 10th streets. Mr. Bigger lived east of the city limits. On measures of wealth and occupational status, the Chamber founders appeared to have been generally higher on the scale, although the WCA clearly had members who were wealthier than the wealthiest Chamber founder. At the same time, the WCA had many members who were less wealthy than most of the Chamber founders. As a consequence, it is fair to conclude that the Chamber was more economically and occupationally elite on average than the members of the WCA, but more diverse in terms of the religious affiliation and origins of its members. The sparse instances of overlap between the two groups (only four overlaps among 25 chamber members) indicated more separation than commonality in the two groups. At the same time, their residential patterns indicated little difference.⁴⁵ The membership of the two organizations indicated that the social and economic leadership structures were open to people who were relatively young and new to the city, going so far as to allow foreign born Irish Catholics to participate in the

⁴⁵U.S. Census, 1870 and 1880; *City Directory*, Kansas City, 1870, 1877, 1880.

Chamber and a Southern-born Baptist and a Quaker to join with Presbyterians to form an association to assist women.

It is unclear why some women of the same religious and socio-economic status joined the WCA while others chose not to do so. Women who joined likely shared a common interest in sociability, community betterment, and in extending their sphere into the public realm, while also having a husband who supported their activities. They also may not have had children or their children were old enough to care for themselves. Women who chose not to join may not have been similarly positioned, were simply not interested in community activities, were married to men who forbade their participation, simply found the nature of the organization to be too far outside their views of appropriate activities for women, or retained a Southern disregard for such Northern activities.

Ecumenical interaction among people of different Christian denominations, such as between Protestants and Roman Catholics, and between Christians and Jews typifies social and commercial activities in Kansas City in the 1870s. As noted above, the WCA members represented Protestant women of the benevolent, reform, and equality persuasions. Benevolent women were from high status denominations such as Presbyterian and Episcopal, reform minded, evangelical denominations such as Methodists and Baptists, and defenders of human equality including, a Quaker, Mrs. Coates, whose views on human equality were well known, and a Unitarian, Mrs. J. C. Merine. The Chamber of Commerce included both Roman Catholics and Protestants. The earliest interaction between Christians and Jews identified in this study occurred at

the Catholic New Year's Festival, an account of which appeared in the *DJC* on January 3, 1870. At this event, Mr. Bachrach of the firm of Mr. Joseph Cahn, reportedly won a raffle prize consisting of a music box and a wine set. The newspaper account of the festival is lengthy, lavish and gushing. Clearly, the Republican newspaper viewed a Catholic event as worthy of extensive and respectful coverage. Equally clear is the fact that Catholics and Jews interacted comfortably in this space. Two years later, Mrs. Cahn was acknowledged in the minutes of the WCA from January 1873 for having made a donation of \$25 on behalf of the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society.⁴⁶ An advertisement in the *DJC* of December 12, 1874, listed Mr. Joseph Cahn as a director of the First National Bank of Kansas City along with such eminent names as Kersey Coates, Howard Holden, and M. W. St. Clair, all whose wives who were active members of the WCA. Another board member, Mr. B. A. Feineman, was listed as the President of B'Nai Jehudah in the 'church directory' published in December 1874.⁴⁷ The membership of B'Nai Jehudah was described in the January 3, 1875, edition of the newspaper as "having many of our best citizens."⁴⁸ Additional examples of ecumenicalism in support of the WCA included a donation of \$1.25 from the Baptist Sabbath School⁴⁹ and the donation of three loads of

⁴⁶*DJC*, January 5, 1873, 4. Jewish charities started in 1865 with the founding of the Hebrew Benevolent Society by Jewish settlers of German origins who had relocated to Kansas City from their previous places of residence in the Eastern United States. These Reform Jews founded a chapter of B'nai Brith in 1868 and were associated with Temple B'Nai Jehudah. The Hebrew Ladies Relief Society was formed in 1871. Members included Mrs. Cahn, Mrs. Hammerslough, Mrs. Bachrach, and Mrs. Feineman. See Howard F. Sachs, "Development of the Jewish Community in Kansas City, 1864-1908," *Missouri Historical Review* 60 (1966), 353-354.

⁴⁷*DJC*, December 20, 1874, 4.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, January 3, 1874, 4.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, January 7, 1871, 4.

firewood from the Roman Catholic priest, Father Bernard Donnelly, in December 1876.⁵⁰ Ecumenicalism was reflected in the bylaws of the WCA, which stated that “any woman of good moral character may become a member of this association by signing the constitution.” The bylaws also state that the WCA “shall be kept entirely free from sectarianism; nor shall any member ever be proscribed by reason of her particular religious views or connections.”⁵¹ While no woman other than a Protestant joined, the statement nonetheless represented an unusual commitment to ecumenical cooperation as illustrated by the business and social interactions of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, which was not evident in cities like Rochester, San Francisco, or Galveston.

Whether ecumenicalism was a consequence of life in the frontier community or was instilled by the settlers who were predisposed either by attitude or necessity to work cooperatively with their new neighbors is a large question. Laura Coates Reed, daughter of Sarah W. Coates provided insight into her mother’s views and perhaps those of the larger society, which her mother was influential in shaping. In addition to sharing memories of her childhood friendship and admiration for Father Donnelly, Reed described an ecumenical childhood. Of her mother, Reed said that “. . . in the absence of any opportunity for outward expression of her creed [Quaker], she did not isolate herself from other forms of worship. Rather, Reed noted:

⁵⁰*DJC*, January 9, 1877, 4.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, this study relies on minutes published in the newspapers of the day. The author has not been granted access to whatever archival information may exist in the collections of the Women’s Christian Association.

Upon the organization of the Episcopal Church, the energies of the family became more concentrated, and we were very comfortably situated religiously until, my mother's progressive and liberal tendencies asserting themselves, we found ourselves interested in the formation of a Unitarian Society.⁵²

Her father, she noted, believed in "helping the town along" and, therefore, contributed to a variety of churches. This Protestant ecumenicalism is further evidenced by the ministers who participated in the WCA annual meeting and included the Rev. Dornblaser of the English Lutheran Church, two Episcopal priests (J. E. Martin and G. C. Betts), a Congressional minister (J. G. Roberts) and a Presbyterian minister (W. M. Cheever).⁵³ Ecumenicalism was not, therefore, unique to the Coates family, who were among its foremost exemplars.

This ecumenical approach fell outside the bounds of convention by Eastern standards, just as the founding members of the WCA clearly viewed themselves as acting outside boundaries of the feminine role in endorsing the equality of the sexes and activism. In the minutes of the monthly meeting of January 1871,⁵⁴ S. W. Coates,⁵⁵ offered encouragement to women who may have hesitated to join the cause:

Among the number present [at the meeting] were the wives of some of our most respected clergymen, and others of high position in society. This fact alone

⁵²Mrs. James was a founder of the WCA. Her husband, a china merchant, was a founder of the Chamber of Commerce.

⁵³*DJC*, February 15, 1876, 4.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, January 7, 1871, 4.

⁵⁵The woman's use of her own initials or those of her husband often varies by woman and occasionally changes over time for the same woman. Sarah W. Coates, however, identified herself without exception as S.W. Coates.

should be sufficient to encourage many who have not the independence to brave public opinion and act with their sisters in a society capacity.⁵⁶

The statement makes clear that some portion of public opinion was averse to the formation of this women's organization. At the same time, the statement suggests that if the respected wives of respected men could be active in the organization, then women of lesser stature could feel empowered to risk public censure by joining the cause. Sisterhood signifies a sense of group identity; "sisters" is a term of great meaning. Seventy sisters in the cause had reportedly stepped out in uncertainty to join by January 1871.⁵⁷ The members included women who were drawn by the benevolent, reform, or equality aspects of the organization or, perhaps, a combination of those aims. The newness of the city accounts for the fact that women representing the three strains of thought were acting within the same organization. They would not have done so in Rochester or Boston. Yet, the newness may also account for the hesitation. The women had not formed deep social bonds or perhaps even circles of acquaintance since they located in the growing city. Nor did many of the women have the experience of negotiating or claiming social space on their own terms, separate from their husbands. Of the thirteen women mentioned in the minutes in the first year, only two – Coates and Holden – were consistent Kansas Citians. They, along with newly-arrived of some social standing, such as the wives of local ministers Roberts and Irwin, invited other newly-arrived women to engage with them in common causes.

⁵⁶*DJC*, January 9, 1871, 4.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

In the earliest years of the WCA, the women demonstrated their willingness to place their organization outside the usual limits of the domestic sphere by embracing equality. The WCA scheduled a fundraising program that featured the well-known advocate of women's equality, Susan B. Anthony, in 1871. The program appeared on the agenda as an item carried over from the December meeting⁵⁸ when the minutes reflect that M. L. Doggett, who also used her own initials rather than her husband's, presented letters from Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. In her letter, Anthony proposed to postpone her lecture until the following month to benefit the WCA. For reasons that are not clear, engaging Stanton was not "deemed advisable" at that time.⁵⁹ At the January meeting, Mrs. Householder, Mrs. I. N. Hicks, Mrs. M. L. Doggett, Mrs. H. M. Holden, and Mrs. M. W. St. Clair were appointed to make all necessary arrangements for Anthony's lecture. Of these women, Mrs. Householder's husband owned the *Kansas City Bulletin* newspaper; Mrs. Hicks, who was occasionally identified by her name, Jennie M. Hicks, was married to the editor of Mr. Householder's newspaper; Mrs. Doggett's husband was a leading retail merchant; and Mr. Holden and Mr. St. Clair were bankers at the First National Bank of Kansas City. Mrs. Holden and Mrs. St. Clair were consistently identified by their husband's initials. Unlike their wives, the husbands did not exercise, nor could they most likely have exercised, similar freedom to speak out on such controversial issues because of concern about repercussions in the business and professional lives. Women's license was not without limits, however. Over zealotry

⁵⁸*DJC*, December 4, 1870, 4.

⁵⁹One explanation may be that Stanton was openly hostile to churches and was not seen as an appropriate lecturer for the WCA. See O'Neill, 12.

on the part of a wife would no doubt also reflect adversely on the husband. The *DJC* reported that Anthony appeared and spoke on the topic of providing women with legal protections for property, which they lacked in Missouri and most other states, and opportunities for education to enable women to make a living without being dependent on a husband.⁶⁰ The tone of the coverage was respectful and the audience that evening at the Mechanic's Institute Hall was described as fashionable. The newspaper made no mention of the WCA sponsorship of the event. A previous notice in the newspaper, however, announced the lecture as a benefit for the organization.⁶¹ The following evening, the then-well known suffrage advocate Mary Livermore spoke at a different location and directly addressed equality and the importance of women's suffrage. No mention of WCA involvement with Livermore's appearance was found in the organization's minutes or in newspaper coverage. Perhaps reflecting her greater fame, Livermore's lecture received far more extensive coverage than Anthony's had received. Like the WCA audience, the Livermore auditors were described as "of excellent quality."⁶² While a comment on the quality or social standing of the people in the audience was not unusual in newspaper coverage of the era, the mention in this case seems to communicate to the readership that the auditors were respectable members of society rather than rabble-rousers and that the Republican newspaper owned by Robert T. Van Horn was not hostile to the message.

⁶⁰*DJC*, January 24, 1871, 4.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, January 18, 1871, 4.

⁶²*Ibid.*, January 25, 1871, 4.

Two years after the founding of the WCA, the organization dropped women's equality from its list of concerns – an action driven largely by a transition to a more elite membership that was interested in benevolence, rather than equality or reform. The rhetoric contained in the annual report of 1876 lapsed into the ideology of separate spheres by intoning that: “The heroism of woman . . . is quick to see, while men deliberate.”⁶³ Sources are silent as to whether there was a reaction against Anthony that had implications for support for the WCA. What is known is that the language of equality was overtaken by the language of the heroic, morally-superior woman as the organization evolved away from its tri-partite roots and toward an elite, benevolent orientation that supported such activities as housing women, supplying basic needs for families, and assisting children.⁶⁴

The WCA enjoyed a broad base of support for its benevolent work. Individuals, civic, labor, and religious organizations, government, and special events all provided funding. Individual women like Mrs. O. C. Day (Mrs. F. H. Day) made a gift as monthly dues since she was unable to engage in active work.⁶⁵ The journeymen tailors, no doubt a low status group of workers, contributed \$50 in February of 1873. The proceeds from the

⁶³*DJC*, February 15, 1876, 4.

⁶⁴Just as Clarina Nichols advocated equality in Kansas in the 1860s, so, too, did Virginia Minor and her attorney husband, Francis Minor, advocated equality in Missouri throughout the period and in the mid-1870s in the case of *Minor v. Happersett*, which was decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1875. Minor argued, unsuccessfully, that the State of Missouri denied her the right to vote in violation of the U.S. Constitution. See LeeAnn White, “The Tale of Two Minors: Women’s Rights on the Border” in LeeAnn Whites, Mary C. Neth, and Gary R. Kremers, eds., *Women in Missouri History: In Search of Power and Influence* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 101-118. See also, Angela G. Ray and Cindy Koenig Richards, “Inventing Citizens, Imagining Gender Justice: The Suffrage Rhetoric of Virginia and Francis Minor,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93, no. 4, (2007), 375-402.

⁶⁵*DJC*, February 8, 1873, 4.

dining hall at the Exposition of 1871 netted \$1000 and were made possible by contributions from what the annual report describes as charitable citizens. The city contributed \$99 because the WCA home accepted overflow patients at the request of the city physician from the overcrowded city hospital.⁶⁶ The county paid the rent for the home. This broad base of support demonstrates that the community understood the need for the relief services the WCA provided, including shelter for women and assistance with food, shelter, and fuel for the worthy poor who applied and were deemed suitable for assistance by the friendly visitors.

Community groups organized entertainment events to benefit the WCA. One of two major entertainments was the Dickens performance in December 1874 that resulted in the formation of the Dickens Club. As prominent merchant and founder of the department store that was to become Emery, Bird, and Thayer, T. B. Bullene noted in his diary of December 8, 1874:

. . . attended last night a meeting at the Coats [sic] house in interest of Women's Christian Association, meeting attended by 30 or 40 ladies and gent'n, in wh [sic] it was determined to get up an entertainment to consist of representations of scenes & characters from Dickens works on the 22nd at the opera house. Some one [sic] kindly suggested that I write a prologue to be read before the entertainment. Will think of it.⁶⁷

⁶⁶*DJC*, February 16, 1873, 4. The 1873 annual report indicated a balance of \$2152.87. By 1876 the balance was \$2812.87, which reflected expenditures of \$459.62 for charity outside the home. *DJC*, February 15, 1876, 4. By 1878, the balance was \$4039.14, which included receipts from the bazaar of \$2382.00. *Kansas City Mail*, February 1, 1878, 4. The city hospital, which was described as serving the sick and destitute, may have had approximately 18 beds. From September 12, 1868, to September 11, 1869, the city hospital admitted 155 patients, of whom 113 were discharged, 24 died, and 18 remained in the hospital. *City Directory* 1870, 59.

⁶⁷Diary of Thomas B. Bullene, 1874-1880 (KC288), *Western Historical Manuscripts Collection*.

The diary entry of December 23 confirmed Bullene's participation. The performance, according to a newspaper clipping pasted inside the diary, had an audience of about 1000 people who attended and responded enthusiastically to the entertainment.⁶⁸ The Dickens performers made a gift of \$247 recorded at their meeting of January 2, 1875⁶⁹ and as \$246 in the annual report of the WCA published more than one year later.⁷⁰ Bullene was elected secretary; Mrs. O. C. Day, treasurer. Both appeared in a production of the play *Our Mutual Friend*. Mrs. St. Clair accepted a committee assignment to make arrangements for music for the production. Proceeds again were directed to support the WCA. The Kemble Club, another community group that staged performances, also contributed to the work of the WCA, through a gift of \$106.40 in February of 1876.⁷¹ St. Clair and Day were members of the WCA. Nearly 1000 people attended the Dickens performance. This level of attendance indicated that the event provided a valuable venue for social interaction in the developing urban community and support for the cause.

The WCA Christmas bazaar served as another expansive opportunity for the elite and non-elite members of the community to raise money and socialize. The bazaar also fostered ecumenical interaction. The WCA organized the event for the first time in 1876 in rooms that had once been occupied by Mr. C. F. Holman's drug store, the event promised to be a bazaar of toys and fancy articles with a lunchroom and appropriate decorations. The first announcement was printed at the direction of the WCA executive

⁶⁸Diary of Thomas B. Bullene, 1874-1880 (KC288), *Western Historical Manuscripts Collection*.

⁶⁹*DJC*, January 3, 1875, 4.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, February 15, 1876, 4.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

committee, Mrs. O. C. Day, Mrs. Arthur S. Ingersoll, Mrs. Wm. L. Ellison (whose name previously appeared in published minutes as Ella Ellison), and Mrs. H. M. Holden. The December 14, 1876 announcement indicated that people who would like to donate to the lunch room may do so, and that:

. . . the soliciting committee have found the task of calling upon each and everyone whom they felt assured would respond a greater task than they were able to accomplish, hence they hope a personal solicitation will not be waited for by any who are willing to help them.⁷²

The admission to the bazaar cost ten cents and dinner cost what must have been a hefty 50 cents.⁷³ The bazaar was described in a newspaper article as a collection of attractions that included, among others, the Winter Villa staffed by Mrs. Silkworth, Mrs. Coates, and Mrs. Brown.⁷⁴ All three women were active with the WCA since its founding years. Mrs. Coates was, of course, a woman of great affluence. Mrs. Silkworth's husband was identified as a "R. R. conductor," yet the couple lived on Quality Hill. Mr. Silkworth was born in New York, and Mrs. Silkworth and their two sons were born in Ohio. Mr. Silkworth's personal estate was \$400.⁷⁵ Similarly, Mrs. A. H. Brown's occupation was listed as a bricklayer in 1877. While their address was 1218 McGee, not a member of the Quality Hill set, his occupation may have been more akin to a contractor. A. H. Brown did not appear in either the 1870 or 1880 census, so it is impossible to determine his vocational status and whether he was on his way up or down the status scale at the time

⁷²*DJC*, December 14, 1876, 4.

⁷³*Ibid.*, December 20, 1876, 4.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, December 21, 1876, 4.

⁷⁵*1870 Census: Kansas City Ward 1*, Jackson, Missouri. Roll M593_782, page 424B, Image 258; family History Library Film 552281.

of the bazaar. The \$100 doll popularity event was staffed by Mrs. Ermine Case, Quality Hill resident, who did not appear elsewhere as a member of the WCA. Mrs. Doggett, the wife of a major retailer assisted Mrs. Case with this popularity contest in which the girl whose family and friends purchased the most votes won the doll. Mr. W. L. Ellison sold sweet cider to “the thirsty throng.” Mrs. Ellison (Mary F.) staffed the candy bower with Mrs. Ingersoll. The Ingersolls resided in Kansas City at least since 1870 when Mr. Ingersoll’s occupation was listed as a bookkeeper. By 1877, the city directory listed him as a grain merchant with the firm of Mulkey & Summitt. The Queen Anne booth sold dolls and fancy work and was staffed by Mrs. Holden, Mrs. Nettleton, and Mrs. Wilson. Mrs. Holden was the wife of a prominent banker who maintained a constant residence near, but not on, Quality Hill. The Nettletons resided in Kansas City throughout the decade and lived on Quality Hill; Mr. Nettleton was a railroad official of note. Mrs. Wilson has not been identified. The Centennial booth, named no doubt in reference to the U.S. Centennial, was covered in long grey moss and staffed by Mrs. Doggett, who also worked the \$100 doll booth; Mrs. Day, who was also active with the Dickens Club; and Mrs. Williamson, who was not mentioned elsewhere and may have been a volunteer from the community.⁷⁶ As noted at the next regular meeting of the WCA in January of 1877, the bazaar netted \$1816. Of that amount, the \$100 doll popularity contest alone raised \$1085. Miss Mamie Drennon, about whom nothing further is known, won the doll with an undisclosed number of votes.⁷⁷ The personal and organizational donations,

⁷⁶U.S. Census, 1870, 1880; *City Directory*, Kansas City, 1870, 1877, 1880.

⁷⁷*DJC*, December 25, 1876, 4.

special benefit performances by community groups, and the participation in and support of the dining hall and bazaar demonstrated the broad support within the community for the WCA and its work. In addition, the social aspects of the event provided the opportunity for the participants to form or deepen personal and professional bonds.

Unlike the expectations for a relief organization, the WCA membership in this period was composed of benevolent, reform, and equalitarian women. This tri-partite structure encompassed the elite Presbyterian and Episcopal women who were expected to be concerned with relief, the evangelical Methodist and Baptist women who were concerned with reform, and the equalitarian Quaker and Unitarian women who were active in support of sexual equality. Mrs. Coates was the one identifiable example of a woman interested in more than one of the areas. The activities of the founding period reflected an effort to address the concerns of each of the three groups – relief, rescue, and equality. That these women all worked within the same organization and received ecumenical support affirms the flexibility of the developing social structure in the new western urban community.

“Rendering Assistance to the Best Advantage”

The WCA quickly moved beyond its original aim of assisting only women in the urban environment. That trend would continue as the organization grew in membership and resources and engaged in a broader range of relief activities before beginning to decline in membership and scope in the mid- to late-1870s. In the meantime, the organization established a residential home for women, provided assistance to children,

men, and families, and administered relief funds for the victims of drought and the grasshopper plague of 1874.

The first instance of moving beyond the narrow mission and into providing assistance to Kansas Citians in need occurred in January 1871, when the WCA worked with the boy of fourteen who was left disabled, or “crippled” in the parlance of the day, by sickness. The visiting committee reported that they had failed to find the boy’s home “after great effort and fatigue.” They had, however, been able to find work for him in a mattress factory that would provide him with the means of “obtaining an honest livelihood.” This solution, however, was not viewed by other members as satisfactory. Rather, Miss Rice (not identified through research) was appointed to investigate the case further, to provide him with “better means of locomotion, and see that he be properly clothed and sent to the Public School.”⁷⁸ Thus, the WCA became the provider of general relief services because no other organization existed to fill this gap.

The WCA, then, had already expanded from its founding goal of serving only women; at the same time, it also offered services in keeping with its founding purpose. The WCA worked to fulfill its original mission and to provide general relief services in the founding period of its existence. The WCA continued to pursue relief and rescue for women as evidenced by the report of the chairman, unnamed, of the committee for visiting dens of prostitution, which were common in Kansas City.⁷⁹ The chairman

⁷⁸*DJC*, January 7, 1871, 4. Miss Rice has not been identified.

⁷⁹Three prostitution narratives existed in the later years of the nineteenth century: First, that prostitutes were young women who had been lured into prostitution by a male treachery; second, that prostitutes were vice hardened, morally-degenerate women; and third, that prostitutes were abandoned

reported having visited “a large number during the forenoon of that day in search of a lost wife, whose husband was anxious to reclaim her, and, whose whereabouts were ascertained.” The chairman further reported conversations she held that morning with a number of the inmates [of the brothels], two of whom desired to lead better lives. One of the prostitutes promised that as soon as she paid off some debt she would be ready to go back to her parents in the East. Another desired to leave and gave them hope that she would be reformed. But the most painful part of the report was the visit to the dying girl on the levee:

. . . . At the hour of eleven she [the Chairman] sat by her bedside and listened to her earnest prayers for salvation. ‘Lord, have mercy on my soul!’ was uttered again and again . . . while her companion in iniquity stood near, repeating the same words – encouraging her to repentance.⁸⁰

The Chairman further reported that another “fallen sister” had been aided in getting away and was “sent to her friends” in Cincinnati. Yet another girl was reclaimed and placed with a respectable family in the country. Mrs. Coates and Mrs. Crider presented additional reports of assistance to applicants. Mrs. Dr. Stockham, presumably of Leavenworth and possibly one of the two Quaker women from Kansas who had visited Mrs. Slavens, appealed for the WCA to assist the “home” in that city for the care they had rendered to inmates from Kansas City who were causing them “great trouble and expense.” Mrs. Marlatt, who had just visited the Leavenworth home, agreed and the

women who turned to prostitution for lack of other options. Stansell, 191. An official count of prostitutes and brothels in 1912 identified 248 prostitutes and 47 “bawdy houses,” BPW, *4th Annual Report*, April 15, 1912 – April 22, 1913, 33-42.

⁸⁰*DJC*, January 7, 1871, 4.

WCA sent \$50 to the Leavenworth home. The creation of a WCA “Home for the Friendless” in a rented building was discussed, but a decision was postponed to a later date.⁸¹

The WCA solidified its service to women by opening a women’s home in January 1871 while continuing the work of relieving destitution in the larger community. The WCA issued its first annual report of the organization’s work at its first annual meeting that same month. Mrs. S. W. Coates read the report that told how the organization had moved quickly to rent and open what was then called the “Working Women’s Home,” rather than the “Home for the Friendless” as had originally been discussed, on Tuesday, January 10, 1871, with Mrs. Marlatt, wife of a presumed carpenter and one of the WCA founders as the temporary matron. The fact that Marlatt accepted this work indicates that she was less affluent and may have been amenable to supplementing the family income through paid labor. Working women were able to live at the home and paid for their room and board. Comportment was governed by seven rules published in the report, including a 9:00 p.m. curfew. The rules also indicated that any woman or child who was sick, unable to work, and without a home would be taken care of, including medical attention, free of charge. The report indicated that families needing help would be visited and aided “as the supplies of the Home will warrant.” The work of the WCA to date had been both in relief and rescue: “Our committees have visited the wretched hovels of the poor in times of sickness and in health.” They also had endeavored to reclaim “our erring sisters” though their efforts have been “marked with little apparent success.” The home

⁸¹*DJC*, January 7, 1871, 4.

served women who were industrious or afflicted with a calamity not of their own making – illness or widowhood. In addition, the home served children both with and without parents. Formerly affluent women who had fallen on hard times were a consistent theme. The effects of Gilded Age corporate capital and the cycles of boom-and-bust it produced became apparent. For the first time, the newspaper mentioned that even formerly self-sufficient people were in need of assistance:

Even in the higher walks of life we find much distress. Persons ‘who have known better days’ have wandered hither, far from early home and friends, in the vain hope of accumulating wealth. Arrived here with their limited means, no channel open for their labor, expenses daily accruing, soon all is exhausted, and they are driven to the verge of despair. Many, many such have appealed to us Destitute widows searching for work of any kind, and all kinds have come to us saying, ‘What am I to do? I have the children dependent upon me, and I cannot find work enough to give them bread.’⁸²

Mrs. Coates’ report noted that it was for “these industrious poor” that the home was established.⁸³ Through the establishment of the home, the WCA remained committed to serving single, wage-earning women as they struggled to survive in the unwelcoming urban environment. Like Peggy Pascoe’s study of rescue agencies in Western cities, the women in Kansas City challenged prevailing notions of gendered roles in society, but without directly challenging male power. In a similar vein, they worked to ameliorate the worst effects of the corporate capitalist structure, from which many of the WCA activists benefited.

⁸²*DJC*, January 18, 1871, 4.

⁸³*Ibid.*

The dual role of the WCA – as the sponsor of the “Working Women’s Home” and as a provider of general relief – quickly solidified in the public mind. By the monthly meeting of December 1871, Mr. J. J. Minter appeared before the meeting to request assistance on behalf of Mr. Pontise and his family who were burned out of their house in Reid’s addition the prior Sunday morning. Mr. Minter was a carpenter who lived on Wyandotte Street between 13th & 14th streets. Mrs. Householder, whose husband was the publisher of a local newspaper and Mrs. Orrison were appointed as the investigating committee and charged with the responsibility to “ascertain their most immediate necessities, with instructions to supply the same to the amount of fifteen or twenty dollars.” Another applicant was Mrs. Mosier, who was described as “an elderly woman, living near the Wyandotte bridge . . . and stated her own wants and trials with a desire for some aid.” Mrs. Epperson, wife of the meat packer, and Mrs. Brown, wife of a bookkeeper, were appointed “to make her a visit, with authority to render her all the assistance in their power at the expense of the Society.” The third applicant was a “young girl from the hospital, with her babe of three weeks old” who came before the Society. She was then received for three weeks into the home while efforts were made to “secure her a home in some small family to do housework.” WCA members were assigned to check on the home each week. For the prior month, November, the visitors were Mrs. Silkworth, the wife of a conductor, Mrs. Holden, the wife of a banker, Mrs. McKnight, whose husband’s occupation has not been identified, and Mrs. Armour, wife

of a prominent member of the Chicago packing family who relocated to Kansas City to establish a packinghouse.⁸⁴

The WCA took on a growing role in providing general relief services in its early years. In addition to starting a “home for the friendless,” the women distributed meat and other products that were donated to them, and they assisted the “crippled lad” with housing and education. In addition, the WCA visited brothels, where they helped a husband reclaim his wife, comforted a dying woman, worked to place another girl with a family in the country, and promised to help a resident of a house of ill fame return to her family in the East.⁸⁵ At the same time, their work at their home for women remained fairly constant. Kansas City’s population continued its rapid growth. The general relief role became at least equal, and sometimes seemingly greater than, the role of providing services at the Working Women’s Home, which housed about twenty “inmates” in January 1873. By February 1873, the WCA was engaged in assisting people with a variety of needs. Cases included “one old lady” who had been provided for during the previous winter and who wanted to return with her paralytic son to their former home in Kentucky. Mrs. Jane Hicks, who was recorded in the 1880 city directory as living at Independence Avenue and Tracy and whose official role with the WCA is uncertain, presented two cases for consideration. One was that of “A poor widow, whose husband

⁸⁴*DJC*, December 9, 1871, 4. See also, *City Directory*, Kansas City, 1877.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, December 4, 1871, 4. Sending people “back to their friends” is a theme that runs throughout the relief efforts from 1870 through the 1880s. Since everyone was from somewhere else, relief providers found it expedient to return aid applicants to their place of origin rather than to address their needs in Kansas City.

was killed . . . some years since She has been endeavoring to support her four children by washing, and . . . lived in a room without a floor” Mrs. Dr. Porter, whose husband was a prominent physician and who lived at 11th & Walnut streets, and Mrs. Theo Wheeler, whose husband was a coal mining official and who lived at 6th and Locust streets, were instructed to procure lumber for a floor. The second case associated with Mrs. Hicks was that of “a very destitute family” who occupied an open cabin with nothing but a fireplace for heat even in the extreme cold of the winter. Mrs. Hicks provided them with rooms. Mrs. Coates and Mrs. St. Clair were appointed to make arrangements to obtain a stove for them. A general call was issued for donated clothing for the husband. A man with consumption and his family also received assistance. He had “supported his family by hauling, but unfortunately lost his mule and is left without means of purchasing another.” Mrs. Wheeler and Mrs. Porter were appointed to provide this family with “coffee to the amount of \$2 and a sack of flour.” Among other relief that was reported was that Mrs. E. E. Branham, most likely a widow who lived at 10th & Central, visited several destitute families and provided aid to some of them; Miss Bombeck, not further identified, visited “a poor woman who has been sick and is in want;” Mrs. St. Clair and Mrs. Branham purchased a stove for Mrs. Purnell for fourteen dollars as directed by the society; Mrs. Phillips gave \$1.50 to a poor woman in West Kansas (the current West Bottoms) who had no money to pay rent; and Mrs. Porter purchased a load of wood for a poor family and a pair of shoes for a poor woman “who was needing them.” In addition, the society reported furnishing three loads of firewood to poor families and assisting eight families

with food, clothing, and money.⁸⁶ The members of the WCA clearly gave assistance to men and to families, extending their activities well beyond service only to women.

Unlike the reports of “outside” assistance contained in the meeting minutes earlier in the month, the annual meeting and report of February 1873 focused much of its discussion on the “indoor” relief provided at the home. The discussion of the poverty experienced by the residents of the home provided indirect commentary on the economic panic the country experienced at this time as an outgrowth of the failure of the banking house of Jay Cooke & Co., that year which sparked the suspension of banks across the country and the collapse of prices. The tone of the minutes already exhibited the marks of defensiveness in response to criticism that had been leveled against the home. Mrs. Branham began her report by picking back up on the theme of assisting “those who have seen better days.” These inmates “. . . give evidence of having been accustomed to homes of comfort and refinement, but the dark clouds of adversity gathered around their pathway” In response to growing needs, the three-week limit on stays at the home was relaxed. Examples of people’s circumstances that justified the change centered on three conditions: illness, circumstances that left a woman unprotected through no fault of her own, and orphaned children. Ill residents of the home included the young woman who was “partially insane” and was returned to her friends in a distant state, a sick mother and her four children who were returned to their friends in another state, a sick widow with one child who was nursed back to health and aided in returning to an Eastern

⁸⁶*DJC*, February 8, 1873, 4. See also, City Directory, Kansas City, 1877. Much of West central and Northern Missouri has coal deposits. Mining operations operated as early as 1840 in these areas, <http://www.dnr.mo.gov/geology/geosrv/coalminemaps.htm>.

state, an ill and unemployed seamstress who was nursed back to health, two ill “Swede women” who regained their health and were sent to friends in Iowa, a widow who was found ill and destitute and was referred to the home by one of the pastors of the city, a hopeless invalid who was transferred to the county home, an ill English girl who recovered her health and received a railroad pass to St. Louis, and a young Irish girl who was nursed through a severe illness. Women who were residents due to the precarious circumstances of life included a widow of culture and refinement, an aged woman from Iowa who was provided for until her son came for her, a recently widowed woman from Kentucky who was taken financial advantage of by unscrupulous men, and an industrious widow with four children who were assisted through the winter. Unnumbered children of whom half were orphans were the third category of people who received asylum. Indeed, Mrs. Branham pointed out that a large number of the beneficiaries were “deserted wives with their helpless children.” She implored that the “influence of good women in the land, and especially mothers, should be invoked to remedy this growing evil.” Both inside and outside the home, the need for assistance grew with “more calls from the really needy than ever before, and we painfully feel that our means are wholly inadequate to the large and increasing demands made upon the association.” Far from fostering indolence, a charge that was answered in the report, the WCA president, Mrs. Branham, exerted great effort to illustrate the worthiness of the inmates and the WCA home’s effectiveness in assisting the worthy and industrious victims of life’s uncertainties. The social position

of many of the women and their WCA's need of community support led the members to justify their actions.⁸⁷

The criticisms that WCA answered may well relate to the reaction in the community against the organization's endorsement of equality. Indoor relief work, on the other hand, was carefully couched within the gender-appropriate language of domesticity. Women were abandoned by their faithless husbands and left "unprotected" in the urban environment. The cure for social ills such as the desertion of wives lay in the "influence of good women . . . to remedy this . . . evil." While the language harkened to domesticity, the message clearly assigned the blame for the conditions of the women on men and, implicitly, on the gendered nature of the social structure that caused women to need the protection of a man. While the WCA eschewed discussion of equality in favor of the construct of moral superiority, the narrative they advanced carried the undercurrent of equality as the cure for the hardship single women faced in the city. Women and children needed to be saved from the pitfalls dug by men, and only women could save them.

While the language of rescuing errant sisters and equality had disappeared from the discourse, mention of the recent war and its effects were identified for the first time in the 1873 annual report. "A widow lady of refinement from the South" whose husband had invested in now-worthless Confederate war bonds had been reduced to penury. While on her way to Denver to work as a seamstress, her funds gave out in Kansas City and she found herself without means of support. After several days of inquiring for

⁸⁷Miller, 145. *DJC*, February 16, 1873, 4.

employment without success, she was referred to the home. “Notwithstanding her prejudices at first, it proved a home for the weary, a ‘cover for the storm.’” The WCA found employment for her in another town. Her “prejudices” no doubt were those of a Confederate widow who was forced by circumstances to seek assistance from an organization that was largely Northern in its membership and orientation. Her apprehension may have been heightened by her lack of familiarity with the voluntary sector in the Northern context. The report goes further to emphasize the catholicity of the WCA approach providing assistance, whether to former Confederates, the Irish, the Swedes, by stating that: “In the Home all creeds and nationalities are received, there being neither sectarianism or [sic] sectionalism.”⁸⁸ No mention is made as to whether African Americans were included in the equal treatment. No evidence exists in the record to indicate that this population received assistance from the WCA at this date. The story of the widow from the South offered the opportunity for the WCA to restate its gendered role in serving women and the highlight its commitment to serving Southerners as well as Northerners. The emphasis on a non-sectional approach reflects the desire, which was afoot in society at large, for reunion between the North and South and sensitivity on the part of the largely Northern membership of the WCA, Mrs. Coates prominent among them, toward the people in the area who had been loyal to the Southern cause.⁸⁹

⁸⁸*DJC*, February 16, 1873, 4.

⁸⁹The desire for reunion caused a retreat in the North from the “emanicipationist view” of the war. Rather, issues of race came to replace sectionalism as the dividing line in American memory. See David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University

The demands on the WCA, the city's only general relief agency, to provide relief in Kansas City intensified further in the mid-1870s due to increased population, the economic depression, and the natural disaster visited upon the region by a grasshopper invasion in Kansas in 1874 and Missouri in 1875. The agricultural disaster in Kansas was described in detail in a letter to the editor of the *DJC* by Riley M. Hoskinson of Burlingame, Osage County, Kansas, some 80 miles distant from Kansas City:

The grasshoppers were not the only cause of disaster. We had no rain in this part of the state from the fourteenth of November [1873] to the twentieth of September [1874]. Then came the cinch bugs in countless millions, which, in many places had destroyed nearly all the grain before the grasshoppers came . . . I had in six acres of fall wheat, ten acres of rye, four acres of spring wheat, ten acres of oats, sixteen acres of corn, four acres of millet, and two acres of potatoes. Of this I realized about five bushels of rye and twenty bushels of potatoes, all told.⁹⁰

In his diary some months earlier on September 1, 1874, merchant Thomas B. Bullene noted the intensely hot season and that "the prospect for a full trade looks quite gloomy." He continued with the observation, "The disaster to the corn crop will be felt especially in newly settled counties more seriously as this was the only [hope?] of the new settlers." Damage from grasshoppers extended from Eastern Kansas into western Missouri. Bullene observed on May 20, 1875, that "damage . . . is very great in nearly all Eastern Kansas and western Missouri." The extensive damage caused the governor of Missouri to set aside the day of June 13 for fasting and prayer. Bullene related that he "closed our

Press, 2001), 1-59. For insight into the function of historical memory as represented by the preponderance of ante bellum images in the U.S. Capitol, see Barry Schwartz, "The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory," *Social Forces* 61, no. 2 (1982), 374-402.

⁹⁰*DJC*, December 22, 1874, 2.

store at noon.”⁹¹ The tone of the WCA annual meeting in February 1876 noted the distress visited upon the population of Kansas City by the grasshoppers and a general economic depression. The financial report showed the substantial sum of \$951.72 that was received in the “grasshopper fund” between January 1, 1875, and February 1, 1876. Funding for grasshopper relief, presumably to assist refugees coming into Kansas City from the grasshopper-affected areas in Kansas and western Missouri, alone comprised nearly one-third of total budget of \$2812.67.⁹²

The annual report of 1876 reflected several changes in language and attitude on the part of the organization and marked a shift from their earlier equality approach. The shift toward a more elite membership was accompanied by a loss of membership and a conscious self-presentation of the organization as upper class. Spencerian language⁹³ emerged in descriptions of the poor, a self-identity of WCA members as “women of culture and refinement” emerged, and a call for more members to carry out the group’s work was announced. The report discussed the depressed economic conditions, noting that:

The winter of 1874-75 was indeed one long to be remembered for its severity, when the poor suffered uncommon hardships, not only from the intense and protracted weather, but from the lack of steady work, or from the greatly reduced wages. And while many a laboring man saw want staring him in the face, the mechanics and business men generally found themselves also straightened as

⁹¹Bullene Diaries.

⁹²*DJC*, February 15, 1876, 4.

⁹³Herbert Spencer’s 1855 work, *First Principles*, was the first to argue for the survival of fittest as applied to societies, which like organisms, evolve to higher forms. Meddling in the process through relief simply thwarts the natural evolution of society. Before Darwin, Spencer had united everything from protozoa to politics under one world-view. See Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, 5th Printing (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1944), 6.

never before, and even men of considerable property were admonished themselves of the need of strict economy . . . but charity is often perverted. There is a sham beggary . . . and in guarding against waste and imposture, the Women's Christian Association deserve [sic] special thanks.⁹⁴

This language of wariness of the poor represented a new attitude among the WCA members even as they continued to provide assistance. The self-description of the WCA members as “women of culture and refinement” who “. . . voluntarily overcome their reserve and shrinking timidity of their sex to engage in any labor for the relief of the unfortunate and distressed . . .” further indicated that the WCA followed the strictures of separate spheres and domesticity, rather than equality. The plea for more membership signals another substantial change: “We beg also for an increased membership. Let our working force be tripled.”⁹⁵

The shifting attitudes were caused by a number of factors, including the apparent loss of many members who were mentioned in the accounts of the WCA's activities during its first two years of existence. It signals an interest in attracting more of the so-called “right kind” of women; that is, women from high prestige backgrounds for the purpose of creating greater community among the emerging elite class and for strengthening business and social ties among the economic and social elite of the city. By early 1873, Mrs. Hicks, the newspaper editor's wife, Mrs. Householder, the newspaper publisher's wife, Mrs. Marlatt, a carpenter's wife, Mrs. Crider, Miss Rice, Mrs. Irwin, a Presbyterian minister's wife, Mrs. Bushong, a Methodist minister's wife,

⁹⁴*DJC*, February 15, 1876, 4.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*

and Mrs. Dr. Porter were not mentioned again in published reports. Mrs. Branham, a hominy mill owner's relative, was last mentioned in monthly meeting minutes from December of 1874. The City Directory of 1873 listed Hicks, Crider, and Porter as residents of Kansas City. Marlatt, Irwin, and Bushong were no longer in town. The presence or absence of Miss Rice, who was not identified by a first name, has not been confirmed.⁹⁶ The only woman known to be a minister's wife this time was the WCA president, Mrs. J. G. Roberts, whose husband was the Congregational minister. These members from the founding period were replaced by women who had not been mentioned previously, including Mrs. Ellison and Mrs. Ingersoll, whose husband had moved from being a bookkeeper in 1870 to the position of grain trader by 1877. The annual report of 1876 clearly signaled that the WCA had reached a point of substantial change by its sixth year of existence.⁹⁷ The organization's explicit orientation in its founding period toward equality, rescue, and the inclusion of non-elite women gave way by 1876 and beyond to a more elite membership. The membership consisted of fewer women than in the past. But the members by 1876 were women whose social and economic status was uniformly higher than the members in the past with husbands whose affluence and influence were able to advance the work of the organization. Some new and affluent women had become active in events and had probably joined the organization. These women included Mrs. Nettleton, the wife of a prominent railroad official, Mrs. Slavens, the wife of a prominent meatpacker, and Mrs. Cravens, the wife of

⁹⁶*City Directory*, 1873.

⁹⁷*DJC*, February 15, 1876, 4.

a local attorney. The days of working across class lines within the WCA were over. The less affluent members were gone. They were motivated to leave by the increasing dominance of the more affluent women who guided the organization in the direction of benevolence and away from explicit claims of equality or moral reform. Nonetheless, the WCA continued to attract financial support from a broad base that included the non-elite journeymen tailors, as well as Protestants of varying stripes, Roman Catholics, and Jews. As the WCA celebrated the sixth anniversary of its founding, its character gained an increasingly elitist orientation even as its broad base of financial support endured.

**“The Laborers are So Few and So Worn”
Responses to Relief, 1877 to 1880**

The WCA continued to serve as the only general charity in the city through the close of the decade even as the organization refocused on the maintenance of the working women’s home as its primary activity. The membership of the association became more elite, less numerous, but no less well funded by a broad base of ecumenical support. As the organization became more uniformly elite, the character of the organization’s activities increasingly conformed to the prevailing construction of activities appropriate to the female sex and to the Spencerian language of deserving and undeserving poor. These changes mark the hardening of the class structure in Kansas City and the willingness of the upper class to view the large gap between rich and poor as a phenomenon dictated by nature. This section will trace the interpersonal relations of the WCA members and supporters during this period, the relationship between the organization and the people it served, and the qualities of the aid recipients. By 1878, the

WCA began to contract its services. The organization wished to limit its activities to the gender-defined role of serving only women and children. To fill the gap in services, a male-led relief organization formed two years later, but with reluctance, to serve the relief needs of the general population.

The WCA report of January 1877 exhibited clear signs of the strain that was placed upon it as a result of a declining membership and increasing demands for services. Yet, the agency also enjoyed diverse sources of support in its work. Donations were reported this month, as they were in every monthly report. The socially and economically prominent Mrs. Ermine Case provided four cases of canned fruit. Mrs. A. H. Brown, whose husband's occupation was listed as a bricklayer in 1877, but who may have been a construction contractor, donated seven gallons of milk. Other people donated sweet corn, turkeys, and clothing. Reflecting support from people, primarily women, outside of the organization, Coates thanked volunteers, including Mrs. Ermine Case, for their assistance with the various aspects of staging the 1876 Christmas bazaar. Yet, the tensions underlying the organization are evident. Mrs. Coates noted that their aim is to assist everyone who needed help:

[It is a] herculean task to undertake to dispense charity to every claimant in a city like ours, in the freezing cold and in the famishing heat of summer; therefore, it is not well to lay at our door the sin of omission of duty, with which a few are ready to charge us. Much as we value their generosity in furnishing us the means therefore, while our main object is to defray the expense of the Home, we are ever ready and willing to render assistance in cases of extreme destitution, consistent with the means at our disposal.⁹⁸

⁹⁸*DJC*, January 9, 1877, 4.

As Coates made clear, the WCA's first priority remained the maintenance of the Home. Other relief would be provided as resources allowed.⁹⁹

Accounts of the WCA Christmas bazaar of 1877 demonstrated the increasingly elite, yet still ecumenical nature of the organization and its supporters. This account and much of the other reporting during these last years of the decade are drawn from the *Kansas City Mail*, a Democratic newspaper that, like the Republican *Daily Journal of Commerce*, made its columns available for the coverage of the WCA activities. *The Mail* described a larger bazaar than that of 1876. The benefit took place in the Exchange Building in a lushly decorated setting that exceeded the previous year's event which was held in a former drugstore. The dining hall of the previous year was referred to as a banquet hall, another indication that the event was grander than its predecessor. The attractions include the Loyal booth, which was "festooned with the true colors of patriotism" just over a decade after some Missourians were arrested for disloyalty; the Sweet Buy and Buy which sold confectionaries; the Mosswood Bower, which was decorated with moss from Florida and sold "exquisite ornaments" and rare minerals from Colorado, among other items; a flower stand staffed by three young ladies; a pavilion of young ladies, a symmetrical booth of "snowy whiteness" supplied with pottery from Mr. Longfellow, a beautiful inkstand from Shepard's, a wax doll from Matt Foster's store, and an elegant trousseau from Bullene, Moore and Emery; the music stand for musical performances; and the art gallery.¹⁰⁰ Unlike the newspaper account of the 1876 bazaar,

⁹⁹*DJC*, January 9, 1877, 4.

¹⁰⁰*Kansas City Mail*, December 10, 1877, 4.

this account failed to mention the names of the WCA members and other volunteers who staffed the various booths. It appears that the WCA increased the scale and the quality of the bazaar in keeping with its increasingly elite, but ecumenical audience.

While an attendance list of the event has not been located, the participants in the entertainment at the bazaar illustrate the elite, ecumenical nature of the event. For example, the newspaper reported that a program of eight pieces of music was performed under the management of Miss Sherlock and Mrs. Donnelly, who also performed in the program, along with two other members of the Sherlock family, a man with the last name of Limerick, and other members of the community.¹⁰¹ The Sherlock family owned a music school at 1203 Main Street at which Ada, Georgianna, and their parents taught, according to the 1880 city directory.¹⁰² They were also mentioned as members of the Pastor Dornblaser's English Lutheran Church.¹⁰³ Mrs. Donnelly was the wife of insurance and real estate broker, Bernard Donnelly. The Donnellys had lived in Kansas City since at least 1870, when they appeared in the census records. Mr. Donnelly was 30 at that time; Mrs. Donnelly was a mere twenty years of age. According to the 1870 census, Mr. Donnelly was born in Ireland and Mrs. Donnelly was born in Illinois. By 1870, the Donnellys already appeared to be prosperous with real property valued at \$7000 and personal property valued at \$400. By 1880 they lived at 7th & Forest streets. Mr. Donnelly was listed in a newspaper advertisement in 1880 as the secretary of the

¹⁰¹*Kansas City Mail*, December 10, 1877, 4.

¹⁰²*City Directory*, Kansas City, 1880.

¹⁰³*DJC*, December 25, 1874, 4.

Bank of Kansas City board of directors.¹⁰⁴ Mrs. Donnelly was a soprano. At the Christmas service at Father Dunn's Church, she sang Von Weber's "Mass in G" with Mrs. Kress (alto), Mrs. Sheppard (tenor) and Mr. Comber (basso); Professor Richter played the organ.¹⁰⁵ Samuel Limerick was a physician, whose office was located at 14 East Missouri Street. The name suggests Irish heritage and by extension adherence to the practice of the Roman Catholic faith. According to the 1880 census, both Dr. Limerick and his wife, Lilly, were born in Kentucky. He was 37 years of age in 1880, and she was 27.¹⁰⁶ The diversity of confession and uniformity of social class among the adults at the bazaar illuminated the fact that socio-economic status was the unifying force in the rapidly forming structure of Kansas City society.

The participation of the children of the elite further demonstrated the ecumenical quality of the bazaar. This Protestant-sponsored event included the children of elite Jewish families in the proceedings. The \$100 doll popularity contest for girls at the 1876 bazaar was replaced with popularity contests for both boys and girls at the 1878 bazaar. Renamed as simply the "popularity contest" for girls and the "pie-bald pony" contest for boys, the contest included children of many of the most prominent families of the city. Among the girls were the daughters of Mrs. Doggett and Mrs. Holden, WCA founders; Mr. Karnes, the prominent attorney; Mr. Slavens, the prominent meat packer, and the

¹⁰⁴For reasons that are not known, Mr. Donnelly was listed in the 1880 census as having been born in Ohio. It is difficult to discern whether he wished to obfuscate his foreign-born roots or a simple clerical error occurred.

¹⁰⁵U.S. Census, 1870, 1880, *Kansas City Mail*, December 15, 1880, 4; *Kansas City Mail*, December 27, 1879, 4.

¹⁰⁶U.S. Census, 1880.

daughters of Mr. Feineman, a wholesale liquor dealer who was previously mentioned as the president of B’Nai Jehudah; and Mr. Cahn, a wholesale clothing merchant (whose wife presented a \$25 donation to the WCA from the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society in 1873). Both Cahn and Feineman served with Mr. Holden, Mr. Coates, and Mr. St. Clair on the board of the First National Bank of Kansas City. The pie-bald pony contest included the sons of WCA members Doggett and Holden; the son of a future officer, Mrs. Nettleton; the son of F. B. Nofsinger, meat packer and physician; Mr. Slavens, meat packer; and Mr. Hammerslough, prominent merchant.¹⁰⁷ The 1878 bazaar was clearly a much higher-toned affair than that of 1876. The adults and children who participated in the 1878 Christmas bazaar represented an elite, ecumenical group that included Protestants, Catholics, and Jews of the merchant and professional class. The bazaar signaled the WCA’s transition to an organization that embraced elite benevolence and activities that were appropriate to the feminine sphere.¹⁰⁸

This upper class self-presentation by the WCA to the community reflected not only the organization’s class orientation, but also signaled the establishment of a well-defined social structure within one generation of the city’s founding. As the membership became uniformly upper class, the WCA adhered ever more closely to the language and activities of domesticity as befitted its membership. Gone were all traces of asserting moral authority, reforming society, and claiming equality. Rather, the goal was to

¹⁰⁷*Kansas City Mail*, December 10, 1877, 4.

¹⁰⁸Case describes how by 1877, the WCA’s resources were inadequate to carry out the work of the home and general city charity work. WCA members then decided to confine their labors to a definite branch of charity work – women and children. Theodore S. Case, *History of Kansas City, Missouri* (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason & Co., 1888), 168-169.

ameliorate conditions for poor, worthy women and children without passing judgment on the larger forces that led to their impoverishment. As the WCA grew ever more elite and gendered in its approach, its membership and its capacity to serve were hampered. In January 1879, the organization issued a “paper” for publication. The paper clearly reflected further retrenchment to the WCA’s original mission of serving “our own sex” through the residential Home and services to “our own sex in the city at large.” While the reports indicated that families were included under this rubric, the intention as in 1876 was to narrow the scope of their work. The paper indicated that membership was no longer a matter of simply signing and agreeing to the precepts of the WCA constitution. Rather, members paid a two dollar membership fee and identified themselves by their ability to participate as either active or associate members. The current officers indicated a high level of affluence and a recent affiliation with the organization in many cases. They included: Mrs. Agnes B. Allen (President), who was mentioned for the first time and whose husband (E. H. Allen) was a bank officer; Mrs. A. B. Pierce (Vice President), who was mentioned for the first time and whose husband (E. W. Pierce) was an insurance broker; and long-time members Mrs. Coates (Vice President), Mrs. O. C. Day (Treasurer), and Mrs. Ellison (recording secretary). The corresponding secretary was Mrs. Campbell, whose first involvement with the WCA was as a volunteer at the Christmas bazaar of 1876 where she staffed the candy bower with Mrs. Ingersoll and Mrs. Ellison. This communication renewed an earlier plea for more members. At this point, only 23 women belonged to the WCA – down substantially from 70 members in the earlier part of the decade. Only nineteen of these members assumed

committee work. The result necessitated “. . . double and in some cases treble labor upon them. But this cannot continue, and we hope that we have only to gain the attention of benevolent women of our city to increase our numbers.” Underlining the gendered appeal for support, the paper continued: “Your husbands, fathers, and friends have most generously supplied us with funds for this year’s work. Will the mothers, wives, and daughters refuse us their active aid and sympathy?” The consequences of inaction were dire: “Must this, our sole charity [the city’s sole general charity] fail because the laborers are so few and so worn?”¹⁰⁹ By 1879, the gradual transition of the WCA membership to an elite Protestant membership was complete. The first hints of the process were discernable as early as 1873. Fewer women joined the organization.

The assumption of the gendered role of female benevolence appeared complete by the time of the WCA monthly meeting of December 9, 1879. The census at the Home remained constant at nineteen inmates. Bible reading took place, the first time this activity was mentioned, and was led by Mrs. Robson, whose name had not previously appeared. Signaling a decrease in the involvement of the WCA members in the provision of direct services to the residents of the home, the minutes encouraged members who “. . . will find it convenient to be present occasionally.” In addition, the summary of the meeting included a mention that “. . . the benevolent ladies have offered toys and candies for poor children. The method of distribution will be announced when decided upon.” This is the first time this type of general relief activity was mentioned; it was one that did not involve assistance based on visits or determination of need, but rather spoke of a

¹⁰⁹*Kansas City Mail*, January 27, 1879, 4.

maternal, nurturing role appropriate to the female sphere. Similarly, the beneficiaries of benevolence who were mentioned in the report are all women: Mrs. Harbour, Mrs. Harris, Mrs. Kollbury, and others. Moreover, “Homes are assured for three orphan children.”¹¹⁰ In these ways, the organization’s shift to benevolence as the organizational principle solidified. The elite nature of the WCA membership shifted the organization’s work toward benevolence, the appropriate female gender role of elite Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Congregational women. Few, if any, traces of the evangelical emphasis on rescue or reform associated with Methodism or the Quaker emphasis on female equality remained.

The expressed desire of the WCA members to assist their own sex and children was reflected in the changing language they used to describe their activities. Not since the monthly meeting of February 1873 were men specifically mentioned as recipients of relief. While no documentation has been located, it is nonetheless likely that men continued to receive some level of assistance because the WCA was the sole provider of general charity in the city. It is highly probable that men were included among the families who received assistance. Mrs. Coates related in her minutes of January 1877, that she visited nine families and provided them with assistance totaling between \$22 and \$25 from the WCA and additional assistance from what she referred to as private sources, perhaps her own. She also “. . . furnished labor to quite a number, compensating them liberally therefor [sic], believing this to be the best kind of charity; inasmuch as it leads to

¹¹⁰*Kansas City Mail*, December 9, 1879.

promote industry and self-reliance.”¹¹¹ Thus, the visiting of poor families by volunteers continued. The minutes of February 1878, indicated that twenty such visits were made in the prior month and they “. . . found much destitution.” Demonstrating that adherence to rules was a precondition for receiving assistance. The minutes reflected that two inmates were dismissed from the Home “on account of disobedience to regulations.”¹¹²

The paper issued by the WCA and printed on January 27, 1879, sharpened the WCA’s self-definition. The Home, which had been referred to as the “Working Women’s Home” in earlier years, was now exclusively referenced by the shortened appellation. The Home seeks to assist “. . . our own sex in the city, who are strangers, or unprotected, or destitute, giving preference to those having their birth or home in Kansas City.” Children without parents will be admitted “. . . only when humanity obliges us.” A secondary mission of the WCA was to “. . . render assistance to the destitute of our own sex in the city at large, when brought to our notice by whomsoever.” The method of seeking such outside assistance was described as well. The weekly visitors (WCA members):

. . . meet applicants for assistance from the city, who, if they are bearing notes from writers known to the committee, or recommended by a previous committee, are helped at once; if unknown, the name and residence, if any, are noted for future use. If found deserving or in suffering, help is given by orders for food, fuel or rent. The giving of money is infrequent and not encouraged.¹¹³

¹¹¹*Kansas City Mail*, January 9, 1877.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, February 12, 1878, 4.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, January 27, 1879, 4.

In this manner, sixty families received visits and some of them several times. Visits for the prior year totaled three hundred.¹¹⁴

The WCA presented itself as a relief organization that assisted only women – as well as children when necessary, a policy that became explicit by its paper of January 1879. That the organization continued, nonetheless, to assist men in limited circumstances was corroborated by a comment in a newspaper article that stated that “professional paupers and tramps go to the city authorities for assistance more frequently than they do to the Women’s Christian Association.”¹¹⁵ With its assistance to women and children as well as to men in limited circumstances, the WCA continued to assist as resources allowed. The WCA preferred, however, not to publicize or encourage this aspect of its work. Rather, the elite women conserved their limited resources to assist women and children – the appropriate objects of their benevolent concern.

The need for a community response to poor relief became apparent in December of 1879 by which time the WCA had contracted its desired scope of services and no organization had formed to step into the void. A front page article, “The Poor at Your Door” in the December 12, 1879 issue of the *Kansas City Mail* highlighted the need for charity in the city. The article shared that the mayor had but \$500 to disburse in alms, the Provident Association had not yet “come to practical deeds,”¹¹⁶ and that the “Ladies Aid society” [sic] is “still doing a good work.” *The Mail* advised the charitably inclined to

¹¹⁴*Kansas City Mail*, January 27, 1879, 4.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, December 12, 1879, 1.

¹¹⁶A Provident Association formed in August of 1879 with Mr. J. T. Howenstein as its moving force. About 40 prominent businessmen joined the organization, but it did not become active and disbanded. W.H. Miller, *The History of Kansas City* (Kansas City: Birdsall & Miller, 1881), 186.

send their contributions to the “Ladies Home.” The reporter spoke with Mrs. S. B. (her husband’s initials) Armour, wife of the packing house magnate, who was the Vice President of the WCA. She indicated that the organization hoped to “get up a carnival of authors entertainment that would net some money to the association.”¹¹⁷ This response appeared wholly inadequate to the problem of poverty and the inadequacy of available relief. There is no indication that the “carnival of authors” event took place. The WCA distribution of toys and candy to poor children seemed a gendered response to need in the community. According to the *Kansas City Mail* of December 27, 1879, “five hundred little ones” received candy and toys as well as “clothes, socks, shoes, and other substantial articles of this kind.” As the newspaper reported:

All day long youthful applicants for charity applied at the Home. The children were admitted at the front door of the home and taken back to the dining room. Here were half a dozen barrels containing confectionary, pop corn and such things. From this room, the most ragged youngsters were taken to the back parlor and given clothes and shoes. The children were passed out of the back door to make room for the incoming squads. The applicants’ ages ranged from three to fourteen years. The children came from all quarters of the city.¹¹⁸

In the first mention of service to African Americans, the newspaper noted that “about one-fourth of the applicants were colored.”¹¹⁹ An account of the mayor’s Christmas dinner for the poor followed the description of the WCA event, and relates that 381 poor people attended, apparently by prior application. The proportion of “white to colored”

¹¹⁷*Kansas City Mail*, December 12, 1879, 1.

¹¹⁸ *The Mail* is the Democratic newspaper. The newspaper evidences a distinctly racist attitude in its coverage in other stories. It is difficult to discern the newspaper’s reasons in this instance for its estimates of the African American population that received assistance. The Republican *DJC* and the *Star* take a more evenhanded stance with regard to African Americans.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*

was stated as five to three. Echoing concern about women, in particular, who had “seen better days,” the story mentioned that 40 of the women were:

. . . of the better class who never asked aid before. It was really a touching sight to see these ladies, some of whom had been reared in the lap of luxury, applying for something to eat. They would approach and give their names in a low tone of voice as if fearing some one [sic] would hear them. They still have some of the pride of their younger days left, and it was plain to be seen that it was very humiliating for them to appear there as objects of charity.¹²⁰

These women were no doubt deeply affected by depression and panic that struck the nation and by other adversities unique to the Midwest. W. H. Miller, Secretary of the Board of Trade, succinctly summarized the economic challenges in the closing years of the 1870s in his 1881 history of the city and surrounding area. Miller indicated that the Kansas City economy had recovered from 1873 panic by the middle of 1876. Natural disaster, however, struck again in 1878 in the form of a mild winter and wet spring that depressed crops as well as slaughtering houses and the livestock trade before radiating out to the larger economy. The First National Bank and the Commercial National Bank failed in January of 1878; the Mastin Bank failed in August of that year.¹²¹ The exact circumstances that led to the impoverishment of these women are not known. What is certain is that a portion of the “middling sorts” had suffered economic loss, the distinctions between rich and poor were growing, and that the need for a community-

¹²⁰*The Kansas City Mail*, December 27, 1879, 4.

¹²¹Miller, 145. Litigation concerning the Mastin Bank continued until at least July 1886. *The Kansas City Star*, July 7, 1886, 1. The history of the YMCA indicated that the effects of the panic had largely dissipated by 1880. YMCA, 24.

wide approach to poor relief became evident by the end of 1879 as the city approached its 1880 population of more than 55,000 inhabitants.

The WCA, by the end of its first decade, shifted its construction of appropriate gender roles. Seventy Protestant ecumenical women in a new frontier town organized the association in 1870. They furtively entered the public realm through their relief and rescue activities. Their membership reflected a broad set of priorities ranging from benevolence, to rescue and reform, and equality. As the decade progressed and the social structure of the community took shape, the membership of the WCA became increasingly elite and focused on activities deemed appropriate to the female sex – the care of women and children. The organization no longer visited brothels or hosted speakers on the topic of female equality. Their ability and willingness to provide relief services decreased in response to increased demands for their services, a smaller and highly elite membership, and their embrace of the domestic sphere.

The year 1880 proved pivotal in the formation of a general relief agency. The newly minted *Kansas City Evening Star* with its publisher, William Rockhill Nelson, joined other newspapers and journalists to spur the male business elite to action. *The Star* on October 25 published an editorial in support of the rival *Journal's* push for the creation of a charity organization to provide systematic relief and careful investigation of circumstances of applicants.¹²² The Kansas City Press Club endorsed the formation of a charity organization patterned after those of Eastern cities at their meeting on November

¹²²*Kansas City Evening Star*, October 25, 1880, 2.

18, 1880.¹²³ By November 23, *The Star* announced that a number of prominent men had gathered the prior evening at the Coates House to form the Provident Association (different from the failed organization that was organized in 1879), for the purpose of extending relief to the worthy poor of the city.¹²⁴ In addition to being all male, the first officers of the Provident Association were uniformly members of the economic and social elite. According to Theodore S. Case, the organization's first president, the Provident Association assisted 569 families, representing 2132 people with aid totaling \$3550 in its first year of operation.¹²⁵ By contrast, the WCA's income was \$2813 in 1876 (the most recent prior year for which annual financial data has been identified). This amount of money provided for the housing of a total of 250 inmates through the course of the year and assistance to between 75 and 95 applicants; whether these were individuals or families cannot be determined with the information that is available.¹²⁶ With the establishment of the Provident Association, a method of providing assistance to more people became available.

¹²³*Kansas City Evening Star*, November 18, 1880, 1. The Star's coverage of African American refugees living in the Armstrong area of Kansas City, Kansas, was a part of the newspaper's justification for a strong endorsement of the formation of a general relief society. These refugees were part of the Exoduster movement in which former slaves from Tennessee, Louisiana, Mississippi, and elsewhere migrated to Kansas. See Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction*, (1976; repr., New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), vi-xv. As many as 20,000 Exodusters arrived in St. Louis in 1879 and 1880 on their way to Kansas. The migrants were penniless and falsely believed that the federal government would pay for their passage from St. Louis to Kansas. The African American and white communities in St. Louis and from across the country provided relief and the cost of passage to Kansas, where the Exodusters first landed at Wyandotte, until the numbers overwhelmed the capacity of the community to assist and then at Lawrence and Topeka. Bryan M. Jack, *The St. Louis African American Community and the Exodusters*, (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 28, 69-75.

¹²⁴*Kansas City Evening Star*, November 23, 1880, 2.

¹²⁵Case, 164.

¹²⁶“WCA Secretary's Annual Report,” *Kansas City Journal of Commerce*, February 15, 1876.

The founding of the Provident Association was not a gendered response by which male-led relief supplanted female-led efforts in charity in response to an economic collapse or natural disaster.¹²⁷ Rather, a substantial void existed in charity work in Kansas City that the WCA attempted to fill in its early years and turned away from in the later years of the decade. The Provident Association formed only after the WCA had contracted its role and at the urging of two of the city's major newspapers and the Press Club. Of the nineteen members of the Provident Association board listed by Case, only the wives of five members (Coates, Nettleton, Wheeler, Campbell, and Thacher) were currently or recently active members of the WCA¹²⁸ Clearly, the WCA had grown increasingly elite and as a consequence acquiesced to the gender roles of women's assigned sphere, which led the members to confine their role to that of serving women and children.¹²⁹ The founding of the male-led Provident Association no doubt was greeted the women with a sense of relief as they would no longer be responsible for providing general relief to the community, a role they were unable to fill.

By late 1880, then, the relationship among class, confession, and gender became clear. The diverse currents of thought within the WCA in 1870 rapidly gave way to uniformity of benevolent thought, upper class Protestantism, and a gendered role in relief. Uniformity carried with it a reduced vigor, a reduced membership, and reduced

¹²⁷ Miller, 199. Miller relates that there was rapid growth in 1878 through 1880 in population and economic activity. Then, as now, the benefits of economic growth are not evenly distributed, leaving many people in need of assistance. W. H. Miller, *The History of Kansas City* (Birdsall & Miller, 1881), 199.

¹²⁸Case, 164-165.

¹²⁹In Kansas City as in Rochester, NY, upper class women tended to be active in benevolence, which was supported by the male business elite. See Hewitt, 44-175.

resources. The women who belonged to the WCA by this time were of the elite economic strata, a tier of society that solidified gradually as the social structure of the frontier community settled in. The women's organization had shed any pretense of staking a claim of equality and accepted the role assigned by their sphere – the care of women and children and eventually the care of orphans and the elderly. Their bold efforts to reconcile their early feminist leanings with the ideology of separate spheres and moral superiority had failed; the spheres triumphed even as their organization enjoyed the support of a wide range of non-elite and elite supporters and maintained its ecumenical approach. The elite men of the community had begun, but not without substantial prodding, to organize the city-wide general relief work that had been performed by women throughout much of the previous decade. The consolidation of male power in civic matters hardly surprises the experienced observer. That the elite women voluntarily left the field by explicitly contracting the scope of their endeavors and that men claimed it with hesitation run surprisingly counter to the expected narrative. Male primacy in local relief in 1880 and beyond set a new and different course with greater resources and a focus on determining fault, rooting out deceit and indolence, and providing corrective measures as prescribed by friendly visitors.

CHAPTER 4

“BACK TO THEIR FRIENDS”: THE RELUCTANT RESPONSE OF MALE-LED RELIEF, 1880 – WORLD WAR I

H. F. DeVol, the president of the city’s male-led relief organization, the Provident Association, reflected upper and middle class concerns about destitution in Kansas City in the organization’s 1886 annual report. DeVol wrote: “. . . doubtless your noble generosity has been returned to you in many fold. Surely your hearts have been made glad in having the means and contributing the same to the relief of the suffering.” At the same time, DeVol implored his readers to “. . . send all those begging at your door to the Provident rooms. By doing so, you will be protected against impostors and annoyances and protect your neighbors as well.”¹

DeVol’s comments capture the ambivalent attitude of the middle and upper classes toward the poor during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century in Kansas City. There was a desire to assist the poor at least to the point of reducing the presence of annoyance to the public and, thereby, to relieve suffering. At the same time, DeVol expressed a clear disdain for people in poverty. The poor were annoyances at best and impostors at worst. While not recognized by DeVol, the conditions of poverty and the poor in Kansas City were, in large part, a consequence of several inter-related factors: the explosive growth in Kansas City’s population following the Civil War, Kansas City’s role as a railroad hub for the

¹*Provident Association Annual Report*, 1886, 4. Vertical Files, Kansas City, Missouri Public Library. DeVol arrived in Kansas City from Ohio and carried the rank of general. He was a resident of Quality Hill. Pierre R. Porter, “Quality Hill – A Study in Heredity,” *The Missouri Historical Review* 35, no. 4 (July 1941), 568.

nation, and the new economic structure that arose at the same time. Kansas City would struggle with this triumvirate of forces over the following decades as its civic leadership sought to embrace a progressive vision and agenda in the face of sustained opposition from the emerging political machines.

Kansas City's history in this period of rapid industrial expansion was marked by social and economic displacement of large numbers of people who passed through and lived within the city's borders. This displacement occurred as a result of larger economic and social forces that engulfed the nation. As the city continued its dramatic trajectory in population growth during the years from the end of the Civil War through the end of World War I, its population was buffeted by the rise of corporate capitalism, the cyclical nature of the economy, and the resulting mass unemployment that created persistent and often severe economic and social dislocation. Recurrent natural disasters in the region such as floods, tornadoes, and droughts further increased the suffering of the poor and heightened the effects of social and economic dislocation and the need for relief in the new city.

This chapter will examine the Provident Association, the male-led organization that was founded in 1880 and assumed the role of a general relief agency that had been previously filled by the Women's Christian Association (WCA). Unlike the assumption of the Eastern thesis discussed in Chapter 3, the Provident Association was not formed at a time of crisis, but rather at a time when the female-led organization simply could no longer meet the general relief needs of the growing population. As the population grew in the years following its founding, the Provident Association evolved to address this

need. This chapter also will look closely at the rise and fall of the Board of Public Welfare, which was established in 1910, and will situate relief efforts within the context of national trends in relief and attitudes toward the poor as expressed in the popular literature of the day. Selected annual reports of the city's male-led relief agency, the Provident Association, and the annual reports of the city's innovative and widely replicated Board of Public Welfare, which was founded in 1910, will be used to assess the size, scope, and methods of relief activities in Kansas City. In addition, the diary of a transient worker, Robert Saunders, who passed through Kansas City during the height of the Progressive movement reforms, will illuminate the conditions of poverty and transience that affected a large percentage of the population. These reports as well as newspaper accounts and other documents will also assess the correspondence between attitudes and approaches to relief in Kansas City as compared with the trends in other cities across the nation. The chapter will argue that Kansas City was uniquely positioned as a regional hub serving a large, poor, rootless population and, as such, responded to perceived threats to public order in a class-based and profoundly gendered way as middle and upper class policy makers, as well as the political machines, sought to impose their vision of class and gender on the poor of the city. This examination of the development of systems of poor relief in Kansas City will shed important light on a topic that has received little scholarly attention,² yet holds great promise in creating an informed understanding of systems of poor relief in a burgeoning Midwestern metropolis that

² Publications for a general audience have appeared over years. See Douglas Kingsbury, *A Brief History of Philanthropy in Kansas City* (Kansas City, MO: The Clearinghouse for Midcontinent Foundations, 1980).

served as a major point of connection for the commercial, agricultural, and transportation sectors of the Midwest.³

The chapter will compare the vast economic and social transformations that affected Kansas City during this period with the experiences of other American cities during the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era. Yet, Kansas City's position as a rapidly growing regional Midwestern commercial center set it apart from other cities. The transformations of particular importance to this chapter are the fading away of entrepreneurial capitalism and its replacement with corporate capitalism, the varying and oftentimes conflicting constructions of manhood by the upper and middle classes as contrasted with those of the working class, and the societal understanding of the overarching process of economic and social progress in this new age of urbanization, industrialization, and immigration.

Building on Richard Hofstadter's view that the homogeneity of society broke down because of these three interrelated factors,⁴ Robert Wiebe set the stage for vigorous scholarly discussion of the effects of these vast societal changes. Wiebe argued that the transition from the small town to the large city as the predominant way of life resulted in

³ See Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Noblesse Oblige: Charity and Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago, 1849-1929*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), and Mary Ann Irwin, "'Going About and Doing Good': The Politics of Benevolence, Welfare, and Gender in San Francisco, 1850-1880," *Pacific Historical Review* 68 (1999). For an extensive discussion of the impact of the transient labor force in the United States and related public policy in Kansas City, see Kathleen Stilwell, "'If You Don't Slip': The Hobo Life, 1911-1916," (PhD Diss. University of Missouri, 2004), 92-164; and, Tobias Frank Higbie, *Indispensable Outcasts: Hobo Workers and the Community in the American Midwest, 1880-1930* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 6-210.

⁴Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform from Bryan to F. D. R.* (New York: Knopf, 1955), 8. Hofstadter argued that the Yankee Protestants viewed government as a moralizing force and that the Europeans who were immigrating at that time acted through hierarchy and personal loyalty.

a “distended” society that suffered from the lack of a core and operated as “island communities” with weak communication, education, and a lack of a structure to manage social and economic changes. The middle class embrace of the bureaucratic approach to regulating an otherwise unregulated society lay at the heart of Progressive ideology.⁵

Where Hofstadter and Wiebe saw white middle and upper class adaptation to corporate capitalism and bureaucracy, Paul Boyer, T. J. Jackson Lears, and Alan Trachtenberg saw discomfort. In the societal response to the poor, Boyer posited the thesis of a desire by the middle and upper classes to seek a return to the intimacy of the village.⁶ Lears believed that the cultural response of the middle and upper classes to the related transition from entrepreneurial capitalism to the corporate variety was more profound than Hofstadter understood. Lears ascribed the shift from a Protestant culture to a consumer culture as a therapeutic response to their unsettled view of the rapidly changing societal conditions.⁷ Similarly, Trachtenberg argued that the “incorporation” or general process of change and the re-organization and re-making of perceptions with the emergence of a changed, more tightly structured society with hierarchical control wretched society from its cultural norms and familiar values.⁸

⁵Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967), 11-149.

⁶Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Social Order in America, 1820 to 1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 149.

⁷T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Anti-Modernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), 4-58.

⁸Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1982), 3-11.

Stephen Skowronek and Martin Sklar approached the effects of the economic, social, and cultural transitions in this period from the standpoint of change in the fundamental structure of the American governmental enterprise. Skowronek argued that courts and political parties formed the bulwark of American government in the early American state. That structure was replaced by a national bureaucracy. This shift led to confusion about institutional purposes, authoritative controls, and governmental boundaries.⁹ In fleshing out the nature of that bureaucracy, Sklar found that the debate centered on whether the law should allow or prevent the corporate reorganization of the political economy and whether the reorganization would take a statist or non-statist approach. It was through the non-statist regulatory consensus that corporate capitalism would be accommodated to representative government. This corporate liberalism approach resulted in the shifting of decisions away from electoral, party, and legislative politics and to the executive, judicial and extra electoral regulatory bodies of administrators that insulated policy from the vagaries of electoral politics. This approach, adopted in fits and starts in Kansas City, pacified populism, accommodated proprietary or entrepreneurial capitalism, and contained socialism.¹⁰

Just as the changing nature of the economy wrought fundamental change in politics, it also brought significant change in how society constructed race, gender and especially masculinity and the way society explained the natural order of humanity.

⁹Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 29-35.

¹⁰Martin Sklar, *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism, 1890-1916* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 433-438.

Building on the work of scholars such as Barbara Fields who argued that race is a social construct and white supremacy was a political program to re-enforce white power and privilege¹¹, scholars such as David R. Roediger, Gail Bederman, and Matthew Frye Jacobson examined the construction of race in the early industrial period. Where Roediger treated blacks and working class whites as largely undifferentiated groups,¹² Bederman argued that for white men in the late 1800s and early 1900s, “whiteness was both a palpable fact and a manly ideal” that brooked no threat by otherwise manly individuals, such as boxer Jack Johnson, who happened to be black.¹³ Jacobson argued that race resides in politics and culture and not in nature and traces the construction of various ethnic groups as white during the period of mass European immigration.¹⁴

Gail Bederman’s argument encompassed the shift from manly restraint and the manly independent entrepreneur to a rougher working class masculinity that began to appeal to the middle class.¹⁵ Kristen Hoganson argued that this cultural shift away from manliness to masculinity, and the need to re-enforce masculinity in society that was perceived as becoming feminized, forms the basis to explain the Spanish-American and

¹¹Barbara Fields, Ideology and Race in American History, in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*, ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 151, 156.

¹²David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, rev. ed. 1999 (London, Verso), 115-127. This treatment is woven throughout the work and is especially event in these pages.

¹³Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 5.

¹⁴Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 8-17.

¹⁵Bederman, 13-19.

Philippine-American wars.¹⁶ This new view of masculinity dovetailed with the survival of the fittest philosophy propounded by Herbert Spencer and his American apostle, William Graham Sumner. According to Hofstadter, theirs was a rationalistic Calvinism in which humanity's relation to nature was as hard and demanding as the relationship to God in the Calvinist system. This rugged individualistic interpretation of Darwin fit well with the American image of itself as engaged in a tooth and claw process of natural selection.¹⁷

Other voices attempted to ameliorate the effects of societal evolution. Among them were John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and Julius Rosenwald. These so-called scientific philanthropists sought to elevate society through sweeping changes that would offer opportunity to the poor for self-improvement.¹⁸ Carnegie's support for libraries across the United States was but one example. Through these broad interventions, these philanthropists viewed themselves as acting at the wholesale level. They did not seek to assist individuals, an approach scientific philanthropists disparaged as retail philanthropy to be engaged in by relief organizations. Their goal, not unlike that of Theodore Roosevelt, was to mitigate the harshest aspects of unbridled corporate

¹⁶Kristen Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 8-9.

¹⁷Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought, 1860-1915* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), 10, 201.

¹⁸The term Scientific Philanthropy is used in two different senses in this period. The Scientific Philanthropists like Carnegie and Rockefeller were looking for measurable outcomes from their wholesale interventions in society. The second sense in which the term is used is in association with the application of modern scientific principles in relief work. As will be discussed later, the friendly visitors of the Charity Organization Society movement sought to apply the latest scientific principles to diagnosing deficiencies in the individual households of the poor and prescribing remedies. This commitment to scientific approaches in relief evolved over time into social work as a profession. See Walter I. Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America*, 6th Ed (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 233-250.

capitalism. Though their emphases and approaches can be criticized, these scientific philanthropists strove to implement sweeping change in society. Among other successes, they profoundly changed the delivery of medical education, the structure of higher education, the availability of libraries, and the effectiveness of public health interventions. In doing so, these leading corporate capitalists attempted, in essence, to save the capitalist system from itself.¹⁹ The actions of these Gilded Age titans were widely reported in the press and were well known to Kansas Citians.

The Social Gospel movement sought to counter Social Darwinism and to critique Scientific Philanthropy's emphasis on wholesale intervention. Rather, the Social Gospel movement implored churches and the larger society to extend aid to the poor whose condition, they believed, was the result of societal inequity, rather than personal moral failings.²⁰ A significant popular voice of the Social Gospel appeared in 1896 with the publication of the best-selling novel, *In His Steps*. In it, Charles M. Sheldon, writing from his vantage point 60 miles west of Kansas City in Topeka, Kansas, provided a stinging critique both of the state of society and the apathy of the Protestant Church. His writing offered a window into in the crushing social needs of the age that grew out of social and economic dislocation. "If church members were all doing as Jesus would do,

¹⁹Judith Sealander, "Curing Evils at their Source: The Arrival of Scientific Giving." In *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*, ed. Lawrence J. Friedman and Mark D. McGarvie (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 217-225. Rosenwald and Carnegie also provided substantial support of African American institutions such as the Kansas City YMCA and the Tuskegee Institution. *The Rising Son* (Kansas City, MO) May 1, 1903, 1. More than a Building: A Story of the Kansas City, Missouri, Young Men's Christian Association, (Kansas City, MO: Western Baptist Publishing Company, 1934), 81-84.

²⁰Sealander, 226.

could it remain true that armies of men would walk the streets for jobs and find the saloon their best friend?”²¹

The political, social, economic and philosophical transitions that affected the country at this time were also much in evidence as Kansas City. The interplay of these forces can be seen in the emerging metropolis, which benefited from an increasing population, a diverse economic base, and a society that had begun to identify as Kansas Citians, rather than as people who had been transplanted from various states and regions and remained loyal to the norms and folkways of their prior homes. Kansas City leaders took conscious steps to become more like other cities. In doing so, Kansas City adopted approaches to poor relief that were similar to those of other cities.

Kansas City as Regional Hub

Fulfilling its founders’ dreams of growth and prominence, Kansas City grew rapidly in population and economic activity. Yet growth brought new challenges, most prominently the pressing question of how to deal with a large rootless population, a large portion of which was made so by the vagaries of the corporate capitalist economy. The transient population arrived in town on one of the 34 operating railroads that made Kansas City a major regional rail hub by 1913. By comparison, Indianapolis had fifteen railroads and Cincinnati had nine.²² The city, which claimed 32,260 people in 1870,

²¹ Charles M. Sheldon, *In His Steps*, reprint ed., (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing, Inc., 2005), 244. For more information on the Social Gospel and the philosophies of Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch; see Max J. Skidmore, *Legacy to the World: A Study of America’s Political Ideas* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 241-242.

²²Board of Public Welfare, *4th Annual Report* (April 15, 1912 to April 22, 1913), 303.

grew to 55,785 in 1880, 132,716 in 1890, and 163,752 in 1900. By 1910, Kansas City boasted a population of 248,381 and by 1920, 324,410.²³ The goal of the city's economic and social leaders was for these new residents to integrate themselves into the city, secure a job, or "go back to their friends."

By 1910, the city population proved to be a diverse lot. The federal census indicates that 62 percent of Kansas City's population was white and of native parentage. Native whites with foreign or mixed parentage accounted for eighteen percent of the population, while ten percent of the population was foreign born. So-called "colored people" comprised nearly ten percent of the population.²⁴ In all then, nearly 40 percent of the population was comprised of people with at least one foreign-born parent or were foreign-born themselves. In addition to native-born whites and blacks, the non-native residents were from a variety of places, including Germany, Ireland, Italy, and Eastern Europe.²⁵

Kansas City's presence as a regional commercial hub attracted a variety of industries, including the transshipment of cattle by rail from Western towns to other cities for slaughter. The first cattle packing operation in Kansas City, E. W. Pattison & J. W. L.

²³Roy Ellis, "A Civic History of Kansas City, Missouri," (Ph.D. Diss. Columbia University, 1930), 36.

²⁴U.S. Department of the Treasury, Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of the United States (1902), 42-43.

²⁵William M. Reddig, *Tom's Town: Kansas City and the Pendergast Legend* (Philadelphia; New York: Lippincott, 1947; reprint ed., Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1986), 23. Because Kansas City was in Missouri, rather than what was understood to be the "Promised Land" of Kansas, Kansas City did not receive the thousands of African American Exodusters who migrated from the South to Kansas in 1879. See Glen Schwendemann, "The "Exodusters" on the Missouri," *The Kansas Historical Quarterly* 29 (Spring 1963), 26. In the population of 1900, the proportion of the African American population had fallen to five percent of the total or 161,234 people.

Slavens, opened in 1868. Plankinton & Armour opened the second plant two years later in 1870.²⁶ The development of refrigerated railroad cars enabled Kansas City to become a meat packing center with 175 acres of concrete-floored cattle pens. Soap factories, timber and lumber, and the distribution of agricultural implements were important industries as well.²⁷ Through the advent of rail transportation, Kansas City became a leading grain market, flour milling center, and location for industries that often accompany meat packing plants. The volume of wheat handled in Kansas City grew from 687,000 bushels in 1870 to 1,820,297 bushels in 1876 and to 94,915,000 by 1929. The increase in the volume of corn trading was equally impressive.²⁸

While the story of Kansas City's growth and expansion may ring with the self-aggrandizing boosterism of a Commercial Club (the precursor of the Chamber of Commerce) promotional brochure, conditions for the newly arriving laborers were far from ideal. The booming industries provided expanded employment; yet the city and the region were teeming with newcomers, too many willing laborers, in fact, for the available supply of steady work. Even in the growing economy of the time, by the mid-1880s, the supply of labor often outstripped the supply of jobs.²⁹

²⁶ Ellis, 40.

²⁷ Garwood, 121-129.

²⁸ Ellis, 40.

²⁹“The fame of Kansas City for growth and prosperity has attracted large numbers of the working classes, more than can be employed. These working class people then become destitute of means and must either be sent back or provided with assistance,” Comments of President DeVol, *Provident Association Annual Report*, 1886, 5.

The largely transient working class population experienced economic dislocation as it endured a series of cyclical economic panics and natural disasters during the 1880s. These natural and man-made occurrences included the great flood of 1881, the tornados of 1883 and 1886, the real estate collapse of 1889, and the prolonged national depression of the 1890s.³⁰ The harsh winter of 1893 also had a profound impact in Kansas City, throughout the Midwest, and along the East Coast.³¹ The shift from entrepreneurial to corporate capitalism in national and local economies meant that poverty was no longer episodic, dispersed and characterized by the migration of transient people seeking work. The individual and isolated qualities of unemployment were replaced under the corporate capitalist structure by the new phenomenon of mass unemployment.³²

Economic dislocation on the scale that it was experienced in urban America and specifically in Kansas City had been largely unknown prior to the late nineteenth century. As R. H. Tawney amplified in his well-known introduction to Max Weber's classic work, *The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism*, capitalism as an economic system

³⁰ Kingsbury, 10-11. Concerning the tornado of 1886, see the *Provident Association Annual Report*, 1886, 5. The tornado of 1886 killed 15 children at the Lathrop School located at 8th and May streets. See Rich Montgomery and Shirl Kasper, *Kansas City: An American Story* (Kansas City, MO: Kansas City Star Books, 1999), 109.

³¹ Barbara Levy Simon, *The Empowerment Tradition in American Social Work* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 61.

³² Kevin Fox Gotham. "Constructing the Segregated City: Housing, Neighborhoods, and Racial Division in Kansas City from 1880 to Present," (Ph.D. Diss. University of Kansas, 1997), 103. For more information on the effects of the transition from entrepreneurial to corporate capitalism on American see Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1982), 3-8. For a discussion of the effects of corporate capitalism on the American state, see Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 4-35. For information on the effect on corporate capitalism on the development of the American regulatory structure, see Martin Sklar, *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism, 1890 – 1916, The Market, The Law, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 438-441.

comprised of the organized labor of legally free wage earners for profit by the owner of capital or by the owner's agents is a modern phenomenon which had a pervasive effect on society.³³ This type of capitalism, Weber argued, was made possible by the accumulation of capital as an outgrowth of the Protestant ethic of limiting consumption combined with acquisitive activity.³⁴ It was also this type of capitalism that resulted in mass unemployment and destitution in urban America when the cyclical economy experienced periodic downturns.

Much of the growing population of Kansas City was not native to the new city. As such these people lacked the social support networks of families and friends available to people who have spent their lives in one locale. They arrived in town from the East, other parts of the Midwest, and from many other nations with the hope of finding stable employment in the packinghouses, factories, or warehouses of the city, but many laborers arrived only to find that the supply of willing workers greatly exceeded the supply of jobs in these firms. Even if employed, the economic cycle of expansion periodically experienced a period of contraction that threw laborers out of work. Because of the rapid increase in population and the seasonal nature of much of the work tied to agriculture in addition to the cyclical nature of the corporate capitalist economy, the social and economic displacement experienced by people in Kansas City may well have been greater than that experienced by people in more established cities.

³³ R.H. Tawney, Introduction to *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, by Max Weber (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), i (c).

³⁴ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, 1904*. Trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 155-158.

Because Kansas City served as the labor market for the Midwest, Southwest, and Northwest,³⁵ the city experienced the seasonal presence of an unusually large number of transient or “floating” workers who were variously referred to as tramps, hoboes, and vagrants. These terms shifted in meaning over the years, but the so-called tramp problem of the late nineteenth century merged with the unemployment problem of the twentieth century. These single men followed the harvest in the summer and often came to a place like Kansas City with a winter “stake” or enough cash to carry them through until work was available again in the spring. Their numbers nationwide were estimated at a conservative low of 500,000 to a high of millions, based on the fact that farms not owned by family members of the worker employed five percent of the labor market in the United States.³⁶ Of particular concern in Kansas City was the fact that ten percent of the transient workers were young men under twenty years of age.³⁷ The large percentage of young men made the transient population volatile and difficult to control. Among them was Robert Saunders, a young man from St. Louis who arrived by rail and planned to earn money in Kansas City before returning home. While Saunders held odd jobs, he also begged in the streets and agitated for political change, which resulted in a period of incarceration.³⁸

³⁵Board of Public Welfare, *4th Annual Report*, 1913, 303.

³⁶*Ibid.*, *7th Annual Report* (April 20, 1915 to April 21, 1916), 80. The BPW adopted the lower number to represent what it termed as “migratory and casual” workers. Frank Tobias Higbie uses the percentage of the U.S. workforce that is employed by nonfamily farms as a yardstick. He indicates that percentage in 1920 was five percent. Higbie, 6, 29.

³⁷Board of Public Welfare, *5th Annual Report* (April 21, 1913 – April 20, 1914), 63.

³⁸Diary of Robert Saunders, *WHMC*, 109.

Yet the labor market did not lend itself to easy solutions. Local authorities understood that the busy season in one industry might be the slack season in another; however, workers were not necessarily equipped to work in multiple industries. A tailor, for example, would not make a good baker or vice versa.³⁹ These transient working men, in large measure, rejected industrial work discipline, exchanging it for a free-wheeling manliness and transient mutuality – the idea that a good deed done for another transient will be repaid in the future in-kind. Just as the larger society rejected the transients’ construction of manhood and viewed them as a threat to social order, so too did society need a supply of male laborers who were free of family obligations to meet the seasonal need for workers, especially in agriculture.⁴⁰ Disliked and yet needed, the transient workforce provided a jarring counter to the prevailing narrative of the possibilities of America and added evidence to show that the economy had reached a stage of dysfunction.⁴¹

The presence of rapid industrialization and urbanization created a volume of relief needs that far exceeded the capacity of traditional mechanisms, such as extended family support structures, to fill.⁴² At the same time that the residents of Kansas City struggled with social and economic displacement, the moral and theological approaches to the poor shifted radically as the industrializing world attempted to deal with the seismic changes

³⁹Board of Public Welfare, *2nd Annual Report* (April 19, 1910 – April 18, 1911), 116.

⁴⁰Higbie, 93-94, 176.

⁴¹Ibid., 210.

⁴² Peter Dobkin Hall, “The History of Religious Philanthropy in America,” in *Faith and Philanthropy in America: Exploring the Role of Religion in America’s Voluntary Sector*, ed. Robert Wuthnow and Virginia A. Hodgkinson (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publications, 1990), 40.

caused by corporate capitalism and its attendant problems as seen throughout urban America and in Kansas City. As Peter Dobkin Hall notes, the rising rates of crime, violence, and social disorder from 1877-1893 led many Americans to think seriously about the relationship between progress and poverty.⁴³ Kansas City leaders also re-examined poor relief and created a new structure for its delivery.

Poor Relief in Kansas City

Relief efforts arose in Kansas City to address the effects of the inter-related burdens of social and economic dislocation on the city's population. General categories of relief included female-led Protestant relief, limited public relief often in the form of private-public partnerships, and charitable sectarian relief. By the mid-1880s a system of male-led relief emerged and by the 1890s, political machines gained ground among the poor by providing assistance. A variety of social, fraternal, and other mutual benefit societies formed to provide a cooperative form of mutual relief. Three organizations – the Provident Association, the Affiliated Charities, and the Board of Public Welfare – came into existence between 1880 and 1910 to address the relief needs of the community in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. But this was contested ground. The emergent political machines opposed organized charity, which they saw as a competitor for the loyalty of the poor. At the same time, the International Workers of the World

⁴³Hall, 47-50.

(IWW) saw organized charity as a palliative response to the fundamental inability of capitalism to provide for its people.⁴⁴ Conflict resulted from the differing approaches.

The Provident Association adopted the Charity Organization Society (COS) model that relied on friendly visitors to the poor, much like the WCA in the previous decade, to assess their merit and carefully track the aid that was dispensed. The COS movement crossed the Atlantic in 1877 from Britain and spread rapidly to include more than 100 cities within a few years. The COS societies across the country organized as the National Conference of Charities and Corrections.⁴⁵ As historian Paul Boyer argued, a large factor in the success of the COS structure can be attributed to the desire of the middle and upper class patrons to restore to the city the lost social structure of the village. Many of the leaders in the COS movement were not far removed from their village roots and lamented the loss of the familiarity and social modeling that was possible in the village, but was lost in the anonymity of the city.⁴⁶ The COS organizations, including the one in Kansas City, were led and operated by Protestants who provided relief assistance to the urban masses which included substantial portions of non-Protestants, many of whom were immigrants from Ireland, and Southern or Central Europe.

The COS embraced the supposedly scientific approach to society that was drawn from Social Darwinism, which adapted principles of biological science to explain the evolution of society and the appropriate responses to the phenomena of widespread

⁴⁴Stilwell, 93-94.

⁴⁵ Boyer, 145.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 149.

unemployment and poverty sparked by the cyclical nature of the new corporate capitalism. So, too, did the relief organizations strive to apply the principles of science to their work. The larger economic environment shaped by industrialization, urbanization, and immigration bore no responsibility for the circumstances of the poor or the conditions that created widespread poverty. Rather, poverty was caused, according to the best scientific thinking, by the inherent flaws of the person who was impoverished. By investigating the case, diagnosing the problem, recording observations in a dossier and following up periodically with the family, the visitors could affect a cure and restore the family to a normal state of function.⁴⁷ Friendly visitors modeled the values of thrift, sobriety, and work that were viewed as the keys to escaping poverty and entering the middle class. In any case, relieving poverty was far superior to having the poor begging for alms on the stoops of middle and upper class homes.

Part of the impetus for the founding of the Provident Association in 1880 – after the WCA had formally restricted their relief work to assisting women and children – was the urging of William Rockhill Nelson of *The Kansas City Star* and other newspapers. The immediate, large-scale relief need was to provide sustenance for the Exodusters who were to spend the winter in the Argentine area of Wyandotte County, Kansas, without adequate supplies or preparation. The larger need was to provide relief to the city's growing population.⁴⁸ The Kansas City organization modeled its constitution on the St.

⁴⁷Trattner. 93.

⁴⁸A. Theodore Brown and Lyle W. Dorsett. *K.C.: A History of Kansas City, Missouri* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Co., 1978), 88.

Louis Provident Association.⁴⁹ Like the WCA in the late 1870s, the leadership of the Provident Association was drawn from the top tier of the economic elite and included such names as noted developer Kersey Coates, and the industrialists George Nettleton and Theodore Case. The Provident Association's object was "To look after the interest of the poor of Kansas City, Missouri, to aid them in securing employment when expedient, and otherwise to assist them in such ways as may be deemed most judicious."⁵⁰ This male-led charity provided services primarily to men such as work in the wood or coal yard maintained by the agency. This work served as a pre-condition for able-bodied men and their families to receive assistance. The agency provided other services, such as an employment bureau and assistance with food and fuel. Their paternalist approach of "looking after" the poor differs sharply from today's professed allegiance in public and private assistance programs to empowering the poor to better their own condition. The COS methodology did not seek a passive role for the relief agency; rather, through the friendly visitor system, the poor would be looked after and encouraged to emulate the mores of the middle class.

The annual reports of the Provident Association provide an important understanding of the philosophies, manner of operation, and motivations of the organization as expressed by its leaders over a period of approximately 30 years. The prominence of the Provident Association in relief efforts in Kansas City from 1880 through the Progressive Era makes it a rich object of study in the effort to understand the

⁴⁹Margaret L. Trigg, "A Brief History of Family and Children's Services," Manuscript (July 17, 1967), Vertical Files, Kansas City Public Library; Trigg, 3.

⁵⁰Articles of Incorporation published in the 1892 *Annual Report of the Provident Association*.

evolution of attitudes toward relief and the poor during this time period. Selected annual reports of the Provident Association and other primary documents of the day provide important insights into how the economic elite viewed relief efforts and the culpability of the poor for their plight. Of particular interest is the influence of leading trends such as Social Darwinism, Scientific Philanthropy in both senses in which it is used, and the Social Gospel movement on relief efforts. These documents also shed important light on motivations of the city's economic leaders in providing assistance.

Although a private organization, the Provident Association received funding from the city and county, as did relief organizations in other cities (including the WCA in its early years), to assist with its work.⁵¹ This partnership enabled public agencies to provide assistance through a private agency without violating the expectations of the citizenry for limited services from local government. In 1881, the Provident Association distributed city relief funds in response to the flood of that year. In 1882, the Provident Association was named the official agent for the city for the dispensing of its charity fund.⁵² In 1886, the Association distributed city funds for tornado relief.⁵³ The Provident Association was recognized by the Commercial Club of Kansas City as the "best and most economical

⁵¹*Annual Report of the Provident Association* (1886), 11-23.

⁵² Trigg, 6.

⁵³ *Annual Report of 1886*, 5. The distribution of public funds for relief was not unique to Kansas City or Jackson, Missouri. Irwin, 380, notes that the leading female led charity in San Francisco received funding from the state of California to accomplish their work. The female led charities, she concludes, were able to put issues of concern to them on the public agenda. Similarly, the male led Provident Association appears to have had no difficulty doing likewise; the Provident Association most likely also served as the available infrastructure for relief that the governmental entities lacked.

channel” for assisting the poor in the community.⁵⁴ In many cases, assisting the poor meant purchasing train fare for them to leave town, or in the euphemism of the day, to go “back to their friends.” This assistance was provided to 891 families in 1886. Enticing this portion of the transient population to leave town consumed less of the Provident Association’s resources than providing relief for them over time, however. The Provident Association also solicited funding from the public at large, promising to keep the poor away from the doors of middle and upper class residents of the city.⁵⁵

The charity organization structures like the Provident Association in Kansas City operated as a clearinghouse to coordinate efforts among agencies, maintained registries and records of assistance, investigated applications for aid to determine the worthiness of the applicants, operated employment bureaus, wood and coal yards, workrooms to train women to become nurse maids, laundresses, and seamstresses, and, as the Women’s Christian Association had done, engaged middle and upper class women as volunteer friendly visitors to investigate families and serve as a tie of sympathy and personal interest.⁵⁶ The object of the Provident Association at its founding was:

. . . not only to relieve suffering and distress, but to ferret out and expose a clan of beggars who constantly imposed upon the confidence and liberality of the people, and to learn how to discriminate between the worthless beggar and the deserving poor and sick.⁵⁷

⁵⁴Minutes of the Commercial Club, November 22, 1892.

⁵⁵Provident Association, *6th Annual Report*, 1885-1886, 4.

⁵⁶Robert H. Brenner, *American Philanthropy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 94.

⁵⁷Trigg, 3.

In its first year of operation (1880-1881), the Provident Association provided relief to 569 families or 2132 individuals and expended \$3,550.57. The Provident Association assisted 798 families or 2975 people in its second year of operation and expended \$4,424.31 in its work.⁵⁸ The increased scope of the Provident Association as compared with that of the WCA is evident by a comparison of their budgets. In 1876, the WCA had income of \$2,812.87 and expenditures of \$1776.62. In 1877, income declined to \$2,175.76 and expenditures grew slightly to \$1,816.61.⁵⁹ Clearly, the male-led organization was able to bring greater financial resources to their work than was the WCA.

The Provident Association's Annual Report of 1886 reported total revenues of \$12,822.70 – more than four times its expenditures during the first year of operation. It received total subscriptions (donations) of \$5,247.35 compared with total pledges of \$5,579.85. Families receiving assistance totaled 1490. Of those, the ethnic breakdown of aid recipients provides a look at the nationalities of the people who were coming into Kansas City and who needed assistance:

⁵⁸ Trigg, 3-7. These numbers indicate that average family size was 3.73 people. That multiplier will be used in reporting the numbers of individuals served when only the number of families served is reported.

⁵⁹ *Daily Journal of Commerce*, February 15, 1876, 4; and January 9, 1877, 4.

Table 2

*Number of Families Receiving Assistance from the Provident Association
in 1885-86 by Nationality/Ethnicity*

Nationality/Ethnicity	Number of Families
American	432
Irish	250
Germans	234
English	50
Canadians	26
Italians	24
Swedes	22
Colored	452

The nationality or race of the recipients of aid and the fact that all recipients lived in family units shed important light on the thinking of the Provident Association’s leaders. Keeping track of recipients by nationality or race was obviously important to them as was the fact that persons of African descent were placed in a category separate from Americans and outnumbered the presumably white Americans who received assistance, though not by many. This differential is significant when compared with the smaller ratio of African Americans in the population, however.⁶⁰ Similarly, the report makes clear that it assisted families in need – not single women, single men, or children without parents. These intact families had the potential to emerge from poverty with the

⁶⁰The African American population grew from 1990 in 1860 to 8,143 by 1880 and to 13,700 by 1890. The new residents relocated from elsewhere in Missouri and other former slave states. McKerley, 217.

guidance of friendly visitors. Assisting single men would have only encouraged transients to come to town. Other agencies existed to serve single women and orphaned children.

Equally telling was the percentage of the population who were touched by the charity of Provident Association. At an average family size of 3.73 people, the 1490 families who received assistance from the Provident Association in 1886 represented nearly 6000 people (5578) out of a population in Kansas City of between 55,785 (the 1880 census number) and 132,716 inhabitants (the 1890 census number). As a result, the percentage of the population receiving assistance may be estimated at a low of five percent to a high of more than ten percent of the population. This assistance, then, reached a substantial portion of the population.⁶¹

Two officers and the Superintendent of the Provident Association provided written reports that were included in the organization's 1886 annual report. Each officer held a different perspective on the role of the Association and its work with the poor in Kansas City. Secretary Charles A. Young provided an overview of the principles of charity that guided the operation of the Provident Association. Young related that the work of the society was not only to relieve distress and assist the destitute in finding employment, but also involved bringing “. . . those above the reach of want into sympathy with the unfortunate.” The middle and upper classes achieved this awareness through their support of the Provident Association. Middle and upper class women – and by extension their families – did so through friendly visiting of the poor in keeping with

⁶¹Provident Association, *6th Annual Report* (1885-1886), 6.

COS model. Young painted as evil the practice of indiscriminate giving to beggars on the street, which bound the unworthy recipient more tightly into “imposture and pauperism.” Doing so would only encourage their behavior and reduce the funding available for “scientific” administration by the Provident Association. He lauded the work of the charity organization societies that had come into operation over the previous decade. The COS method removed the impulse from charitable giving, provided a cost-effective and efficient investigation of the worthiness of the applicant, and taught the poor the ways of self-help. Young noted that the COS applied the business methods of charity administration in its work.⁶²

Young’s comments reflected the influence of Spencer and Sumner in their attention to the unworthiness of the many poor people and their emphasis on the efforts of the upper and middle class to assist the laboring class. This helpfulness was a gracious act, because as Sumner concluded in his 1883 work, *What Social Classes Owe Each Other*, the classes owe each other nothing but mutual respect.⁶³ Those who were worthy suffered nonetheless from poverty due to the fault of not knowing the ways of self-help. The Provident Association encouraged self-help by requiring poor men to work in the wood and coal yards as a pre-condition for aid and by assisting them in finding

⁶²Provident Association, *6th Annual Report* (1885-1886), 6. Young’s comments reflected the growth of managerialism in American society at this time. The modern business enterprise was an institutional response to technological innovation and consumer demand in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The management revolution arose to provide an administrative structure in which employees monitored and coordinated the activities of corporate enterprise. Management was separated from ownership. Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 3-12.

⁶³William Graham Sumner, *What the Social Classes Owe Each Other* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1973) first published Harper & Brothers, 1883.

employment. At the same time, the Provident Association used the most modern methods in its work, including friendly visiting, maintaining a dossier on each family, and coordinating assistance with other charitable agencies.

President DeVol's written remarks in the annual report of 1886 centered on the importance of the Association as a means for separating the worthy poor from the nefarious beggar. Yet, DeVol also noted the social and economic dislocation that made the work of the Provident Association necessary:

The fame of Kansas City for growth and prosperity has attracted large numbers of the working classes, more than can be employed. These working class people become destitute of means and must either be sent back or provided with assistance.⁶⁴

He then, advanced two arguments that are not entirely consistent. First, the Provident Association existed in part to protect decent Kansas Citians by keeping the dishonest beggar off their porches. At the same time, DeVol frankly admitted that poverty was inevitable in a city that had more willing workers than available jobs. DeVol seemed to reflect the Social Gospel influence to the extent that the poor, once here in Kansas City, had to be provided for; they could not simply be left on the street to create social disruption. Social Gospel thinking is further reflected in DeVol's candid admission that the economy did not produce enough jobs for all the willing workers. According to this member of the elite class, the economic structure, then, and not the inherent flaws of the laboring class, produced hardship and the need for relief services. Yet, he stopped well short of advocating a fundamental restructuring of the economic structure to address its

⁶⁴*6th Annual Report*, 6.

inherent shortcomings. Some Social Gospel adherents, such as Walter Rauschenbusch, saw the need for structural change. Unlike DeVol, Rauschenbusch, a socialist advocated for public ownership of some industries and a more equitable distribution of wealth and power.⁶⁵

Superintendent Geoffry Damon's report provided important details of the many relief programs that had developed over the previous six years in the Kansas City community. The social service infrastructure included hospitals, refuges for women, sewing schools for girls, homes for street boys and kindergartens.⁶⁶ These social service initiatives had been undertaken by religious and ethnic organizations that had stepped into the social services void. They included the Catholic Church, Reform and Orthodox Jewish organizations, the WCA, and the YMCA, among others. He noted that one of the Provident Association's programs and, in particular, the wood yard, had proved its value as an encouragement to work, particularly for “. . .those already old in the ways of imprudence, indolence and dependence.” The wood yard, the coal yard, and the stone quarry operated by the Provident Association provided unemployed, able-bodied men with the ability to earn wages by chopping wood, shoveling coal, and breaking rock. He acknowledged with equal gratitude the support of the city council, the county court, and the railroads that provided the Association with a charity rate that had helped “many sick

⁶⁵Max J. Skidmore, *Legacy to the World: A Study of America's Political Ideas* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 242.

⁶⁶The Women's Christian Temperance Union promoted kindergartens as early as the 1880s. The WCTU also sponsored a home news boys, who were also street boys. *The Kansas City Star*, November 11, 1886, 2. Riis described efforts to assist newsboys through a hotel and other efforts during this period in New York City; Riis, 190-197; Bordin, 102.

and unfortunate ones toward their homes or friends.”⁶⁷ Damon’s comments revealed the city was developing private resources with some public funding to provide relief from destitution. The poor were thus controlled through work. To the extent possible, the surplus portion of the labor class was sent back home so that the community avoided the burden of their care.

Jane Addams, founder of Hull-House, a well known settlement house in Chicago, and a leader in the development of social work as a profession, roundly criticized the COS as it existed in Kansas City and in her own city of Chicago. With particular reference to the practice of friendly visiting, she observed that it was in the interest of the poor to laud the virtues of temperance, thrift and religious observance when their friendly visitor came calling.⁶⁸ Meeting the expectations of the visitor was a surer path to receiving assistance than not doing so. Influenced by the Social Gospel movement, Addams’s approach to the settlement house movement was three fold: to interpret democracy in social terms, to aid race progress, and to advance Christian humanitarianism. Addams saw the difficulties of the slums as arising out of the structure of industrialization, rather than from the deficiencies of individuals as the COS model assumed. Addams endorsed labor legislation as a means of instituting a structure that would produce a more just economic result. Addams argued, as did subsequent officers of the Provident Association in Kansas City and leaders of other cities, that because

⁶⁷6th Annual Report, 6.

⁶⁸Trattner, 99. At the same time, Addams was not without her own class-based views. She argued that the neighborhood around Hull-House needed to be more like a middle or upper class area. The modern city, in her view, was filled with weakness and wickedness and was in need of being rectified and purified. See Boyer, 156.

industrial conditions were forcing workers below a decent standard, their ability to be good citizens and to bring up their children as good citizens was threatened, thus placing in peril the very future of the nation.⁶⁹ Addams's approach was to model middle class behavior and tastes through the programs and services at Hull-House. Addams's goal then was to create a more just society in which the poor could improve themselves and the economic structure would become less unjust. In the end, she did not seek to fundamentally restructure the economy. Her views fell between the *laissez-faire* approach of the Provident Association and the Christian socialism of Rauschenbusch.

The Provident Association's resources continued to grow in the early 1890s. The president's report of 1892 was updated and reprinted more than a year later, in October of 1893 in the program that accompanied a musical revue, "Allegory of the War of Song" by S. G. Pratt, as a benefit for the Provident Association on October 12 and 13, 1893. In his report, President A. R. Meyers painted the picture of a city that had matured and of a laboring class population that continued to experience economic dislocation.⁷⁰ The Provident Association's income, number of donors, number of individuals assisted, and funds spent on relief increased substantially from 1892 to 1894 in response to the increasing demand for relief as detailed in the table below. As with the WCA in the 1870s, the Provident Association received funding from the county and city governments,

⁶⁹Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, originally published 1910, (Indianapolis, IN: Penguin Books USA, INC, 1981), 98, 168.

⁷⁰A. R. Meyer, Provident Association, 'Program of the Allegory of the War' presented as a benefit for the Provident Association, October 12 and 13, 1893.

individual donors, special events, and from its enterprises such as coal and wood yards and stone quarries.⁷¹

Table 3

Provident Association Income, Donor Numbers, and Assistance Provided, 1892-1894

Year	Revenue	Number of Donors	Number of Aid Applications	Number of Individuals Assisted	Relief Spending
1892	\$6,202	212	3,527	8,981	\$5,783
1893	\$14,182	457	7,794	22,051	\$17,774
1894	\$24,792	2,924	17,501	43,902	\$22,258

A significant shift in thinking about changes in the economy and poverty is evident in the annual report. Just six years after the annual report of 1886, for example, no reference was made to transient populations or to sending people back to their family and friends. Rather, the poverty of the laboring class was due, according to the report, to the challenges of the larger economy. President A. R. Meyers characterized the volume of employment in Kansas City as “irregular and insufficient.” In a sympathetic yarn, he related how a group of willing laborers could not obtain employment because they lacked shoes. The Provident Association stepped in to purchase them. In the report, the overall economic condition of the poor in the city appeared bleak. Many people had been thrown

⁷¹The city government provided financial support of the WCA’s operations. Examples of the city government’s support of the Provident Association include an appropriation of \$1400 in 1885 and the request for the Provident Association to administer the tornado relief fund in 1886. See the Provident Association’s 6th *Annual Report* (1885), 5, 8.

out of work in the first six months of the year and the poor would not be able to survive through the summer, as it had been previously supposed they could, without aid.⁷²

Poverty among laborers, therefore, appeared not to be of their own making, but rather an outgrowth of larger forces. The role of the Provident Association, Meyers indicated, was to engage in scientific charity work that was managed to the highest standards of every “well regulated business.” The scientific charity work and business standards dictated that a record was made of every application for assistance, records were kept for each individual receiving assistance, and investigations were made and recorded by visitors who were “careful, strict, but just and confidential friends of the poor.” Self-help was encouraged to the extent possible.⁷³ Poor relief had ceased to be an endeavor of well-intentioned amateurs as the well-intentioned women of the WCA had practiced it in the 1870s. Rather, charity in Kansas City as in Chicago had become steeped in the managerialism of commerce.⁷⁴

This report illustrated the ascendancy of the Social Gospel approach and the relative decline of the harshness of Spencerian thought by the early 1890s. The language used to describe the process of aid contrasted sharply with the attitudes expressed in the 1886 annual report. Several factors help to account for this rapid shift in outlook on the

⁷²A. R. Meyers, Program for the ‘Allegory of War.’ Vertical files, Missouri Valley Room, Kansas City Public Library.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Jane Addams spoke favorably of the efficiency of the COS organization in Chicago, yet maintained doubts about the ability of agencies, including her own, to apply strict guidelines to the infinite variations in clients’ situations. Addams, 121-123. For more on the transformation of the structure and management of business during this period, see Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Management Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 3-12.

part of the middle and upper classes. First, the national economic depression, which was keenly felt in Kansas City according to the report, underscored the cyclical nature of the economy and the effect of the vagaries of the larger economic environment on the working class. Second, the data generated by the female volunteers who served as friendly visitors and captured in their dossiers rendered untenable the view that poverty was a symptom of the deficiencies of individuals.⁷⁵ The women who served as friendly visitors were seen as well suited to the role of working with the families, but were excluded from the management and governance structure of the organization. These women no longer appeared to diagnose the defect in the aid applicant or develop a plan to remedy a fault. Rather, the organization recognized that poverty and the need for assistance were by-products of the economic structure. If there were no jobs, for example, a family could not be faulted for falling into or remaining in poverty. Third, the devastating winter of 1893 helped to reshape the view of the poor.⁷⁶ Contingencies such as adverse conditions caused by the weather affected both rich and poor. The rich, however, had resources that the poor lacked to ameliorate the weather's worse effects. The facile conclusion that poverty was an individual disease caused by defective character became untenable. The evolving profession of social work began to address the larger, systemic causes of poverty.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Trattner, 100.

⁷⁶ Simon, 61. Addams described the "terrible winter after the World's Fair." The harsh weather, the continuing financial depression in the country, and the large number of people who had no work after the closing of fair all contributed to the misery of the city. Addams, 121-122.

⁷⁷ Brenner, 110.

The thoughts expressed by Provident Association President A. R. Meyers further reflected the shifting philosophical underpinnings of the relief agency. The conditions of poverty, unemployment, and social dislocation described by Meyers reflected the understanding of hardship in urban America that was described in the Social Gospel writings of Charles M. Sheldon. Sheldon, a Congregational minister from Topeka, wrote a bestselling novel, *In His Steps*, which communicated the Social Gospel ideology to large numbers of Americans. Sheldon's novel appeared just three years later in 1896 and reflected the shift in thinking that was already taking place at the elite levels of society. The question, "What would Jesus do?" has retained currency in Christian and popular culture.⁷⁸ As Meyers wrote, "Life does not deal out equal kindness and plenty to us all. Sickness . . . death of the bread-winner . . . often plunge [families] suddenly into want and distress without fault of their own." At the same time, Meyers did not completely disavow Spencer. Rather, he felt the need to point out that ". . .there are those who take advantage of generosity to sustain an idle and worthless life."⁷⁹ The difference between the visiting of 1892-93 and that of 1886 is that the purpose of the visits appears to be geared more toward providing help than to investigating worthiness and diagnosing familial flaws.

Yet, the impoverished people of Kansas City were not a monolithic group. The Provident Association worked to assist poor people in family units who had fallen into poverty through a variety of circumstances. By 1893, the agency also assisted single

⁷⁸Charles M. Sheldon, *In His Steps* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing, Inc., 2005) originally published 1896.

⁷⁹A. R. Meyers, Program for the 'Allegory of War.'

transient males who arrived in Kansas City by rail and often begged on the streets. These men were provided with the option to work in the wood and coal yards, find work through the employment bureau, or to leave the town with a train ticket the agency supplied. By re-enforcing work, the Provident Association discouraged transient men from begging in the streets. Meyers' related that the organization helped rid the city of professional beggars. A benefit of donating to the Provident Association was that each donor received a book of coupons with directions to the Provident Association. The coupons were given to any beggars who approached the donor. In this way, the Provident Association provided a means to protect the average citizen from solicitation by beggars and ensured that relief flowed to the truly needy.⁸⁰ The Provident Association then arranged transportation out of town for the transients.

Reflecting population growth, changing immigration patterns, and economic cycles, the number of families that received assistance between 1886 and 1892 grew dramatically and during the same time the national origin of the families shifted. Families of American origin that received assistance grew by more than 400 percent. Unlike the 1886 report, both white and black Americans were included under the category of American. This change reflects the recognition of people who were born in the United States as being of one statistical category, but certainly did not imply racial equality. The number of Irish families assisted decreased by 23 families, while the number of German families assisted decreased by 175 families, Canadians by 23 families, and Italians by 19 families. At the same time English families receiving assistance

⁸⁰A. R. Meyers, Program for the 'Allegory of War.'

increased by 49 families and Swedes increased by 23 families. The wood yard employed 553 men that year for 6,240 hours or an average of 11.3 hours per man. The Association earned \$634.02 from the operation of the wood yard.⁸¹

Table 4

Number of Families Receiving Assistance from the Provident Association in 1892-1893 year by Nationality/Ethnicity

Nationality/Ethnicity	Number of Families
American	1827
Irish	217
Germans	59
English	89
Italians	5
Swedes	43
Unknown	48
Austrians	6
Russians	11
French	2
Norwegian	1
Canadian	3

By the late 1890s, city leaders believed that an agency was needed to coordinate charitable operations at the client level among the growing number of agencies that

⁸¹Provident Association, *12th Annual Report*, 23, 26.

dispensed relief services. The product of their efforts was the Associated Charities.⁸²

The function of Associated Charities was later described as the coordination of “. . . the benevolent forces of the city to promote the better and more intelligent relief of distress and to elevate the standard of living of the poor.” Twenty-five organizations were members of the Associated Charities.⁸³ In 1908, the General Secretary of the Provident Association, Geoffrey Damon, shared his thoughts about charity in Kansas City in *The Annual Review of Greater Kansas City Illustrated*. This publication of the Business Men’s League was written to highlight progress for the business and professional class of the community. Damon noted that the Associated Charities of Kansas City included 25 private charities that were “worthy of confidence and support.” He shared that the Associated Charities provided relief, cooperation and prevention of poverty. Members included homes for girls, homes for boys, homes for the aged and for assistance for mothers with young children. Among them were Catholic, Protestant, and secular charities.⁸⁴

Through the Associated Charities and the work of its constituent organizations, Provident Association Superintendent Damon related that Kansas City successfully

⁸²Trigg, 13.

⁸³BPW, 2nd *Annual Report*, 50.

⁸⁴Trigg relates that the Associated Charities organization was formed in March of 1899 at the suggestion of the Commercial Club. See Trigg, 13. Irwin indicates that the Associated Charities of San Francisco was founded more than a decade earlier, in 1888, to streamline and rationalize local charity efforts. See Irwin, 39. D.M. Bone, Editor, Publisher, General Secretary of the Business Men’s League, *Annual Review of Greater Kansas City Illustrated 1908* (Kansas City, MO: Bishop Press, 1908), 205-206. These charities included Doors of Hope, House of the Good Shepherd, Saint Joseph Girls Home all of which served “wayward girls,” Little Sisters of the Poor, Mattie Rhodes Memorial Society, Nettleton Home, Old Folks and Orphans Home that served African Americans, Saint Luke’s Hospital, Salvation Army, WCA, Provident Association, Saint Anthony Home for Infants, Human Society that served women, children, and animals, among others.

practiced a policy of preventing poverty. He provided the following measures of success: an absence of outdoor relief, a term he used to describe aid that was dispensed without investigation by the Provident Association, primarily alms giving and soup lines. Such indiscriminate giving, he believed, only encouraged begging and idleness; sufficient breathing space, a reference to the availability of public parks through the parks and boulevards system inspired by the City Beautiful movement; an absence of sweatshops; and an absence of “the undesirable foreign population that other cities have.” By undesirable foreign population, Damon may well have referenced Italian immigrants, who were not present in Kansas City in large numbers and who were seen as alien to the predominately Northern European populations in Kansas City and elsewhere in the United States.⁸⁵ While his comments about undesirable foreigners is shocking by current standards, the larger point of Mr. Damon’s remarks was that Kansas City was moving forward in an organized, efficient, community-wide manner to relieve and prevent poverty. His comments appeared at the height of the Social Gospel movement and shortly after the 1907 publication of Walter Rauschenbusch’s well-known work, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, which foresaw intense social upheaval in the United States resulting the industrial capitalism. He viewed competition in the economy as a

⁸⁵The term “outdoor” relief has more than one application. In another use, outdoor relief meant relief that was provided to the poor in their homes as contrasted with indoor relief, which meant custodial care of the poor in institutions. See Irwin, 384; Bone, 205-206.

denial of brotherhood, saw autocracy as an outgrowth big business, and believed that key segments of the economy should be publically owned.⁸⁶

The competing political machines of Irish politicians Jim Pendergast (known as the Goats) and Joe Shannon (dubbed the Rabbits) concentrated in the poorest areas of the city, were also an important source of assistance for the destitute members of the laboring class in Kansas City. While their motivations related to building and maintaining political support, they provided substantial relief to the poor. Like many politicians in immigrant Irish wards, Pendergast started as a saloon keeper not long after his arrival in Kansas City in 1878. Pendergast learned to ingratiate himself with the poor.⁸⁷ James Pendergast was said to have passed on his secrets of political success to his younger brother Tom Pendergast. These secrets included doing favors, distributing food and coal for the poor, fixing things with the police, and helping the local priest. Pendergast took pride in the fact that his workers had funds to buy coal, food, shoes and clothing without the investigations like the city charities imposed.⁸⁸ The Pendergast machine's hand was strengthened when the Commercial Club, the forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce, chose not to become involved in relief efforts following the Panic of 1893. This decision provided an opening for the machine to fill an important gap and win the political

⁸⁶Skidmore, 242; Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: The McMillian Company, 1907), xi.

⁸⁷Garwood, 170-174.

⁸⁸ Maurice Mulligan, *Missouri Waltz: The inside Story of the Pendergast Machine by the Man Who Smashed It* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), 47.

benefits of their actions.⁸⁹ This expanded foothold provided a base of power that these machines expanded over the next decades.⁹⁰

Social and cultural divides between the elite, business-oriented Progressive leadership of the Provident Association and the working class orientation of the Democratic machines should surprise no one. The Provident Association board of 1885, for example, included names such as the industrialist, A. R. Meyer, the Kansas City representative of the Chicago meat-packing family, K. B. Armour, the developer, D. O. Smart, the minister of the First Congregational Church, Rev. Dr. Henry Hopkins, who would leave Kansas City to become the president of Williams College, and the German-born and trained physician, E. M. Shauffler (whose wife was an active member of both the WCA and the soon-to-be established YWCA), among others.⁹¹ Their position in life caused the organization to align quite naturally with the Republican Party and oppose the ideology of the Pendergast and Shannon machines.

Throughout this period, the Democrats, evenly divided between two factions, were far more successful than the Republicans in winning highly contested races for the mayor's office, which controlled city patronage. An open split in the Democratic ranks was a necessary condition for a Republic victory. In these contests, African Americans,

⁸⁹ For a discussion of the role of relief in the rise to Pendergast political machine, see Lawrence H. Larsen and Nancy J. Hulston, *Pendergast!* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1997).

⁹⁰ Political machines as represented by Pendergast and Shannon not only subverted the politics of the city, but also exhibited inherent conservatism so as not to endanger their position, shun policy innovation, and block working class pressures that might have challenged employer hegemony. See Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley, Nation's Work: The Rise of Women's Political Culture, 1830-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 300.

⁹¹ Provident Association, *1885 Annual Report*, 3.

in particular, faced a cruel choice: whether to support the Republican Party which demonstrated overt racism yet generally provided some influence and patronage to African Americans when they were in office, or to choose expediency and side with the Democrats, who often embraced violent white supremacists.⁹²

Through his support of James A. Reed in the race for mayor in 1900, Jim Pendergast gained substantial control of city patronage jobs. By contrast, rival Joe Shannon controlled areas in Jackson County outside of Kansas City, which gave him substantial county patronage. After several political clashes between the Pendergast and Shannon machines later that year, the two men worked out a compromise that split patronage jobs evenly and called on each faction to support the others' candidates in general elections. This so-called 50-50 compromise lasted through the transition of power from Jim Pendergast to his brother Tom in 1910 and, though not uniformly successful, until 1925 when Tom gained complete control over the Democratic party in Kansas City and Jackson County.⁹³

A substantial challenge to the compromise occurred in the 1916 mayoral race. The Pendergast candidate lost to the Shannon candidate in the primary. When the Pendergast forces sat out the election, the Republican, George Edwards, won the general election.⁹⁴ The two machines healed the fissure well enough to defeat Edwards in 1918

⁹²McKerley, 222-227.

⁹³Dorsett, 26. See also, Larsen and Hulston, 33.

⁹⁴Larsen and Hulston, 57.

with the election of Democrat James Cowgill as mayor.⁹⁵ The machines survived through patronage and the political distribution of relief services which were in direct opposition to the scientific distribution of relief provided by charities. Any governmental entity outside of the machines' control that assisted the poor also threatened the machines' hegemony and was vigorously opposed by them.

A new phase of poor relief began in 1910 with the creation of the Board of Public Welfare (BPW), which succeeded the former Board of Pardons and Paroles that had only recently been established for the purpose of taking the pardon and parole function out of the hands of the mayor. This obligation had become a substantial burden on the office. William Volker, a highly successful, respected, self-made millionaire businessman, was appointed President of the Board. The respected lawyer Frank Walsh – a man of working class Irish Catholic background who broke from the Shannon Machine and formed the People's Party in Missouri to do battle with the railroads – was appointed legal counsel.⁹⁶ The First Annual Report of the Board of Public Welfare, the name of which changed from the Board of Pardons and Paroles in mid-year, shared the following story of the Board's creation:

⁹⁵Dorsett, 67. For more information on the interactions of the two machines and the effects on public policy in Kansas City, see Susan Debra Sykes Berry, "Politics and Pandemics in 1918 Kansas City" (Master's Thesis: University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2010), 22-24.

⁹⁶Julie Green, *Pure and Simple Politics: The American Federation of Labor and Political Activism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 249. For more on the life career of Frank Walsh, his feud with U.S. Senator James A. Reed, and his service as the head of the U.S. Council on Industrial Relations, see Joseph A. McCartin, *Labor's Great War: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy and the Origins of Modern American Labor Relations, 1912-1921* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 20-37.

About the holidays, 1909-1910, there was a parade of the unemployed in the city, who marched to the office of the Mayor asking for work In response, to this request of the unemployed, who were led by James Eads How, the mayor appointed William Volker the President of the Board of Pardons and Paroles, which was reformed as the Board of Public Welfare.⁹⁷

The genesis of the Board of Pardons and Paroles was, however, more complicated than that. According to *The Kansas City Star*, a board of pardons and paroles was to have been included in the newly-adopted city charter, but was left out due to a clerical error. Because of that omission, Mayor Crittendon, a Democrat, commissioned the well-known local attorney Frank Walsh to travel to such progressive cities as Toledo, Cleveland, Baltimore, Boston, and New York to examine the operation of so-called mercy or parole boards in those cities. Walsh reported that:

The mercy boards [pardon and parole boards] not only minimize human suffering and save the souls of men and women, but they also effect economy in the administration of justice By giving men and women a chance and the weak a little help, only the inherently criminal become habitual offenders. By saving the minor offenders the state gains good citizens and the thefts of property and crime decrease.⁹⁸

Walsh advocated that a board of pardons and paroles should work with charitable organizations and gather information about so-called lesser delinquents as a way of administering exact justice. Walsh observed from his trip that other cities had succeeded

⁹⁷First Annual Report of the Board of Pardons and Paroles ([Known as the Board of Public Welfare after April 27, 1910] April 19, 1911), 4, 13. See Stilwell, 118. She describes James Eads How as the “millionaire hobo” and placed the homeless parade in December of 1908 during which the homeless men demanded public relief jobs and the creation of a municipal boarding house. For a brief description of the parade and the role of Mr. How, who is described as an “eccentric millionaire hobo from St. Louis,” see, Herbert C. Cornuelle, *Mr. Anonymous: The Story of William Volker* (Caldwell, ID: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1951,) 84.

⁹⁸*The Kansas City Star*, September 13, 1908, 5.

in changing bad environments and ending “vicious” ones.⁹⁹ In the creation of the parole board, he envisioned a way to give young offenders a chance to reform before they became hardened criminals. Walsh also advocated a system of pardon and parole as a means to prevent penury on the part of the criminals’ dependents. Without it, their wives and children suffer from the loss of the male breadwinner’s income and require assistance, thereby increasing the demands on local charities.

The annual reports of the Board of Public Charities starting in 1910 added additional perspective and knowledge of relief systems in the community. The First Annual Report of the Board of Pardons and Paroles/Board of Public Welfare indicated that Kansas City followed “in the footsteps of Cleveland” in creating a board for this purpose.¹⁰⁰ The BPW established Kansas City as a national leader in Progressive thinking about social problems. It was the first publicly funded agency of its kind in the country.¹⁰¹ This distinction can be attributed to the advocacy of the Progressive, wealthy, and generous Volker, who believed that public programs should replace private charity. Volker provided substantial support from his own resources for the operation of the BPW. At its peak, the BPW employed nearly 100 city workers in its many administrative divisions.

The Board of Public Welfare began its operations under the direction of a three person board. The ordinance, however, permitted a board of up to five people. The

⁹⁹*The Kansas City Star*, September 13, 1908, 5.

¹⁰⁰BPW, *First Annual Report*, 13.

¹⁰¹Montgomery and Kasper, 169. For an explanation of the politics behind the BPW’s founding, see Harry Haskell, *Boss-Busters and Sin Hounds: Kansas City and Its Star* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 107-108.

composition of the board reflected the city's ongoing ecumenical approach and Progressive attitudes. The board members included Volker, a Lutheran. Jacob Billikopf, the highly respected Superintendent of the United Jewish Charities, and Mrs. Kate E. Pierson, a long-time community activist and Special Investigator for the Associated Charities, served as the other board members. In apparent recognition of the increasing numbers and effectiveness of women in professional social welfare work, the ordinance provided that one of the members of the BPW could be a woman.¹⁰² Frank Walsh served as secretary. In an example of the tie between the Social Gospel and Progressive thinking, the BPW appointed L. A. Halbert, a graduate of the Chicago Theological Seminary and former assistant pastor to the well-known Topeka Social Gospel minister Charles Sheldon, as the BPW's Superintendent, or chief staff member.¹⁰³ Among other duties, the BPW assumed the role of assessing requests for pardons and paroles, a responsibility that had previously been exercised by the mayor.¹⁰⁴ In its first year, the BPW paroled 885 people, of whom 158 left the city. No person was forced to leave, who

¹⁰²*Kansas City Times*, December 15, 1908, 1. As an example of Volker's generosity, he paid the salary of a clerk for the parole board to facilitate its work. *Kansas City Times*, January 5, 1909, 14. Kate E. Pierson had long been involved in the treatment and prevention of tuberculosis and served as a member of the board of the Missouri State Tuberculosis Society. As a member of the Board of Public Welfare, Mrs. Pierson advocated segregating "mental defectives" to prevent the transmission of mental defects. She also established classes for the women at the city workhouse in such subjects as plain cooking [sic], hand sewing, and reading and writing. After her term on the board expired, she was hired by the board to serve as a district superintendent and superintendent for delinquent women. She resigned that position on January 9, 1912, to relocate to Manhattan, Kansas, where her son-in-law, Charles J. Dillon, had accepted the position of dean of the journalism school at Kansas State Agricultural College. See *Kansas City Times*, September 24, 1918, 16; *Kansas City Times*, October 31, 1908, 12; *Kansas City Times*, March 17, 1910, 4; *Kansas City Times*, November 27, 1909, 3; and *The Kansas City Star*, January 9, 1912, 11.

¹⁰³A. Theodore Brown and Lyle W. Dorsett, *KC: A History of Kansas City, Missouri* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Company, 1978), 156.

¹⁰⁴*The Kansas City Star*, December 13, 1908, 5.

“. . . desired to live in the city and lead a respectable, decent life.”¹⁰⁵ An early project of the BPW was to add a Municipal Farm (hereinafter referred to simply as “the farm”) as an adjunct to the County Workhouse, a penal institution that served 2563 offenders – 2081 males and 482 females – during the reporting period. Unlike the prison-like atmosphere of the workhouse, the farm was intended to be a place of rehabilitation for offenders through access to physical labor and access to the outdoors. The farm served just 333 men during the year.¹⁰⁶

The philosophy behind the farm demonstrated the middle and upper class view that rehabilitation and the desire for a middle class life could be instilled in the inmates.¹⁰⁷ As the report intoned:

On the farm . . . the prisoner is allotted a definite task . . . in an abundance of fresh air and sunshine. He has the opportunity of regaining his health and of building up whatever qualities of moral or intellectual strength he has left . . . He has been treated like a man and has responded to it.¹⁰⁸

The philosophy reflected concern about the weakening of civilization and the loss of the ideal of manly self-restraint caused by the lost connection between man and nature.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵BPW, *First Annual Report*, 15.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 15, 21-22.

¹⁰⁷Thorstein Veblin in 1899 wrote that “The leisure class stands at the head of the social structure in point of reputability; and its manner of life and its standards of worth therefore afford the norm of reputability in the community. The observance of these standards, in some degree of approximation, becomes incumbent upon all classes lower in the scale.” *Conspicuous Consumption: Unproductive Consumption of Goods is Honourable* (reprinted from *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 57.

¹⁰⁸BPW, *First Annual Report*, 19.

¹⁰⁹Bederman, 77-99. See also, Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

City dwellers, in particular, reflected this lost state. The farm's Superintendent, J. F. Burlie, touted the restoration or reconstruction of the prisoner as a means of restoring manliness:

Placing a man amid the most favorable natural surroundings where all nature can sing and appeal to his feelings, freeing him from his old and ever-present temptation to err. We have been able in many cases to establish true moral citizenship¹¹⁰

In addition to medical treatment at both facilities, the Board provided alcohol and drug addiction recovery services. The staff physician, Dr. Fred R. Berry, informed the Board, "We have treated quite a number of patients for the drug and liquor habits and are pleased to say we have had quite good reports."¹¹¹ Berry's comments about alcohol consumption reflected a concern about abuse of the substance by individuals, rather than concern about the widespread abuse in society. His comments provide no indication of support of the prohibition movement.

The Board's second annual report covered the period April 19, 1910, to April 18, 1911, and provided insight into the institutional development of the organization. During this period, the Board enunciated six key operating principles that outline a progressive, administrative, and governmental approach to addressing the needs of the poor:

1. Emphasis on justice before charity and on prevention rather than a cure.
2. The burden of caring for the poor should be laid upon the entire community through taxation rather than be provided by the voluntary gifts of the generous minority.

¹¹⁰BPW, *First Annual Report*, 21.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 50-51.

3. Social action should be based on accurate knowledge and investigations should both precede and accompany all efforts to improve social conditions.
4. The Board strives for the harmonious co-operation of all existing agencies both public and private, and does not duplicate the work of any.
5. The Board gives no public outdoor relief [defined as relief provided outside of established institutions] except in cases where the breadwinner of the family is a city prisoner and then only in cases of destitution and upon recommendation of the Superintendent of the Provident Association.
6. The Board gives no subsidies to private charities.

The most intriguing of the principles from today's standpoint is the BPW's embrace of funding poor relief through taxation, rather than private action. The BPW, led by Volker, was well aware of the role of private charity in the community. He no doubt knew its limitations. As a Progressive, he had faith in the ability of a well-managed organization such as the BPW to administer aid, engage in many other forms of social service, and remove the funding burden from philanthropically-inclined citizens.

In the reform spirit of the Progressive Era, the Board embraced a number of programmatic initiatives to cushion the general public from the vagaries of the modern economy. These initiatives included a public employment bureau and unemployment insurance, the prosecution of husbands for the desertion of their wives, sick benefits from the benefit societies, "workingmen's" compensation, and old age pensions to be arranged by law.¹¹² As practical steps toward its Progressive vision, the Board created a number of bureaus, including: the Welfare Loan Agency to make loans at two percent monthly

¹¹²BPW, 2nd Annual Report, 9.

interest rather than the prevailing loan shark rate of ten percent; the free Legal Aid Bureau to assist the poor and which collected \$6,046.07 for poor litigants in its first year; the Recreation Bureau to regulate dance halls and inform mothers when their daughters under sixteen years of age were at public dances without suitable escorts; the Parole Board; the Registration Bureau to record the names and pertinent information about all recipients of charity in the city; and the Charity Endorsement office to monitor the operation of charities that were approved for the endorsement of the BPW – 41 charities received the BPW’s endorsement during the period; the employment bureau to assist people in finding work; and the rock quarry to provide work for individuals who could not find it elsewhere.¹¹³

The BPW’s positions on outdoor relief and the need for public charity reflected a middle class desire during the Progressive Era to prevent poverty and embrace a bureaucratic, rather than a private, piece-meal solution to relief. The BPW’s objections to outdoor relief were three-fold. First, the BPW believed that outdoor relief “. . . destroys ambitions and becomes a substitute for work.” The BPW strongly believed that work was the first option for the able-bodied. Second, outdoor relief ran the risk of assisting people in low wage jobs. The BPW believed that employers should pay wages that were high enough that their employees did not need assistance. Third, outdoor relief ran the risk of leading to political patronage and of becoming little more than a political

¹¹³BPW, *2nd Annual Report*, 15-23, 77. Odem argued that controlling the sexual expression of young working class women in the city was a particular area of focus for Progressive reformers. These women lived in the city without supervision and took part in the new commercial amusements such as dance halls, movie theaters, and amusement parks where they interacted with men. Public authorities such as the BPW took on the task of monitoring young women in public places and intervening when young women’s moral purity was imperiled; Odem, 104-111.

slush fund.¹¹⁴ The BPW and the Progressive Republicans who aligned with their ideology had a well-founded concern with the way relief was distributed by the Pendergast and Shannon machines. They did not want the machines to gain control of public funds with which to provide relief that would further strengthen the machines' power. While the notion of replacing private charity with public assistance is surprising to modern ears, it fit neatly within the aims of the Progressive embrace of bureaucratic solutions to the problems of society.¹¹⁵

The BPW also centralized the control of city relief funds that had previously been disbursed by the Mayor's office. The BPW formed active partnerships with the Provident Association and the Helping Hand Institute, an institution that provided housing and assistance to transient workers. The process remained a public/private partnership, but the supervision of the funds was delegated to the BPW. Where these two agencies had previously been the beneficiaries of the \$5,000 to \$7,000 per year directly from the Mayor's fund for poverty relief, the arrangement shifted so that the BPW directed these funds to the two organizations in exchange for services. The Provident Association took over the function of investigating and supervising applicants for relief. The Provident Association did not provide assistance until the friendly visitors had completed an investigation. A complete record was maintained on all applicants. The report also indicated that the Provident Association placed a greater emphasis than before on the "constructive treatment of families" to help them overcome adversity rather than

¹¹⁴BPW, *2nd Annual Report*, 9.

¹¹⁵Wiebe, 145-160.

treating symptoms of family dysfunction.¹¹⁶ The Helping Hand Institute agreed to provide housing for transients referred by the city. The transients received room and board and the Institute operated an employment bureau to help them find work. Founded in 1894 in response to the depressed economic condition, the Helping Hand Institute enjoyed the support of leading Kansas Citians of the day, including William Volker, lumber baron R.A. Long, and prominent attorney, Gardiner Lathrop.¹¹⁷

The 3rd Annual BPW report continued to show an activist board that endorsed bureaucratic solutions to pressing public welfare issues. “We have been carrying on a propaganda [sic] in churches, schools, and clubs for . . . workingmen’s compensation, vocational guidance, industrial education, and the suppression of social evil” The report mentioned visits to the city by Florence Kelley, Secretary of the National Consumers’ League and Owen R. Lovejoy, Secretary of the National Child Labor Committee.¹¹⁸ Kelley and Lovejoy had been at work for many years to reform child labor. In 1912, Lovejoy lamented: “No state has made any adequate plan to protect its

¹¹⁶BPW, *2nd Annual Report*, 87. The interaction between the BPW and the Helping Hand Institute is noted in a *Kansas City Star* article of December 1911. John Adams was arrested for begging after release from the farm. He indicated that he had no money when he was released and was thus forced to beg. The article quotes Halbert as saying that prisoners may stay at the farm for two or three days after their release to earn money. The BPW expended \$1,430.12 in the prior year for this purpose. Released prisoners were also informed that they may have food and lodging in exchange for work at the Helping Hand Institute. *The Kansas City Star*, December 8, 1911, 4.

¹¹⁷BPW, *2nd Annual Report*, 7-8, 50. A pamphlet published in 1931 by the Helping Hand Institute “Does it pay to Help them? A few facts for the good citizen,” 6, notes that “Kansas City is one of the largest centers in the United States for seasonal labor distribution. This class of labor is vital to the industrial and agricultural activity of this trade territory.”

¹¹⁸For a description of Kelley’s pioneering work on protective labor legislation for women and children in Illinois, see Addams, 150-152. For more information about Kelley’s work in labor issues, see Sklar, especially 215-291. Agreeing in outcome, if not in logic, with the BPW’s desire to fund charity through public means, Kelley viewed philanthropic work as a way to “patch and palliate an evil social system, so propping up what ought to be torn down and rebuilt.” See Sklar, 115.

children . . . from bare-handed contact with the red hot tools of our industrial competition.”¹¹⁹ The BPW completed the inspection of 331 factories. In the course of those inspections, the BPW inspector issued 176 citations. These citations were for the absence of safeguards on machinery, the repair and clean up of toilets, and for not complying with child labor laws.¹²⁰

At the same time, the Board struggled against inclement weather and an uncooperative economy in providing for the welfare needs of Kansas Citizens. Extremely cold weather in January and February of 1912 created an emergency. Hundreds of people swarmed the Provident Association. Through the BPW’s coordination of agencies, and especially the Helping Hand Institute and the Provident Association, the situation was addressed without resorting to what the report called “indiscriminate soup lines.” The report of the Department for the Homeless and Unemployed reflected the relationship between the cyclical nature of corporate capitalism in the nation and its effect on Kansas City: “The influences that make for homelessness and the vagrancy . . . are nation-wide . . . and have their roots deep in the defective social and industrial conditions which will not readily yield to local treatment.”¹²¹

¹¹⁹Quoted in June Axinn and Herman Levin, *Social Welfare: A History of the American Response to Need* (New York: Longman, Inc., 1982), 138. By 1900, twenty-eight states had adopted some legal protections for children. By 1914, nearly all states had laws that governed working hours and conditions for children. National legislation in 1916 to federalize child labor protections were found unconstitutional. Axinn and Levin, 139. During this time, reformers also championed legislation to restrict the hours the women could work. The impetus arose from both the desire to re-enforce the women’s sphere and to lessen competition for men in the workplace. Skocpol, 379.

¹²⁰BPW, *3rd Annual Report* (April 19, 1911-April 15, 1912), 10, 117.

¹²¹BPW, *3rd Annual Report* (April 19, 1911-April 15, 1912), 11, 138. At this time, two BPW staff traveled extensively to participate in the conferences of national organizations and for other purposes. Halbert and others attended the conferences of the American Association for Labor Legislation conference

The Fourth Annual Report of the BPW reflected an organization that was already coming under political attack from the political machines that were threatened by its existence and opposed its methods and philosophy. The self-perpetuating nature of the board, the fact that it operated with three members of the board rather than five as prescribed for charter commissions, and attempts to “unsettle” employees’ job security through political pressure all weighed on Superintendent Halbert’s review of the past year. Achievements included the establishment of a social worker’s institute to provide education for social workers, the endorsement of 40 charities by the charity registration bureau, and the creation of a central repository of uniform records of aid recipients among 25 participating charities. During the year, 19,834 cases were reported to the BPW or about 1,653 per month. The BPW also reported in an approving tone that several of the employers in the community were doing so-called welfare work by providing free hospitalization and medical service, subsidized lunchrooms, pensions, sickness, and disability coverage. The BPW, as stated earlier, felt that employers should provide a wage that was adequate to provide the necessities of life for employees. Otherwise, the public was subsidizing capitalism through charity to working people. Montgomery Ward’s and the Jones Store merited specific mention for their forward-

in Atlantic City, the International Association of Factory Inspectors in Washington, and the National Playgrounds Association conference in Cincinnati. In addition, one staff member spent two months studying the work of the women’s prison in Indianapolis and convalescent work at Bellevue Hospital in New York. *The Kansas City Star*, May 30, 1912, 1.

thinking policies that provided benefits beyond wages to their employees and thus eliminated the need for their employees to receive services from charity.¹²²

During the winter of 1913, the Board of Public Welfare, in conjunction with the Helping Hand Institute, opened the rock quarry. The quarry was located at the base of the hill in front of the new Union Station. The rock was sold to the Kansas City Terminal Railway Company. This company owned and operated the Kansas City rail yards just as it does today. The rock was used to build and maintain the railroad yard. The company purchased the rock at the rate of 90 cents per cubic yard. Similar to the wood and coal yards of the Provident Association, the rock quarry provided an avenue for unemployed men to earn money. The BPW paid the men 60 cents per cubic yard. The remaining thirty cents per yard covered the cost of supervising the operation and other expenses.¹²³

The BPW published a Social Prospectus of Kansas City as a part of the Fourth Annual Report and also as a separate document. The document painted a vivid picture of the social and ethnic conditions in Kansas City. Shocking conditions – poor housing, overcrowding, and rampant tuberculosis – existed in the African American section located north of 31st Street and west of Brooklyn. Conditions for African Americans were bad as well in the hospital district. Only 800 of the 23,566 African Americans in the city owned their own dwellings. These conditions were said to require “careful and intensive uplift” services. Slightly more than 6800 Russian Jews lived in Kansas City of whom about half were foreign born. Twenty-five hundred Greeks lived in Kansas City

¹²²BPW, *4th Annual Report*, 10, 21, 146, 148, 169.

¹²³*The Kansas City Star*, December 3, 1913, 3.

and were concentrated in the Northwest area, including 758 foreign born Greeks. Assimilation problems were said to be common among the Italians, Greeks, Russian Jews, and Mexicans. The report noted that Mexicans were often the victims of working class prejudice because of their “racial characteristics,” or the fact that Mexicans, like African Americans, looked different from the European population and were perceived as “others” and less advanced than the various European “races” that were present in the city.¹²⁴ By contrast, the so-called races whose cultures were most like the native-born white Anglo-Saxon population were said to have no difficulty assimilating. The Swedes, for example, were so cosmopolitan that they “mingle easily” with the American population. The Germans were scattered through the city and contributed to the common good as did the English, Canadians, Irish, Scottish, and Swiss.¹²⁵ American Indians, Chinese, and Japanese were viewed as the “other.” They were counted as one heterogeneous group that totaled 138 people. Beyond issues of race and ethnicity, the Research Bureau found that 33.575 percent of the population belonged to the city’s 234 churches. The city housed 616 saloons, 152 pool halls, and 47 bawdy houses with 248 inmates. The Helping Hand Institute provided recreation for homeless men. Recreation

¹²⁴For an extensive discussion of the operation of the social construction of race in this period, see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigration and the Alchemy of Race*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 94-111. See also, Barbara Fields, ‘Ideology and Race in American History,’ in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*. Ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson. (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 147-151. Immigrants from Mexico arrived in Kansas City in three waves from between 1900 and 1920. Single, transient men arrived after 1900 to find work with the railroads and other industrial employers. The Mexican revolution caused another wave of immigration in 1910. Labor demands of World War I drew additional workers. Michael M. Smith, *Mexicans in Kansas City: The First Generation, 1900-1920, Perspectives in Mexican American Studies 2* (1989), 30-31.

¹²⁵Research Bureau of the Board of Public Welfare, *Social Prospectus of Kansas City* (1913), 4-13.

included reading rooms as an alternative to the saloons, free showers, and a water foundation, which was the only place to obtain a free drink of water in the north part of town.¹²⁶

Complementing the work of the BPW, the Provident Association in its next available annual reports provided a look at the operations from mid-1910 through 1913 as the Progressive Era reached full maturity. These reports documented the work of an organization that had grown in complexity and professionalism. The Provident Association issued a two-year report in 1912 that covered the period from July 1, 1910 to July 1, 1912. The report's front page touted its historical investment in relief services as \$237,498 since 1880. The association employed thirteen skilled social workers. Eleven of them were field visitors who performed the function described as "personal service work." These social workers – the first time the term is used in these documents – called on 5,000 families to provide aid during the winter months. The role of these social workers was to individualize the methods of relief so that the needs of each family would be met in the most effective way.¹²⁷ The private-public partnership of the Provident

¹²⁶BPW, *4th Annual Report*, 17, 33-42.

¹²⁷*Provident Association Report* (July 1, 1910 to July 1, 1912), 7-12.

Association continued through salary support for some of the social workers from the Board of Public Welfare.¹²⁸

The presence of these practitioners of the newly-minted social work profession place the social welfare approach in the Kansas City squarely at the forefront of the progressive approach to providing social services. As historian Robyn Muncy described, the almost exclusively female social work profession arose during this time period because males were willing to cede power to women who served clients who were primarily women and children. As a result, women created the social work profession that was separate from and not competitive with the men. Through the evolution and professionalization of social services, the profession gained the body of unique, esoteric knowledge that characterize a profession. The goal of progressive reformers like Florence Kelley and others was to expand the state through a bureaucracy filled with female technical experts.¹²⁹

The report used language that was at least superficially reminiscent in some ways of the 1886 report to describe the methods of the visitors' work. The visitors were to employ a three step process of ascertaining the nature and extent of the family's distress and provide necessary relief. The visitors then located and removed the cause of distress. Finally, the visitors assisted the family in making plans to raise its moral, physical and

¹²⁸This step was taken at the behest of William Volker who personally paid for a substantial portion of the costs of the Board. Volker in this and other instances of civic involvement personally financed some of the costs of operating public agencies. For more information on Volker's engagement as a "voluntary taxpayer," See Herbert C. Cornuelle, *Mr. Anonymous: The Story of William Volker* (Caldwell, ID: The Caston Printers, Ltd., 1951), 81-88.

¹²⁹Robin Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1936* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 20-36.

financial condition to the point of self-respect and self-sufficiency.¹³⁰ The subtle, but substantial difference between the two approaches that were separated by nearly 30 years was that the family by 1912 was viewed as having a cause of distress that could be addressed and remedied, rather than having a moral failing that must be overcome. The distress may have been caused by the external environment, in which case the family must be assisted in adjusting to the external environment. This approach, while continuing to embrace and model middle class mores, reflected the acceptance of the effects of the external environment on the family, a viewpoint that mirrored the Social Gospel approach and was far removed from the harsh Social Darwinist view. These Progressives, led by the prosperous industrialist Volker, sought to soften the economic system. Through its activities, the BPW sought to empower the lower class to take up the values and practices of the middle class.

During this period, the Provident Association also benefited from the work of 90 volunteers, described as housewives, who “. . . take the time to get acquainted with their less fortunate neighbors in order to be of service to them.” Each of these visitors:

. . . takes a family under her charge and endeavors by frequent visiting and friendly advice to lead the family to a higher plane of life. This is social service of the highest order and we hope that this band of volunteers will be joined by many others within the coming year. This form of Social Service is applied Christianity, and is a duty that every good citizen owes his less fortunate neighbor.¹³¹

¹³⁰*Provident Association Report*, July 1, 1910 to July 1, 1912, 7.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, 12.

The motivation of the Provident Association, its professional social workers, and its volunteer visitors had clearly changed from that of imposing middle class values to the morally-degenerate poor, as the tone of the 1886 report could be characterized, to that of assisting the poor as a tenet of Christian duty, while also modeling the norms of middle class behavior. The apparent desire for social control mixed with benevolence shifted to one of benevolence mixed with a small, but still evident, element of social control. The 1912 report indicated that the goal was to build character and develop in the poor a spirit of independence and thrift to make a better citizen. In this way, “. . . the more money we spend on intelligent reconstruction, the less relief is needed, and this is present economy and future gain.”¹³² Yet the Provident Association was well aware of the conditions they must combat to be effective: “Our contact shows that insufficient nourishment and bad housing are the direct causes of sickness, delinquency, and degeneracy. Families need a normal standard of living to avoid misery and deterioration.” By July 1, 1910, the Provident Association maintained records on 40,000 cases of relief.¹³³

The annual report of 1912-1913 reflected continued progress toward professionalism in the delivery of social services. The Provident Association reported that an experienced visitor had been assigned to social service at General Hospital. In addition, the investigative services of the Provident Association’s visitors had been used by the Board of Public Welfare, by the Jackson County government and by private and benevolent institutions, agencies and individuals. The report noted with a touch of pride

¹³²*Provident Association Report*, July 1, 1910 to July 1, 1912, 10, 11.

¹³³*Ibid.*, 9.

that the Provident Association had become “a veritable bureau of investigation covering the whole city.” The professionalism went beyond the function of investigation and extended to new efforts to maintain the continuity of care for the people receiving services. Because the goal was to restore the family to its normal place in society, families were no longer dropped from receiving services once they attained self-sufficiency. Rather, the family received what is referred to as watchful care until its well being was assured.¹³⁴

To conduct this work, twelve paid visitors were employed and more than 100 volunteer visitors were engaged in social service work. One of the paid workers was referred to as “colored” and she was reported to have “stimulated self-respect and industry among her people and taught them better ways of living.” The volunteers received access to training through Friendly Visitor Conferences that were held twice each month to provide “systematic study in the accepted principles and methods of organized charity.”¹³⁵ The training and elevated skills of the visitors were credited with reducing the percentage of cases that received aid from 90 percent to 49 percent in the period of the report. During this period, staff and volunteers made 2,947 first visits and

¹³⁴*Provident Association Report, 1912-1913, 5-8.*

¹³⁵ A circular announcing the friendly visitor conference topics of 1914 indicated that the conferences are held monthly by that time and the conference program was in its fifth year. The object of the monthly programs was as: 1) the development of team play in dealing with the problem of poverty; 2) the development of higher ideals of helpfulness; 3) the better understanding of the poor by the more favored, and of the rich by the poor; and 4) promotion of neighborliness. Provident Association pamphlet, vertical files of the Kansas City, Missouri, Public Library, (1914).

16,423 revisits to homes. The value of relief grew to \$20,563.83 and was distributed to 6,281 cases.¹³⁶

Superintendent Damon reiterated the thoughts he shared in the previous report, which reflected the influence of the Social Gospel. Namely, social conditions remain trying for “hundreds if not thousands of families where resources would not allow a decent standard of living.” Hundreds of mothers were trying, he stated, to support three or more small children on \$20 to \$35 per month. Many of these mothers were reported to be dying of overwork and exhaustion. The superintendent wanted these families to have a normal standard of living both for their own sake and for the good of society. Echoing Jane Addams’s concern, he asked rhetorically, “What kind of citizens can we expect when children are reared under such conditions?” Ensuring a normal standard of living was not only morally right, he argued, but also economically prudent by avoiding the costs of criminality that would result from substandard conditions.¹³⁷

A sociological study that documented substandard conditions among the African American population in Kansas City appeared in 1913. Written as a master’s thesis by Asa F. Martin, a teacher at Westport High School, and containing an introduction by L. A. Halbert, Superintendent of the BPW, the study painstakingly documented the economic, housing, community, health, education, and religious environment faced by 9.7 percent of the city’s population. The study provided important insight into the delivery of relief services. The real relief work of the BPW, the report noted, was

¹³⁶*Provident Association Report*, 1912-1913, 6-7.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, 11.

conducted by the organizations that belonged to the Affiliated Charities. Only a limited number of those charities gave regular assistance to the African American population. Of them, the Provident Association was the most prominent and did not make any “race distinctions.”¹³⁸

Martin wrote with evident middle class exasperation at what he considered a foolish expenditure by the impoverished African American’s he met: industrial insurance. This form of life insurance was purchased to provide a decent, even pretentious, burial. It was not intended to provide financial security for the survivors. He found numerous instances in which families were regularly receiving coal and groceries from the Provident Association, but were paying insurance premiums on every member of the family. Martin nonetheless castigated the inadequacy of assistance to the African American population. He noted that they represent nearly ten percent of the population, but receive only one-fifteenth of the aid of the institutional charities. “We are putting forth every effort to raise the standards of the foreign element,” he wrote, “while doing nothing for the Negro.”¹³⁹

¹³⁸Asa F. Martin, *Our Negro Population: A Sociological Study of the Negroes of Kansas City, Missouri* (Kansas City, Missouri: Franklin Hudson Publishing Company, 1913), 106, 117.

¹³⁹Martin, 106, 117, 152. Among the forty charities endorsed by the BPW at this time that serve African Americans are the Old Folks and Orphans Home, the Working Girls Home, and St. Simon’s Nursery. See *4th Annual Report*, 146. The African American population was not unique in fearing a pauper’s burial. Mrs. Kate E. Pierson, while working for the Provident Association in 1906 commented to *The Kansas City Star* that she had seen instances in which families accepted charitable assistance while also paying the premiums on several insurance policies. *The Kansas City Star*, October 13, 1906), 3. In his study of New York tenements, Riis noted that lavish funerals had taken root among tenement dwellers. “It is not at all uncommon to find the hoards of a whole lifetime of hard work and self-denial squandered on the empty show of a ludicrous funeral parade and a display of flowers that ill comports with the humble life it is supposed to exalt.” Riis, 175.

Martin reported mixed success in the self-help efforts of African Americans. “The better class of Negroes has thus far taken little interest in caring for the poor of their own race.” Only two African American physicians provided free medical care to the African American charities that requested it. Martin found encouragement, however, in the work of two organizations of African American social workers; the Brotherhood for men and the Negro Social Workers for women. The latter group worked under the direction of Miss Ellen Cook of the Provident Association, presumably the African American social worker referenced in the Provident Association’s annual report.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰Martin, 106, 153.

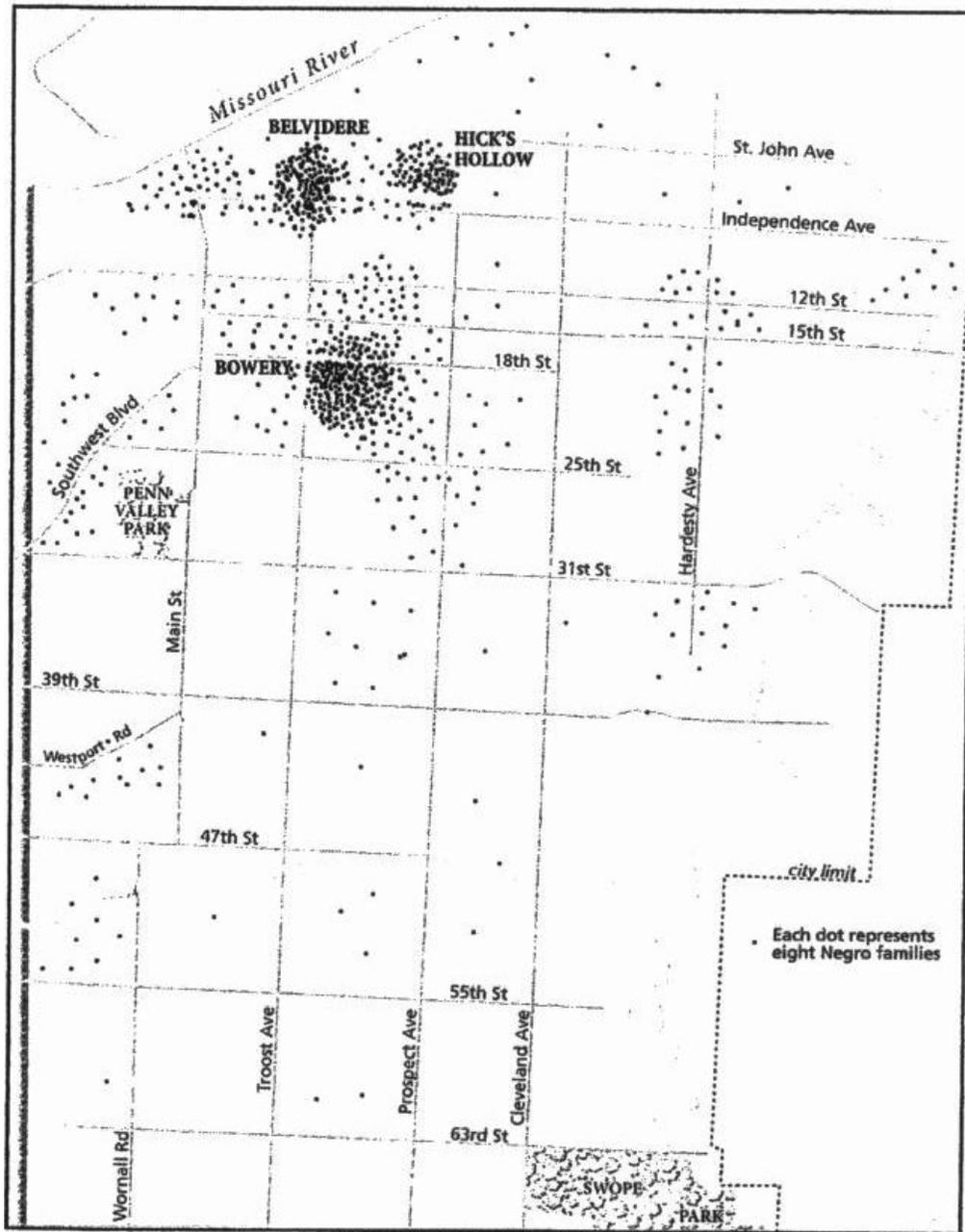


Figure 5. African American Population in Kansas City, Missouri, 1910

Source: Thomas R. Shortridge, *Kansas City and How it Grew, 1822 - 2011* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2012), 17.

The Fifth Annual Report of the BPW for the period April 21, 1913 to April 20, 1914 explored two inter-related events of significance for the city – the unusual volume of homeless people who needed assistance and the influx of representatives of the International Workers of the World. The recessions of 1910-1911 and 1913-14 had taken a toll on the working population of Kansas City and the nation. The number of homeless men who received assistance from the city nearly doubled from the previous year. Other cities that served as labor centers experienced similar increases in homelessness. The municipal quarry, the BPW, and the Helping Hand Institute cooperated in meeting the demand. The BPW recognized the larger social problems imposed by the migration of the harvest labor force as “one of the tragedies of our industrial life.” The BPW advocated attaching coaches to freight trains and penalizing stolen rides on trains as ways to save lives, stop robberies, and reduce vagrancy. The BPW argued that the system of transient agricultural employment in which working men followed the harvest across the country caused tramps to be manufactured out of honest workingmen.¹⁴¹

The Provident Association’s 5th Annual Report for 1913-14 provided evidence that the organization had come to a new view of itself and its role. The organization stated that it was a charity organization society that is “seeking to conserve family life.” The conservancy approach reflected further professionalism in applying the former friendly visitor approach in a much more focused way. This shift was most likely informed by the latest techniques of social service work taught at the Provident

¹⁴¹BPW, *Fifth Annual Report* (April 21, 1913 to April 20, 1914), 8, 63-64. Regarding the effects of the recession, see June Axinn and Herman Levin, *Social Welfare: A History of the American Response to Need* (White Plains, NY: Longman, Inc., 1982), 130.

Association's monthly educational conferences for the corps of volunteer friendly visitors. The goal of conserving families was to be achieved by prompt investigations of reports of distress and providing emergency aid as needed; procuring hospital or medical service; securing employment; reuniting relatives; promoting friendly visiting and other forms of personal service; and cooperating with churches, schools, institutions, and individuals to further the well-being of the poor.¹⁴² The Provident Association made 3,568 new visits in that year and made 17,647 visits to existing aid recipients. Those numbers compared to 2947 new visits and 16,423 visits to existing aid recipients during the previous year. Two hundred and forty-nine men were placed in permanent employment and 527 men were placed in temporary employment; 246 women were placed in permanent jobs; 923 women found temporary employment.¹⁴³

The Provident Association continued to note the importance of its work to the building of good citizens: "The service of the needy – the care of the unfortunate by the more favored – surely tends to the moral health and finer citizenship."¹⁴⁴ Yet, the Association informed the community of breadth and complexity of the task it undertook while forgetting its historical roots as a COS:

We desire to make it clear that the Provident Association is serving a double purpose to the people of Kansas City. While it is primarily a relief society, it has developed into a charity organization society, as well, and is doing the work of both. This is unusual in cities of our size, and is almost an ideal situation.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴²*Provident Association Annual Report*, October 1, 1913 to October 1, 1914, 3.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, 5-9.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 2.

The Provident Association's Annual Report for 1914-1915 painted a gloomy picture of the economy: "Demands for labor fell far short of supply . . ." The report attributed the economic difficulties to the "acute industrial situation of last winter . . . a condition that still obtains." Nowhere was the impact of corporate capitalism on the economic life of the worker more clearly illustrated in the annual reports than it is in this one: "In the past, a case of simple unemployment was quickly remedied, because a job was easily found, but now families must be aided for a long time before regular work can be secured, if at all." The consequence for the Provident Association was that fewer transient families and more resident families asked for assistance for the first time.¹⁴⁶ This general lack of employment led to the opening of two privately operated soup kitchens and a sewing room through the Board of Public Welfare.¹⁴⁷

In the face of this substantial need, the Provident Association worked to have an organization that was up-to-date and of sufficient size and strength to meet the real and changing needs of Kansas City. The report also contained currents of thought about the poor that reflect much older Spencerian thinking that blamed the poor for their condition. Evidence of modernity included the fact that the term mental illness was used for the first time in this report. Mental illness was seen as a possible cause of distress and something

¹⁴⁶*Annual Report of the Provident Association (1914-1915)*, 7.

¹⁴⁷A group associated with the Disciples of Christ opened a soup kitchen at this time to serve the Mexican immigrant community on the Westside of the Kansas City, Missouri, through the severe winter and economic downturn. Whether this soup kitchen was one of those referenced is unknown. See Smith, 43. Sewing served different purposes for different ethnic and class groups. For immigrant and working class women, sewing was used by Progressive reformers to introduce the women to industrial or domestic service. Sewing skills also kept these women from competing with men for jobs. Sarah A. Gordon, *"Make it Yourself": Home Sewing, Gender, and Culture, 1890-1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 167.

that the experienced visitor looked for in the home visits.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, the Provident Association had greatly increased its organizational complexity through a committee structure that was mentioned for the first time to oversee the functions of the organization.¹⁴⁹ At the same time, the report stated that relief must aid in the cure of the conditions that caused the distress and prevent their re-occurrence. The report described in a patronizing tone that the Provident Association helped fund a vacation school where children received training “. . . that will help them equip themselves for a more successful fight against poverty than their parents waged.” Even while striving for the highest standards of service and relating the conditions that led to unemployment and poverty, the author of the report persisted in thinking that the poor bore some amount of responsibility for their poverty.¹⁵⁰ Even in the face of progressive reforms and the presence of a highly innovative Board of Public Welfare in Kansas City, the older strain of Spencerian thought had not been extinguished.

While middle and upper class Progressives in Kansas City and elsewhere advocated reforms to ameliorate the effects of the economic system and the political machines sought primacy in delivering relief, the Industrial Workers of the World

¹⁴⁸Social work as a profession has its roots in the COS friendly visitor and settlement house caseworker traditions, which merged between 1905 and 1909. As Trattner explains, the first step in this direction came with the combining of the settlement house journal with publication of the New York Charity Organization Society publication. In 1909 Jane Addams, a representative of the settlement house movement, was the first woman and the first settlement house representative to be elected to the Presidency of the National Conference of Charities and Correction. An improved understanding of mental illness developed at this time through the work of Clifford Beers, a former mental patient, and the assistance of well known psychiatrists William James and Adolf Meyer. Beers founded the National Committee for Mental Hygiene in 1909. The group raised awareness and public concern about mental illness and worked to improve mental hospitals. See Trattner, 182-183, 195-196.

¹⁴⁹Provident Association, *Annual Report*, 1914-1915, 12.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 14.

challenged the legitimacy of the social and economic structure itself. The Wobblies, a name sometimes and perhaps mistakenly attributed to the anti-union publisher Harrison Gray Otis, editor of the *Los Angeles Times* in 1911, advocated industrial unionism and control of the means of production by the workers. They promoted their cause through open street meetings – a necessity in organizing transient laborers – and clashed with local authorities throughout the country. As a means of protest, they sought to crowd jails and demanded separate jury trials as a means of overwhelming local justice systems and burdening taxpayers.¹⁵¹ The clash of Wobblies and the Progressives in Kansas City was evident in the editorial language of the BPW’s Fifth Annual report, which indicated that the Wobblies claimed the right to speak on the streets without any consideration of overcrowding in the streets or the “character of their utterances.” Authorities made more than 2,500 arrests. The leading offenses of male prisoners of the city reflected the effects of the city’s desire to control Wobbly dissent. The political motivation and desire to control the transient population was evident in the nature of arrests during that period. Vagrancy led the list with 1,804 offenses, disturbing the peace with 660 arrests, drunkenness with 83 arrests, and blocking the sidewalk with 61 arrests. By contrast, selling liquor without a license, gambling, and drug possession netted a combined total of

¹⁵¹Tom N. McInnis, “Kansas City Free Speech Fight of 1911.” In Diane Mutti Burke and John Herron, *Kansas City, America’s Crossroads: Essays from the Missouri Historical Review* (1906-2006), 153-169. For more information on the origins of the IWW nickname and efforts to form One Big Union of workers, see Archie Green, *Wobblies, Pile Butts, and Other Heroes* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 97-139.

only 47 arrests. Eighty-three of the men arrested were committed to the farm that housed served 295 inmates.¹⁵²

One of the men arrested and sentenced to the farm in the spring of 1915 was Robert Saunders, a transient worker and dedicated Wobbly. He arrived in Kansas City from his native St. Louis. Saunders expressed his political and labor philosophy with the statement that he wanted to work, contrary to the public perception of middle and upper class people about the laboring class, but he would do so only for union wages. He believed that the workers contributed to the gross national product, yet received too little benefit from such a productive economy. He viewed the formation of unions and the recognition of collective bargaining as the most important step that could be taken in raising the standard of living for workers.¹⁵³

Saunders' aim was to earn money in Kansas City and return to St. Louis and find a job. While in Kansas City, he made a small sum of money shoveling snow and slept on the floor of the Wobbly Hall. He added to the number of transients in Kansas City. With friends, he developed a new approach to begging: "One of us held the basket while the other two entered stores and told of their sick wives and hungry kids we went back to the hall with enough food for several days." He credited the general, working class public with supporting the Wobblies' right to free speech: "Many, no doubt, felt that if

¹⁵²BPW, *5th Annual Report*, 8, 120.

¹⁵³Saunders, 114.

the police power could be used to suppress the freedom of speech of the I.W.W., it could . . . suppress the freedom of speech of anyone else.”¹⁵⁴

Saunders ran afoul of the law in Kansas City, an experience that provided him with the opportunity to write his firsthand account of the program and conditions at the farm. In support of the union demands of waitresses at the Y Not Eat? restaurant, Saunders spilled a bottle of “valerianate of ammonia,” a stink bomb, at the restaurant during its busiest hour. The smell cleared the restaurant of customers. In response to actions, Saunders was arrested on vagrancy charges and received a fine of \$150. Since he had no money, he worked off the fine through seven months of hard labor at the county farm.¹⁵⁵ This transient, then, was sentenced to the farm for his political actions in opposition to capital and in support of labor, rather than, for his status as a vagrant.

Saunders, a political prisoner, contested not only the larger economic narrative of the Progressives, but also their account of the transformational qualities of the farm, which housed 600 inmates. The farm was not segregated by race. Saunders mentioned a fellow hospital inmate, Scott, “a big husky negro” who “had the chloroform habit” and other voluntary patients who were addicted to various drugs. Saunders contracted mumps and was placed with fourteen other prisoners in the farm’s hospital. Saunders was the only prisoner in the hospital who was not there for drug treatment occasioned by the effects of the Harrison anti-narcotics law that placed rigid restrictions on the sale of narcotics and greatly reduced the supply. Before the criminal black market developed,

¹⁵⁴Diary of Robert Saunders, WHMC, 109.

¹⁵⁵Saunders, 113.

addicts found themselves with no access to the drugs. As a result, Kansas City offered a free course of treatment – the Lambert Treatment – at the farm.¹⁵⁶ The volunteer patients were provided with morphine twice each day until a class of about a dozen arrived at the hospital. Then the morphine stopped and the treatment began. Saunders described the treatment as:

[starting] with a purgative, then a dose of bella-donna every hour for fifty-six consecutive hours. Forty-six alcoholics. The size of the dose increased every hour. The treatment ended with another purgative. then [sic] they spent the balance of their twenty-one days without further treatment.¹⁵⁷

Saunders recounted that most of the drug addicts begged for drugs. The alcoholics suffered most; some were strapped down and screamed for hours. A 65-year-old morphine addict named Old Dick died two weeks after taking the cure.

Saunders also described daily life on the municipal farm. Saunders was put on a farm gang with two dozen men to grow vegetables for city institutions. The diet consisted mostly of bread – bread and syrup for breakfast and a hash of bread, stewed tomatoes, ground meat, potatoes and other vegetables for other meals. Black coffee was provided once each day. Baths were compulsory on Sunday mornings when clean clothes were issued. Cigarettes were prohibited, but pipes were allowed after the evening meal.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶For more information on the Lambert treatment and the Harrison Narcotic Act, the nation's first broad anti-drug legislation the first step toward the war on drugs in the United States, see Stilwell, 132-148.

¹⁵⁷Saunders, 114.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., 116.

Discipline was enforced in a number of ways. Attempts to escape were rewarded with progressively heavier shackles, ranging in weight up to 45 pounds. Three dark cells in the basement were referred to as “the hole.” Time in the hole was meted out as a punishment for refusal to work. The emphasis on work above all else was evidenced by the fact that prisoners who committed other offenses that were punishable by solitary confinement were held in cells with windows and electric lights. Prisoners wore a privilege tag that allowed them to visit the barber, borrow a book from the library, and attend church services. The guards removed the prisoner’s tag for infractions of the rules.¹⁵⁹

In the Progressive Era institution, boys as young as fifteen were confined along with hardened prisoners who had previously spent time in penitentiaries. These men were regarded as what Saunders calls “the real McCoy” and demanded deference from lesser criminals. Saunders related that there were many homosexuals at the farm as well. Saunders strongly disagreed with the references to the farm as a reformatory. It was in his mind a penal institution.¹⁶⁰

The way that Robert Saunders’s incarceration at the farm ended illustrates the practical functioning of Progressive Era relief institutions. Saunders’s mother visited the offices of the St. Louis Provident Association and told them that she needed her son at home in St. Louis. The St. Louis Provident Association wrote to the Kansas City Bureau of Pardons and Paroles, an agency within the Board of Public Welfare, to inform them of

¹⁵⁹Saunders, 117.

¹⁶⁰Ibid., 118.

his mother's plight. Saunders was then granted an audience with Pardons and Paroles, which released him with the agreement that Saunders would leave Kansas City within 24 hours, go home, and get a job. On July 9, 1915, Saunders left the municipal farm.¹⁶¹

Saunders, however, did not return immediately to St. Louis. At his release in the middle of the summer, he received the winter clothes he was wearing when he was arrested. They had been deloused and had shrunk as a result. He spent several days in Kansas City in violation of his parole and paid a visit to the Cooks and Waiters Union and the Waitresses Union to ask for help to purchase more suitable clothing. They provided meager assistance, which he believed was inadequate to the sacrifice he had made on their behalf. Applying a lesson of self-help to others, Saunders found that it was imprudent to carry out an action, such as the stink bombing of the Y-Not-Eat? Restaurant, on behalf of the waitresses who were not willing to take action themselves. When he did leave Kansas City, he chose to follow the wheat harvest in Kansas, rather than to return directly to St. Louis.¹⁶²

By the time of Saunders's release, the BPW was being dismantled through the machinations of machine politics. The Fifth Annual Report covered the period from April 20, 1915 to April 19, 1916. By this time, only two of the original senior officials – Board member Jacob Billikopf and Superintendent L. A. Halbert – remained affiliated with the board. Yet greater shifts occurred since the previous report. Five important initiatives of the BPW had been discontinued: housing investigations, the employment

¹⁶¹Saunders, 118.

¹⁶²Ibid., 118-119.

bureau, the social service department, vacant lot gardening, and the operation of social centers. The reduction of services greatly reduced the BPW's effectiveness by hobbling its capacity to assist the poor who benefited from its services. Looking to the future, Halbert saw two dangers looming: continued political interference and retrenchment. Halbert indicated that key personnel had left to pursue new opportunities in other cities. He also stated emphatically that the boards had not been appointed for political reasons and were frequently of the opposite political party from the mayor who appointed them. Reflecting on the BPW's achievements, Halbert pointed with pride to the fact that twelve larger cities and 50 small towns and cities in Kansas had established boards of public welfare. In addition, the School of Social Service established by the BPW completed its third year. Four students of the 41 enrolled received diplomas.¹⁶³

Yet substantial challenges to public health remained. Halbert enumerated the problems that needed to be addressed. They included the inter-marriage of "imbeciles, the feeble-minded, and degenerates;"¹⁶⁴ the need for special attention to the blind and crippled with special workshops so that they do not have to beg or go to alms houses as had been advocated earlier by the Provident Association; more clinical work to reduce the rate of infant death; the elimination of privy vaults by extending the sewer lines; the vigorous prosecution of desertion and non-support of wives by husbands, the excessive use of alcohol; low wages and long hours in certain occupations; and the piecework

¹⁶³BPW, *Seventh Annual Report*, April 20, 1915 to April 19, 1916, 1-9, 13, 15.

¹⁶⁴This statement reflects Eugenic thought that feeblemindedness, a term used to refer to sexual depravity in working class white women as well as African Americans, was passed on to "defective, unfit" offspring in keeping with LaMarkian genetics. Odem, 32, 98.

system of labor. These problems, Halbert argued, should be attacked and such was the function of the Research Bureau of the BPW.¹⁶⁵

The Seventh Annual Report addressed the conditions of the casual or transient laborer. The report noted two divergent views on the cause of poverty. The Wobblies argued that exploitation of the workers in the form of low wages and unemployment made a decent standard of living impossible. By contrast, employers maintained that casual workers either did not want to work or wasted their earnings. Of the 5,393 men who were aided by the BPW during the reporting period, 65.4 percent were judged as able bodied; 85 percent were less than 55 years of age; 86 percent spoke English readily; nineteen percent had a skill; and 90 percent of the men served by the municipal quarry were the victims of alcohol.¹⁶⁶

The report provided dramatic evidence of the scope of the migratory labor problem in the city. During December 1915, a large number of men began to apply for relief or begged from door to door. Many men appeared destitute even after a prosperous season. By March, when work was plentiful, street begging flourished. The able bodied and “crippled” beggars were so plentiful that eighteen beggars were encountered in the course of an hour’s walk on the streets. The report speculated that perhaps the city had assumed a burden that should somehow be placed on the industries that the migratory laborers follow. In keeping with the Progressive vision, the BPW’s recommendations for

¹⁶⁵BPW, *7th Annual Report*, 19. The thinking of Eugenicists and LaMarkian genetic concepts permeated the thinking of society at this time. Sexual immorality and other deviant behaviors were the result of a mental defect or “feeble-mindedness.” Feeble-minded women passed this trait onto their children and contributed to the spread of disease. Odem, 98. For more information on LaMarkian genetic theory, see Bederman, 92-93, and Woods, 127.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 96, 98.

ameliorating these conditions included: requiring lodging houses to use clean sheets, to have a lobby spacious enough for adequate seating, and to have a medical inspection of the men; banning bawdy houses; removing saloons; hiring a vagrancy officer; educating the public not to give to beggars; providing an opportunity for productivity; establishing a municipal boarding home; establishing a federal employment bureau to replace commercial agencies; and sending an investigator to labor camps to view and address the conditions.¹⁶⁷

Through the course of this chapter, a number of findings have emerged. Kansas City was deeply affected, like other new cities, by the social and economic dislocation that resulted from rapid population growth and the rise of corporate capitalism and mass unemployment. The effects were exacerbated in Kansas City because of the large number of transients who passed through Kansas City and natural disasters that confronted the population of Kansas City on a regular basis.

Similarly, the larger trends in thought that affected the nation did not leave Kansas City untouched. Early relief efforts were undertaken with the view that poverty was caused by a moral flaw within the poor themselves. That flaw could perhaps be ameliorated through the interest and friendship of a middle or upper class visitor. This approach was influenced in its harshness by Social Darwinist as expounded by Spencer and Sumner, but was ameliorated by the Judeo-Christian ethic of assisting poor, which permeated the culture. This mix of disdain and grudging charity was evident in the Provident Association's annual report of 1886. Spencerian thinking lost ground but did

¹⁶⁷BPW, 7th *Annual Report*, 99, 104.

not completely disappear. The Social Gospel predominated for the balance of the period in response to the realities of economic conditions and perhaps the observations and experiences of the visitors themselves. The Progressive Era put in place grand administrative experiments such as the Board of Public Welfare, the future of which would be decided by the collision of Progressive reform with machine politics.

CHAPTER 5

“IDIOTS, IMBECILES, SLAVES, AND WOMEN”: WOMEN’S ACTIVISM IN KANSAS CITY, 1880 TO WORLD WAR I

The joint meeting of the Women’s Christian Temperance Unions (WCTU) of Kansas City held on the afternoon of January 18, 1895 possessed an “interesting and lively” quality. Following the reading of a dialogue between the devil and a rum seller by Mrs. Carrie Oder, Miss Ellen Morris, local and state secretary of the WCTU led the “Suffrage Catechism,” which consisted of asking the assembled women a list of questions concerning suffrage. The first question, “What is a Vote?” was answered as “the recorded opinions of men people [sic].” State President and local long-time WCTU activist Clara Hoffman had arrived by the second question, “What is the ballot?” The answer was that only sovereign citizens, who are men, can cast a ballot. The third question – “On what principle was our government established?” – yielded the answer – “equality.” In response to question 4 – “How were the principles of equality first violated?” – Hoffman responded: “By disfranchising all not property owners [sic] or church members.” Clara Hoffman, “upon her feet again,” elaborated. “Yes, and poor people and people not belonging to a church were not all who were refused the right of suffrage,” she said. “Idiots, imbeciles, slaves and women were also included. Idiots, slaves, and women,” she repeated and sat down. When Miss Morris posed the question, “Why should a woman want to vote?” Hoffman replied that she wanted to vote because “. . . she is an individual and does not want to be classed with imbeciles.”¹

¹*The Kansas City Star*, January 19, 1895, 6.

The aspirations of this group of women in Kansas City echoed those of women across the United States who advocated equality and the vote for women. Suffrage advocates in Kansas City knew and interacted with national suffrage leaders such as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mary Livermore, and Frances Willard, among others, who passed through Kansas City as they crisscrossed the country speaking on behalf of the suffrage movement and the engagement of women in the issues of the day.

Clara Hoffman exemplified the Kansas City activist with national ties. She served for 25 years as the president of the Missouri WCTU. During that time, she also served for twelve years as the recording secretary of the national WCTU. She was a close associate of Frances Willard and traveled the country and world on behalf of the WCTU and its many and varied causes. Yet, local historian Carrie Westlake Whitney, in her encyclopedic history of Kansas City and its prominent people written in 1908, placed the biographical sketch of Hoffman within that of her husband, Dr. Goswin Hoffman, M.D., a native of Germany who died in 1883, two years prior to Hoffman's attendance at the meeting of the Kansas City unions. Hoffman, nee Cleghorn, was born in St. Lawrence County, New York, to a wealthy farming family. When she arrived in Kansas City with her husband in 1871, Hoffman was "deeply interested in all that pertains to intellectual and moral progress, to reform and improvement." Yet Hoffman, a married woman with children, led a life that was uncharacteristic for married, high status women at the time. Before becoming the state WCTU president, she taught and served as the principal of the Lathrop School for twelve

years. She was also an early and active member of the high-status First Congregational Church.²



Figure 6: Clara Hoffman

Source: Missouri Valley Special Collections

Chapter 5 will trace women's activism in Kansas City from the early 1880s to World War I. In the process, the chapter will examine the major women's organizations that pre-dated and continued to exist during that time and the women's organizations that were founding during the period. The study includes the Women's Christian Association (WCA), the WCTU, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the women's clubs that operated within the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) and the

²Whitney, vol. 3, 379-380.

work of the GFWC itself, the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), the Association of Colored Women (ACW), and the Catholic Ladies Aid Society/Catholic Women's League (CLA/CWL). This discussion will take place within the context of the structural ties that bound the Kansas City organizations with national organizations and within national patterns of women's activism during the Progressive Era

This chapter seeks to answer the question left unresolved from Chapter 2. What happened to the women who belonged to the WCA when it was a broad-based organization that included equalitarian, reformist, and benevolent women once the organization narrowed its focus over the course of the 1870s? Through what channels did they find avenues for their activism? As noted in Chapter 2, the WCA membership was comprised primarily of elite women at the end of its founding decade. These women housed orphaned children – a mission that was considered appropriate for their gender and station in life. No longer was the organization interested in reform activities such as rescuing “fallen” women or holding public suffrage lectures by Susan B. Anthony as it had been in its early years. Yet, the women whose interests no longer found expression in the WCA did not retreat quietly to their homes and occupy their time with activities appropriate to the feminine sphere. Rather, this chapter will argue that these women formed themselves into local chapters of national organizations. These local clubs furthered their interests and provided opportunities for the women to take an active role in shaping their communities and creating their worlds. The women claimed expanded space in the public sphere by making the implicit argument that they were simply enlarging the feminine sphere of the hearth by

addressing societal ills that threatened the home. Whitney, speaking of the rise of women's clubs in 1908 offered the observation that:

The Women's Clubs [sic] are now the intermediaries . . . between the plane of the home and the planes of the business and political world The forums and counting houses. . . of men are no longer alien to worlds of women by this new spirit of reciprocity man has lost none of his virility nor woman her tenderness.³

The chapter will also argue that the organizations they formed and joined, such as the WCA at its founding, did not exist to advance single issues. Rather, the women's organizations in the span of nearly 40 years from 1880 to World War I tended to embrace one or more of the three strains of women's activism – benevolence, reform, and equality – at one time or another. In nearly all cases, however, an organization was primarily involved in one strain with the others as secondary or tertiary interests. Unlike the unique experience of the unsettled community that combined all three areas of interest into a single organization in the early 1870s, the much more established metropolis of the 1880s and beyond strove to find its place within the larger national context and fashion itself in the image of other cities, primarily those in the East. To make this case, the chapter will carefully examine the benevolent, reform, and equality activities of each organization.

³Whitney, vol. 3, 640. A body of literature argued that a separate political culture existed that made women's political culture more effective than men's in advancing political goals. Robyn Muncy, for example, argued that women were successful in creating a female dominion of a limited scope, because men were willing to cede power when the subject in question was women and children. Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890 – 1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), xv. Theda Skocpol argued that the WCTU, NCU, and GFWC were able to disseminate maternalistic social legislation to states across the country in the 1910s. These advocates of maternalistic policies were far more effective in their advocacy than were advocates of paternalistic policies for the benefit of male wage earners. Skocpol, 56. Sklar contrasted the female political culture that gave Florence Kelley a voice in a narrow range of public policy formation with that of Henry Demarest Lloyd, whose voice and views were muted in that policy area, which was claimed by women activists. Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work: The Rise of Women's Political Culture, 1830-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 228.

These activities will be discussed in the order from most active in that category to least active. Through this examination, the study will determine whether and how the tri-partite structure of women's activism that was present within the Women's Christian Association in its early years shaped the landscape of women's activism in Kansas City over the next 40 years.

Because religious affiliation provides a very useful marker for social class, the chapter will compare a sampling of the members of each organization to determine which tended to be associated with which denominations. It will also examine the membership of each organization to determine whether women commonly took part in more than one organization or limited their activity to just one organization. It will also consider how religious affiliation influenced those decisions, tracing how, if at all, the organizations' activities and ideologies were influenced by denominational affiliation.

The chapter will be informed by the literature that examines the shifting construction of gender in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as studies of women's activism in other cities. The moral superiority construct – the view that women's separate domestic sphere and sexual purity set them apart for special activities within the evangelical Protestant church and under the direction of the male clergy – provided a philosophical justification for women to expand their sphere from the hearth to the street.⁴ Women used their claims of morality superiority to address problems of poverty, crime, intemperance, as well as women's rights and suffrage.⁵

⁴Cott, 158-159.

⁵Hewitt, Rochester, 19.

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, writing in 1985, argued that women made substantial gains over the course of the nineteenth century through female solidarity across class, race, and religious lines. That solidarity resulted in a public role for women that provided a critique of the male world, which needed to be reformed according to the feminine vision. The public space claimed by women through moral superiority and the extension of the hearth into the public sphere gave rise over time to the construct of the New Woman, someone who acts not out of a position of superiority, but rather from a position of equality. Female participation in higher education, the workforce, and the professions sparked a counter-reaction among men. Male discomfort with the New Woman of the 1880s and 1890s gave way to open hostility by the 1920s as demonstrated by the trope of the maladjusted, mannish lesbian.⁶ Nancy Cott, writing in 1987, placed the 1910s as the only decade in which suffrage became a mass movement.⁷ John D’Emilio and Estelle D. Friedman, took a more global view in their 1997 work in which they argue that the meaning and place of sexuality in America evolved from family-centered reproduction, to romantic relationships in the nineteenth century, to commercialized sexuality and the separation of sex from marriage. Unlike Smith-Rosenberg and Cott, D’Emilio and Friedman argued that the view of women as morally superior had evaporated by the 1920s.⁸ Smith-Rosenberg claimed the demise of the moral superiority construction happened much

⁶Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 15-280.

⁷Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 30-42.

⁸John D’Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 233.

earlier and can be found at least as early as the writings and speeches of the Grimke sisters.⁹ Cott argued that feminists had abandoned the moral superiority argument by 1910.¹⁰ Further evidence of the decline of the notion of moral superiority can be found in Kansas City as early as the 1890s. The effect of this reaction against the assertive, self-confident woman in the public sphere will be evaluated in the setting of Kansas City.

This chapter owes its inspiration to Nancy Hewitt's 1984 community study of women's social activism in Rochester, New York between 1822-1872. In it, Hewitt identified the three separate strains of women's activism – benevolence, reform, and equity. Hewitt studied these groups within the larger process of social change in Rochester during the period, the extent to which each group challenged the men of their circle, and the social and economic characteristics of these women and the activities they pursued. Benevolent women sought to ameliorate conditions within the existing order. Reformers worked to cleanse individuals and institutions of evil. Equality envisioned forming a democratic society based on sexual, racial, and social equality.¹¹

Subsequent studies of such cities as Galveston, Texas, Davenport, Iowa, and Chicago, Illinois, did not attempt to analyze the broad sweep of women's activism in the community. Rather they focused on one of the strains of activism as illustrated by a specific organization in each community. Elizabeth Hayes Turner's study of Galveston, for example, dealt with the role of elite white women, both Protestant and Jewish, in rebuilding

⁹Smith-Rosenburg, 126.

¹⁰Cott, 30-42.

¹¹Nancy A. Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, NY, 1822-1872* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 21-23, 231.

the city and engaging in progressive causes, including municipal housekeeping¹² and suffrage before and after the turn of the century hurricane.¹³ Sharon Wood's study of Davenport, paid obeisance to Lebsack's aphorism to "choose a place small enough to see the whole, and read everything." While an important contribution to the scholarship of women's activism in the Midwest, the study looked only at the work, albeit important, of a female physician who founded an organization that provided a place of respite for working women in the unfriendly geography of Davenport's commercial district through the "Lend a Hand Club." As Woods amplified, paid employment in a Gilded Age city placed women outside the reciprocal obligations of marriage and implicitly compromised her sexual reputation. While other activist organizations no doubt existed in Davenport at the time, their activities – some of which may have been complementary to those of Lend a Hand – received short-shrift.¹⁴ Kathryn D. McCarthy's examination of the transition of elite women's activities in Chicago between 1880 and 1920 found that their activities shifted from providing direct relief services to raising funds for relief and charity and, finally, to merely contributing to charitable causes. Professionals in the field of relief services and the management of charitable organizations increasingly operated these charities.¹⁵

¹²For a discussion of municipal housekeeping, see Skocpol, 331.

¹³Elizabeth Hayes Turner, *Women, Culture, and Community: Religion and Reform in Galveston, 1880-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 8-13, 96.

¹⁴Sharon E. Wood, *The Freedom of the Streets: Work, Citizenship, and Sexuality in a Gilded Age City* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 9-78. Wood dismissed the effect on the YWCA on empowering women, saying that the YWCAs were "immersed in the ideal of domesticity." The Kansas City YWCA, while evidencing an element of domesticity, also empowered its members through education and social connections.

¹⁵Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Noblesse Oblige: Charity and Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago, 1849-1929* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 173-179.

Unlike other case studies that focus narrowly on one group, this chapter will illuminate the process of change in women's activism following the retrenchment of the Women's Christian Association in the late 1870s. The chapter will examine the formation of various women's organizations of varying economic, sectarian, and ethnic/racial lines. In this way, the work of women's organizations will be placed within the larger context of a rapidly growing city with a vigorously contested partisan landscape. This study will also highlight Kansas City's growing sense of itself as a city comparable in amenities and sophistication with the older cities to its east and growing self-identity of the residents as Kansas Citians.

The Three Strains of Women's Activism in Kansas City

The three strains of women's activism – benevolence, reform, and equality – that were once contained within the Women's Christian Association broke apart by the mid-1870s because of the WCA's preference for engaging only in benevolent activities as suited the benevolent women's perception of their appropriate role in society. The reformers and advocates of equality, over time, found other groups that provided a means to express their concerns. With the exception of the WCA, the other organizations operated locally as chapters of national organizations. As such, local members gained access to national and even international networks of activist women and ideas that they used in their work in Kansas City. Some local women served in leadership roles within national women's organizations and help shape their activities. In all cases, involvement in the local chapter of a national organization brought women in Kansas City into close communication with the national conversations on issues that were important to them. They and their city no

longer walked alone as a unique experiment, but rather entered the mainstream of American women's activism. An examination of the origins and interests of each organization provides important insight into where their activities tended to fall within the tri-partite structure. Some organizations existed to advance a single strain, while others advanced more than one and, in some cases, pursued all three.

Benevolence has been defined as an expression of value in relief efforts outside the home; reformers, by contrast, sought to rid the world of vice, rather than ameliorate social ills; and supporters of equality embraced activities to bring about social, sex, and race equality.¹⁶ While the three strains differed substantially in their approach to social good, they were united by a common bond – the desire to change elements of the existing social and economic structure, but not to overturn it. The three-pronged structure of activism existed within the Women's Christian Association in Kansas City in the early 1870s was followed by other women's organizations in succeeding decades, including the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the General Federation of Women's Club (GFWC), and the Young Women's Christian Association, among others. These organizations – particularly the clubs associated with the GFWCs – had their origins in the needs of leisure class women, who learned to speak in public, run meetings, work with strangers, and think in a community-wide fashion.¹⁷ As Ruth Bordin said of the WCTU, the greatest long-term result of the organization was that a large group of women with little if any political

¹⁶Hewitt, 44.

¹⁷O'Neill, 84-86.

experience learned the practice of politics.¹⁸ While women who had been involved with abolition or women's rights had learned these skills decades early, the mass membership nature of the WCTU spread these skills to a much larger population. These women learned to exercise authority and leadership within the club structure and to carry those skills into the larger world. The organizations had distinctly separate memberships and goals in Kansas City. As suffrage became a unifying issue in the 1910s, the groups worked in collaboration to a far greater degree than before or since.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union, the leader in the suffrage fight, had its roots in the protests of evangelical women and began in 1873 as a protest against the sale of alcohol. The organization was founded in 1874 and gained momentum especially in the Midwest among middle class women. But by the 1880s, the WCTU saw alcohol abuse as a symptom of poverty, rather than its cause. WCTU President Frances Willard concluded in 1883 that only through women's suffrage could the necessary votes be found to achieve prohibition.¹⁹ The WCTU worked steadily on behalf of the ballot for women for the next four decades. Through its work as the largest organization of women in the United States with 200,000 members by 1892, the WCTU made suffrage an increasingly respectable position for white middle class women by the 1890s. The organization grew to 344,000 members by 1921.²⁰

¹⁸Bordin, 138.

¹⁹Ibid., 117.

²⁰Alison M. Parker, *Purifying America: Women, Cultural Reform, and Pro-Censorship Activism, 1873-1933* (Urban and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 5; Bordin, 14.

The effectiveness of the WCTU as a movement following the death of Francis Willard in 1898 is a matter of academic dispute. Bordin saw the decline from the highly respected, effective, and forward-looking “do everything” organization during Willard’s presidency to a peevish, narrow minded, one-issue group after 1900.²¹ In contrast, Allison Parker argued that the WCTU remained active and highly effective in a long list of progressive causes, including suffrage, child labor, mandatory school attendance, juvenile courts, and an increased regulatory role for government. At the same time, the WCTU fought for its vision of social purity, which attacked the pastimes and mores of both the lower and upper classes and their high and low culture, including prize fighting, crime story papers, theatre advertisements as well as ballet, semi-nude sculptures and paintings, and Theodore Dreiser’s realism. The WCTU sought to impose its own wholesome “middle brow” aesthetic sense in literature and the visual and performing arts on the American public.²² These cultural sensitivities were located between what the WCTU perceived as the vulgarity of working class tastes and the licentiousness of upper class preferences.

Against this backdrop, the WCTU was organized and functioning in Kansas City by 1881. At the first meeting reported in *The Kansas City Star*, Clara Hoffman was elected president and the Union discussed the establishment of a free coffee house and reading

²¹Bordin, 155.

²²Allison Parker, *Purifying America: Women, Cultural Reform, and Pro-Censorship Activism, 1873-1933* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 7-9, 17, 225-227.

room.²³ Multiple WCTU chapters came into existence through the years. These included the venerable Central WCTU as well as new entrants such as the Hoffman and Willard chapters. The WCTU operated with a city-wide, county, congressional district, state, and national governance structures.

The General Federation of Women's Clubs came into existence in 1889 to meet the needs of women of the leisure class. By 1892, 20,000 women belonged to the GFWC; by 1900, 150,000 women belonged. Like the WCTU, the women's clubs provided a venue for women to learn about public life through public speaking, running for offices, and thinking on a community-wide basis. The organization also embraced the Progressive impulse and indulged its taste for using its influence for community betterment, also known as "municipal housekeeping."²⁴ The GFWC arrived in Kansas City soon after.²⁵ By 1893, the GFWC of Kansas City asked that the insane patients at the poor farm be sent to a "properly conducted insane asylum," among other items of business.²⁶ By 1896, 21 clubs in Kansas City with about 500 women belonged to the Missouri Federation.²⁷

²³ *The Kansas City Star*, October 10, 1881, 1. The influence of the WCTU in women's activism is difficult to overstate. As Bordin described, "During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, women used the WCTU as a base for their participation in reformist causes, as a sophisticated avenue for political action, as support for demanding the ballot, and as a vehicle for supporting a wide range of charitable activities." Bordin, xvi.

²⁴ O'Neill, 84-86.

²⁵ *The Kansas City Star*, February 20, 1889, 2. Skocpol argued that the founding of the GFWC allowed elite and middle class women throughout the country to be influenced by Eastern ideas and to organize federations in their states to "civilize" their state and community. Skocpol, 329.

²⁶ *The Kansas City Star*, October 12, 1893.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, December 27, 1896, 6.

The Young Women’s Christian Association movement began as a prayer circle among socially prominent women in New York in 1858. The organization then began assisting the increasing numbers of native-born “working girls” who were arriving in the city. Assistance included residences, and other temporal as well as religious programs. The movement spread to major cities of the urban Northeast in the years immediately following the Civil War. The YWCA served the secondary purpose of allowing women to work across denominational lines by creating large organizations that were outside the control of the male hierarchy of Protestant churches – organizations that furthered the evangelical desire to reform both society and the individual.²⁸ The YWCA of Kansas City, Missouri, celebrated its first anniversary on June 15, 1891.²⁹ The dating of the first anniversary is confusing, however. A newspaper article mentioned a YWCA meeting at “the home” – an already established entity – on September 21, 1889.³⁰ The separate YWCA of Kansas City, Kansas, operated during this time as well. Its activities will be discussed to provide a basis of comparison between the two YWCA organizations.

As with the WCTU and the GFWC, the Catholic Ladies Aid Society provided the opportunity for Catholic women across parishes in Kansas City to organize and act with a high level of autonomy outside the male church structure. The CLA received its first mention in the *Star* on December 27, 1900, when it distributed \$400 worth of candy, toys, nuts, fruit, food, and clothing to 200 children and their families. The article noted that the

²⁸Nancy Marie Robinson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 12-13.

²⁹*The Kansas City Star*, June 15, 1891, 1.

³⁰*Ibid.*, September 21, 1889, 2.

CLA (later referred to as the Catholic Women's League) had been in existence for eleven years, thus placing its founding at the same time as the YWCA and the GFWC.³¹

Founded in 1893 in Chicago through the work of a Hannah Greenebaum Solomon, a member of a wealthy Chicago merchant family and one of the few prominent Jewish members of a prestigious women's club in Chicago, the National Conference of Jewish Women patterned its structure and operations on the larger women's club movement. The organization's purposes included fellowship; a better understanding of Judaism among Jewish women, who had previously not taken an active role in the faith; the improvement of Sabbath schools and advocacy of reform; and working against religious persecution. Solomon became the first president.³² The Kansas City chapter of the NCJW made its first appearance in the *Star* on April 15, 1896, when it held a performance of Faust to raise funds for the free bath, the sewing and industrial school, and the kindergarten the organization founded.³³

The National Association of Colored Women formed in 1895 through the leadership of Ida B. Wells, although she did not hold any positions of prominence within it. The organization brought together the African American women's clubs that had already formed across the country. Assaults on the character of African Americans in general and

³¹*The Kansas City Star*, December 12, 1900, 2. Boylan argued that the Catholic feminine ideal was nearly indistinguishable from that of Protestants through the first four decades of the nineteenth century and that nuns displaced lay women in nurturing activities. See Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797-1840*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 61. By the late nineteenth century, Catholic women in Kansas City and elsewhere appeared to have replicated and adapted a form of activism similar to that of their Protestant sisters.

³²Faith Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 9-25.

³³*The Kansas City Star*, April 15, 1896, 1.

on leading African American women leaders in particular provided the impetus for the national organization.³⁴ The only appearance of the Association of Colored Women in the *Star* occurred on July 14, 1901, when Mrs. J. S. Yates, “a teacher in Kansas City for a number of years,” defeated Margaret Murray Washington (wife of Booker T. Washington) for the presidency of the national organization. The article included the editorial comment that Yates is “one of the few enthusiastic workers along educational lines among the colored.”³⁵



Figure 7. Josephine Silone Yates

Source: Missouri Valley Special Collections

³⁴Mia Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2009), 193.

³⁵*The Kansas City Star*, July 14, 1901. For more on the remarkable life of Josephine Silone Yates, see Gary R. Kremer and Cindy M. Mackey, “Yours for the Race”: The Life and Work of Josephine Silone Yates,” *Missouri Historical Review* 90, no. 2 (January 1996), 199-215.

Very little overlap in membership existed among the organizations. An analysis of the 159 members of the GFWC, 102 members of the WTCU, 77 members of the WCA, 35 members of the GFWC, eleven members of the Kansas City History Club, a club of high status women that was not within the GFWC, and seven members of NCJW revealed that only twenty individuals were members of more than one organization.³⁶ Some women were members of two or more organizations. Of the women who held membership in two organizations, seven held membership in both the WCA and YWCA, three in both the YWCA and the WTCU, and one each in the Kansas City History Club/WCA, YWCA/GFWC, WCA/WTCU, WCA/GFWC, the NCJW/GFWC, and WTCU/GFWC. Of the hundreds of members of these clubs in Kansas City, the fact that only twenty women have been identified as belonging to more than one demonstrates the separateness of each organization.³⁷

Denominational affiliation goes some way toward explaining the lack of shared members among the various organizations, but not all of it. Based on the churches where the various groups held meetings and the clergy who participated in their events, loose

³⁶No members of the CWA or the CLA society were included on the list, because no members of those organizations overlapped with the other organizations.

³⁷That number may be high as it assumes, for example, that Mrs. Charles Campbell of the WTCU was the same “Mrs. Campbell” who also belonged to the WCA; that Mrs. T.H. Kennedy who belonged to the Y.W.C.A. was the same “Mrs. Kennedy” who belonged to the WTCU; that Mrs. A. B. Frankel of the NCJW was also Mrs. Daniel Frankel of a GFWC organization; that Mrs. Judge Allen who belonged to the WTCU was the same “Agnes B. Allen” who also belonged to the WCA; and that “Mrs. Morgan” of the YWCA was the same person as Mrs. J. S. Morgan of the GFWC and Mrs. M. B. Morgan of the WCA.³⁷ In addition to 14 women who overlapped with two organizations, three women overlapped with three organizations. Mrs. Morgan overlapped with three organizations as did Sarah W. Coates – WCA, Kansas City History Club, and the GFWC and Dr. Martha C. Dibble overlapped with three clubs: Kansas City History Club, WCA, and the YWCA. One hardy soul, Mrs. J. C. Merine, wife of then-well known artist and painter of portraits of prominent Americans, John C. Merine, belonged to the WCA, WTCU, YWCA, and the Kansas City History Club. Women were often listed by their own initials as well as their husband’s initials. For more on the artistic career of John C. Merine, see Whitney, Vol. 2, 144.

denominational lines can be drawn. The WCTU, for example, interacted with the Methodist Church (nine times), the Congregational Church (five times), the Christian Church (four times), the Presbyterian Church (two times), and the English Lutheran Church (two times). Bordin's view that the enthusiastic denominations – Methodists and Baptists – dominated in the WCTU in the early years, but were less influential in later years also holds true in Kansas City.³⁸ Clara Hoffman of the WCTU, for example, was a long-time member of the First Congregational Church, not one of the so-called enthusiastic denominations. That Kansas City's Central Union hosted a lecture by Mary Livermore, a suffrage advocate, Unitarian, and president of the Massachusetts Union, who had first spoken in Kansas City thirteen years earlier, suggests that the Union benefited from a broad Protestant base.³⁹ By contrast, the YWCA met at or had a member of the Presbyterian clergy present three times; Methodist, three times; and Congregational and Episcopal, one time each. Only one identifiable example of overlapping membership has been identified with members of the NCJW and the other clubs. Ida Block (Mrs. Sol. Block) was a founding member of the local chapter of the NCJW.⁴⁰ The ecumenical quality of Kansas City discussed in Chapter 3 is also evident in the fact that Ida Block⁴¹ and Miss Sybil Feineman were both charter members of the Athenaeum, a club within the GFWC. No

³⁸Bordin, 169.

³⁹*DJC*, January 25, 1871, 4. *Kansas City Evening Star*, February 6, 1884, 1. On Livermore's religious affiliation and position in the Massachusetts Union, see Bordin, 48.

⁴⁰Howard F. Sachs, "Development of the Jewish Community in Kansas City, 1864-1908," *Missouri Historical Review* 60, no. 3 (April 1966), 356.

⁴¹In Ida Block's obituary, she was noted as a person deeply involved in philanthropic activities within the Jewish community. Mrs. B. A. Feineman was her sister. Presumably, Miss Sybil Feineman was her niece. *The Kansas City Star*, October 23, 1898, 2.

instances of overlap were found between the CLA or the NACW and any other organization.

To assess the congruence of denominational ties and organizational membership, the study compared the membership list of the First Congressional Church and a list of prominent members of the Central Presbyterian Church (formerly the 1st Presbyterian Church) – session members, elders, deacons, and others with the members of women’s organizations. Twenty-six members of the First Congregational Church held membership in the women’s organizations. Of those, the highest number (sixteen) belonged to the YWCA, five were members of the WCA, three belonged to the WCTU, and two belonged to the GFWC. It is significant, however, that both Clara Hoffman, Missouri WCTU president, and Mrs. Ira Lewis, a long-time activist with the Central WCTU, were both members of the First Congregational Church. None of the 26 women belonged to more than one women’s organization.⁴² Of the women who were members of the Central Presbyterian Church, seven possible matches of names were identified. Of those seven women, five were members of the YWCA, one of the WCTU, and one of the WCA. Of the four conclusive matches, all four were members of the YWCA.⁴³ From this examination of church records, the study concludes that the higher status denominations, such as Congregational and Presbyterian churches, were disproportionately represented in the membership lists of the YWCA. Membership in the prestigious WCA was more common

⁴²B. B. Seelye, *A Brief History of the First Congregational Church Kansas City, Missouri, 1866 – 1909* (Kansas City, MO: Hailman Printing Co.), 1909.

⁴³Bertha Wright Swofford, *The Light Shined: History of Central Presbyterian Church* (Kansas City, MO: Brown-White-Lowell Press, 1957), 15-130.

in the First Congregational Church than membership in the WCTU. Relatively few members of each congregation were members of the WCTU. At least one member of the Christian Science Church, Mrs. Merine, was active in each of the organizations.⁴⁴ This comparison, then, provides the conclusion that women in high status churches were much more commonly involved with the YWCA than with the WCTU. The WCTU, however, was not without representation in these churches. Clearly, the majority of the membership of the WCTU must then have been drawn predominantly from other denominations, most likely from denominations such as the Methodists and the Baptists.

Benevolence

Among the three strains of women's activism, benevolence came to dominate the work of the WCA by the mid-1870s. This strain occupied a place in the work of nearly every women's organization in Kansas City. Some of the organizations focused exclusively on benevolence, while others engaged in the activity as a tangential aspect of their work. The strong, positive correlation between an organization's involvement in benevolence and the socio-economic status of its members proved true in Kansas City, just as it did across the country. Simply put, organizations formed for the purpose of benevolence devoted much greater resources to that activity than organizations that were formed for other purposes, such as reform or sexual equality.

The Women's Christian Association was the only organization in Kansas City formed for the purpose of providing benevolence outside of sectarian lines. By the end of the 1870s, the membership consisted of elite women and existed to exercise benevolence.

⁴⁴Whitney, vol. 2, 146.

The WCA's benevolent emphasis was reflected in the 1880 annual report, which was discussed at the regularly monthly meeting of January 1881. The report showed that the WCA had made 699 visits to the homes of the sick and provided 1744 meals and 584 charity lodgings at the WCA home.⁴⁵ Later that year, the WCA discussed establishing an orphanage through the purchase of the former widows and orphans home.⁴⁶ By 1882, the WCA had engaged noted Kansas City architect Henry Van Brunt to design an orphans' home. Plans were delayed substantially, however, by legal issues surrounding the will of Mary Gilliss Troost, whose bequest of land near "Penn" Street and Southwest Boulevard was restricted to serve as the site of a new orphans' home. Yet, she did not provide funds for the home's construction. Through legal proceedings that stretched out over the 24 years, the WCA succeeded in gaining the court's permission to sell the lots and use the proceeds – nearly \$75,000 – to construct an orphanage at 22nd and Tracy. In 1894, the WCA announced plans to build both an orphanage and a home for aged couples on land donated by Thomas Swope at 23rd and Tracy.⁴⁷ The two buildings stand today at 22nd and Tracy. The annual report for 1894 was shared at the 25th annual meeting of the WCA. The organization reported that 138 children were received at the home that year. Of those, 25 were charity cases. Of the 45 children at the home at the end of the year, ten were babies. The WCA facilitated twenty adoptions in 1894. The attending physician, Dr. Merriman, reported "no deaths among the children and twenty-four among the babies." The deaths of

⁴⁵ *Kansas City Evening Star*, January 8, 1881, 1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, December 30, 1881, 1.

⁴⁷ *The Kansas City Star*, January 5, 1894, 6, and December 15, 1898, 8.

the babies were explained by the fact that “many of the babies are in frail condition and even dying when they are received at the home, and it is sometimes impossible to nourish them.” On a happier note, the newspaper reported that the treasury balance stood at \$30,000, a sum that was made possible in part by the proceeds from the New Year’s Eve reception and poetry soiree.⁴⁸

With the construction of the homes for orphans and aged couples, the WCA appeared only occasionally in the pages of the *Star* over the next fifteen years.

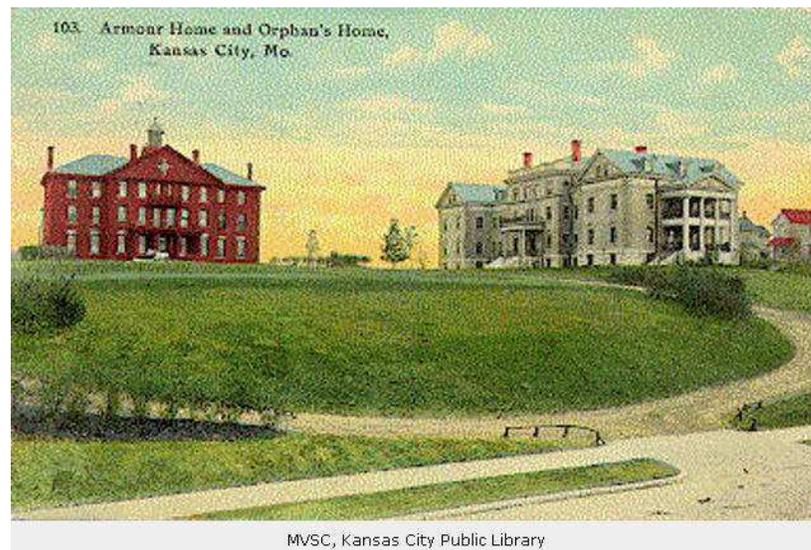


Figure 8. Armour Home and Orphan’s Home, Kansas City, MO

Source: Missouri Valley Special Collections

⁴⁸*The Kansas City Star*, January 4, 1895, 8. Riis reported that in New York few “outcast” babies survived. Of the 508 babies received at the Randall’s Island Hospital in one year, 333 babies, or 65.55 percent died. “The high rate of mortality among foundlings is not to be marveled at. The wonder is, rather, that any survive.” Riis, 183.

In one of those appearances, in 1911, the *Star* reported about a couple who had used two lots in the east bottoms as their entry fee for the Armour Memorial Home.⁴⁹ Later that month, the children of the Gilliss Orphans' Home, the name given to the orphanage by the WCA in honor of the gift of land from Mary Gilliss Troost, participated in the Mothers Day festivities that also involved the children of the Institutional Church⁵⁰, the Jewish Educational Institute, and churches across the city. Seventy children from Gilliss participated. Half the children wore white carnations in honor of the mothers who were dead. The other half of the children wore red carnations in honor of their mothers who were living.⁵¹ Whether these mothers had placed their children at the Gilliss Home on a temporary basis due to hardship or had given them over the orphanage on a permanent basis is unclear.

The closest the WCA came to engaging in any reform activity was the discussion of organizing a "Youths' Mutual Improvement Association" in 1886. The brief article noted that a WCA committee was appointed to confer with Colonel Hogeland in this regard. No further mention of the association was made in the *Star*.⁵²

Governance of the organization by the members provided a consistent theme in the activities of the WCA. Unlike the experience of benevolent women in Chicago, members

⁴⁹*The Kansas City Star*, May 2, 1911, 2.

⁵⁰The Institutional Church is described as having been started by the late C.W. Moore and as one of the greatest influences for good among the foreign element of the North Side. *The Kansas City Star*, December 25, 1910, 2. Whitney provided additional information on the Institutional Church, its founding, and its programs. Whitney, Vol. 1, 417.

⁵¹*The Kansas City Star*, May 15, 1911, 3.

⁵²*Ibid.*, April 5, 1886.

of the WCA remained very much in control of the management and operation of the orphanage and the home for aged couples, both gender appropriate activities for benevolent women. Reasons for this difference from the Chicago experience include the relatively smaller population of Kansas City as compared with Chicago and the relatively compact geographical size of Kansas City, which allowed for convenient participation in the organization's activities and interaction among the WCA members.

Unlike the WCA, the Young Women's Christian Association in Kansas City benefited from an affiliation with a national organization. At the national level, the upper class women had founded the YWCA to "work with, not for," the native born, white women and girls who were arriving in the cities to seek work. Their approach was to prevent these women from succumbing to the unhealthy influences of the city without the supervision of their families, rather than rescuing them from a disreputable life.⁵³ In keeping with the YWCA's national focus, the Kansas City, Missouri, chapter focused the majority of its efforts on providing a safe space for women who worked in offices and department stores in the center of the otherwise hostile central business district. The YWCA provided a lunchroom, gymnasium, and religious and other educational classes,

⁵³Nancy Marie Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 11-14. For more information on the so-called preventive work among the working class women in the city, the rise of commercial amusements, and the efforts of upper class women to control the sexuality of working class women by raising the age of consent across the country, see Mary Odem, *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 187-188. For information on the two-way transmission of social values and the shift from the homo-social to the hetero-social world of young working class women in this period, see Cathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York, 1880-1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 186-188. For information on the development of the female working class in New York City and the efforts of middle and upper class women to impose their values on the lower class women in the antebellum period, see Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 214-220.

and other services, including an employment bureau, a savings bank, and a hotel for hundreds of working women. In this way, the YWCA resembled the function of the Lend A Hand Club in Davenport, Iowa.⁵⁴ Yet, the YWCA also acted on occasion much like a benevolent organization by holding elaborate fundraising events attended by members of society and otherwise catering to their social needs and desire for involvement. This tendency may be due, in part, to the overlap of seven members with the benevolent WCA. Two fundraising events held eleven years apart were described as attracting the society crowd. The first event drew what the *Star* called “society and particularly society from Hyde Park and the South side” to an evening of *tableaux vivants* staffed by other members of society with names like Holden, Van Brunt, and Bullene. These society people represent the trend of intra-city migration from the older north part of the city to the newly developing areas on the city’s south side, a transition facilitated by the expansion of streetcar lines. As the populations shifted, neighborhoods became more socially homogeneous. The tableaux included scenes of the French imperial court, the American colonial period, and the Grecian period, among others. The event raised \$500 in net proceeds.⁵⁵ Eleven years later, the YWCA held an “Old World Market” with special

⁵⁴Efforts to serve these urban working women were not limited to the YWCA. A Sunday school newsletter for young women at the Grand Avenue Temple asked: “Are you a young woman alone in the city and lonesome? Do you long for some real congenial companions?” Women responding in the affirmative were invited to attend the class. Grand Ave. Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Gleaner* 1, no. 8, (June 1914), 1. The Grand Avenue Advance newsletter carried a notice in 1915 that “. . . the assembly room of our church is open from 11 until 2 to provide a comfortable place where young women may bring their own lunches. A matron is in charge. Tea and cocoa is [sic] provided to all who desire them.” *The Grand Avenue Methodist Church, The Grand Avenue Advance* 1, no. 3 (May 16, 1915).

⁵⁵*The Kansas City Star*, April 24, 1897, 1.

scenery for countries that included Egypt, France, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, and Spain.⁵⁶

The YWCA also met the social needs of affluent young women. In 1901, Mrs. S. W. Moore called together 25 young, unmarried women to form an auxiliary guild. The duties of the auxiliary were to “provide entertainment for the working girls and women and to form study classes” as needed. This language clearly indicated that the auxiliary members were not among the class of working women, but served to model middle and upper class behavior. The auxiliary was also asked to help serve “noonday luncheon.” The group agreed first to arrange for refreshments and entertainment at the upcoming reception for working women.⁵⁷ In 1908, the YWCA served both the social needs of the society supporters and working women by opening a tea-room. The tea-room also served as the training ground for the newly developed school for waitresses. The impetus for the training program, however, lay not with the need to find employment for women, but in improving public manners. In the absence of proper training for waitresses, Kansas City residents were “. . . cutting soft meats with the side of their forks and eating watermelon with spoons.” The school for waitresses sought to improve public etiquette. The tea-room was to be furnished with “. . . light oak chairs and tables, in mission style, stained green. The paper is a bright Austrian design. Hand woven rugs, dark green, are to be laid over a dull

⁵⁶*The Kansas City Star*, April 23, 1911, 2.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, February 8, 1901, 4. The Lend a Hand Club of Davenport, by contrast, was not led by matrons in search of activities to fill their leisure hours, but rather by women who earned a living. See Wood, 65.

brown floor.” The committee in charge of the tea-room included Mrs. William F. Borland.⁵⁸



Figure 9. YWCA Dormitory located at 7th Street and Troost.

Source: *Kansas City Star*, December 12, 1909.

The quest to serve the needs of the society crowd reached new heights early in 1911. In January of that year, the YWCA began a ten-week cooking class for fourteen students “of social standing in the city.” Yet these debutants, as they were labeled in the

⁵⁸*Kansas City Times*, September 17, 1908, 6. Mr. Borland later became a member of Congress. *The Kansas City Star*, May 15, 1913, 2. The distribution of flowers by the YWCA to hospital patients each Friday during the summer of 1910 also has the ring of benevolence and meeting the social and service needs of married women. *The Kansas City Star*, June 17, 1910, 12. Waitresses – probably not trained at the YWCA tea room – struck the Y Not Eat? restaurant chain along with the Cooks and Waiters Union. Robert Saunders described the strike in his memoirs, 112.

headline, were not there to learn to cook. Rather, they sought to acquire the necessary skills to be “mistresses of cooks.” Mrs. Crum, a graduate of the cooking class at the University of Chicago, explained the exactness of the cooking process. “No more dashes of this and a pinch of that We measure now by the fraction of a teaspoon.” The article noted that at the end of the session, five luxurious electric cars awaited the debutant cooking students.⁵⁹

The YWCA returned to its benevolent roots again in 1914. A newspaper article highlighted a new program to provide women the opportunity to talk with “businessmen” about the positions that were available at their businesses. This event might today be described as a job fair. The newspaper account, no doubt drawn from the YWCA’s own publicity about the event, shared that the job fair was designed for “women who must work.”⁶⁰ Clearly, female employment outside the home remained an unnatural notion in the minds of YWCA leadership and most certainly in the minds of the debutant cooking students and members of the auxiliary.

The only comparable example of benevolent activity of the YWCA of Kansas City, Kansas, that the *Star* shared was the garden party of May 20, 1903. The garden party was held at the country home of Mr. and Mrs. Willard Merriam and featured music, addresses, and a picnic. The purpose of the event was to raise funds for the YWCA Settlement Association.⁶¹

⁵⁹*The Kansas City Star*, January 31, 1911, 3.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, May 15, 1913, 1.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, May 20, 1903, 11.

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs engaged sparingly in activities that can be classified as benevolent. In 1906, however, Mrs. E. R. Weeks, a founder of the Athenaeum, a former teacher, proponent of kindergartens, and founder of the Mothers’ Unions of Kansas City,⁶² served on the Kansas City Arts Commission. The charge of the Arts Commission was:

. . . to make Kansas City as a whole harmonious; to give it an atmosphere of art and good taste; to shape the growth of the city in its public and private improvements along symmetrical lines and, as probably the first step, to influence a proper treatment of the approaches and surroundings of the new Union Station – the city’s front door – with the view of making the first impressions pleasing and attractive.⁶³

The article does not share whether Mrs. Weeks represented the Athenaeum or the GFWC on the commission or whether she served as a prominent, civically engaged woman. Her participation is, however, congruent with the municipal housekeeping thrust of the women’s club movement.⁶⁴ Another member of the Art Commission was the landscape architect and park department engineer, George E. Kessler.⁶⁵

Also under the rubric of benevolence, the GFWC held a day at Swope Park for about 300 poor children in 1908, from such institutions as the Institutional Church, the Franklin Institute, the Bethel Mission, the Kansas City Day Nursery, and the Southwest

⁶²Donna S. Calvin, *Kansas City Athenaeum, 1894-1994* (Lenexa, KS: Sloan Printing Company, 1994, 7.

⁶³*The Kansas City Star*, October 1, 1906, 1.

⁶⁴Whitney described the evolution of the women’s club movement as having “grown in strength and usefulness . . . to the greater good of the cause. The “Club Woman” is now a Home Woman. She has come to understand that the lintel of her own house is the first step into her world of usefulness . . . never before has the Home idea – the development of the Municipal Household . . . received such an impetus and enjoyed such an expansion as it has within the past few years in America.” Whitney, Vol. 1, 639. McArthur identified municipal housekeeping as a central focus of the clubs in Galveston. McArthur, 143.

⁶⁵*The Kansas City Star*, October 1, 1906, 1.

Boulevard mission. The children received lunch and played games under the care of members of the various GFWC clubs.⁶⁶ That same year, the GFWC endorsed the creation of a Fine Arts Museum in Kansas City. Demonstrating the influence of the GFWC, a representative of the organization and a committee of trustees of the Fine Arts Institute met with Mayor Crittenden to express their support of the museum and enlist the mayor's support, which they received.⁶⁷ The GFWC hosted a free viewing of a collection of 40 works in oil and water color by St. Louis artists in anticipation of a coming bond issue and appropriation for a museum building.⁶⁸

The NCJW held three benevolent events during the period. No doubt riding the wave of patriotism during the Spanish-American War, the first event was a strawberry festival to benefit the soldiers of the Third and Fifth regiments at Falls Church, Virginia and Chickamauga Park, which were comprised partly of soldiers from the Kansas City area. The festival was held in June 1898.⁶⁹ The NCJW, along with the Women's Hebrew Charity Association, the Men's Hebrew Charity Association, the Ladies' Shoe Fund, and the Sophie Newgass Sewing Society benefited from the proceeds of a "fine ball" at the Progress Club in February 1899.⁷⁰ The event yielded net proceeds of \$4,000 through the

⁶⁶*The Kansas City Times*, June 9, 1908, 14.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, June 4, 1908, 5.

⁶⁸*The Kansas City Star*, April 25, 1909, 12. The municipal fine arts museum did not come to fruition. The people of Kansas City waited until the 1930s for the construction of what became the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, www.nelson-atkins.org/art/HistTreasuredHist.cfm.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, June 8, 1898, 1.

⁷⁰The Progress Club, a social club, was founded in 1881 by Samuel Latz. While the founding of the club may be viewed as an exercise in maintaining ethnic cohesion, the founding of the club did not signal social withdrawal from the larger community. See Sachs, 355.

participation of 300 couples. It is unclear whether the event was attended exclusively by Jewish people, but only people with Jewish surnames were mentioned in the newspaper coverage. The *Star* added the editorial comment that illuminated the nature and methods of Jewish philanthropy: “The Jews . . . care for their own poor. [Anyone] whether Jew or Gentile, who applies for aid and . . . is found to be worthy, is assisted.”⁷¹ In 1911, the NCJW held a concert of piano music, dramatic readings and a baritone solos at the Temple at Linwood and Flora.⁷² The article did not mention whether the purpose of the evening was to raise funds for a cause or whether the event was stage for the enjoyment of audience.⁷³

The WCTU conducted only two projects of benevolence. The first was the ongoing flower distribution and jail visitation program. The organization distributed flowers to the inmates of the workhouse in 1885 and conducted religious services.⁷⁴ The interest in visiting penal institutions and distributing flowers continued through the years. In 1888, for example, the Central Union made twenty visits to the 2nd Street jail in the prior three months. The women distributed newspapers and magazines. They also encouraged inmates to take the temperance pledge. During that period, they obtained 33 temperance pledges, 30 for one year and three for life.⁷⁵ In 1894, flower day included the distribution of flowers to the state penitentiary in Jefferson City. Two members of the local Unions,

⁷¹*The Kansas City Star*, February 16, 1899, 1.

⁷²This building remains in use by the City of Kansas City, Missouri.

⁷³*The Kansas City Star*, March 7, 1911, 2.

⁷⁴*Kansas City Evening Star*, June 10, 1885, 1.

⁷⁵*The Kansas City Star*, December 7, 1888, 1.

Ellen Morris and Mrs. Isgrig, attended the event.⁷⁶ The Central Union provided relief assistance to needy families in Kansas and Nebraska in the form of nine barrels of clothing.⁷⁷

As a demonstration of benevolent activity, the CLA conducted an annual Christmas distribution for poor and needy children. The first article in *The Kansas City Star* to mention the project was printed on December 27, 1900. By that time, the CLA had been in existence for eleven years. The CLA distributed candy, nuts, toys, and fruit to the children and food and clothing to their mothers, whose backgrounds had been investigated, perhaps through the Provident Association. The event received support from nearly every big store in the city.⁷⁸ Similar events were reported in 1902 and 1903.⁷⁹ This event may well have continued, but was no longer covered by the *Star*, which reported sparsely on the CLA activities.

From this discussion, the pattern of benevolence becomes clear. The WCA, formed for the purpose, engaged extensively in benevolence. The YWCA conducted more benevolent activity than any organization other than the WCA. The GFWC became involved in benevolent activity for a brief period from 1906 to 1908, all of which was related to the visual arts in the community. The NCJW conducted a few benevolent activities over a span of thirteen years. The CLA conducted the benevolent Christmas give away of food, toys, and candy for at least three years in the early 1900s, and the WCTU

⁷⁶*The Kansas City Star*, June 9, 1894, 1.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, November 16, 1894, 8.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, December 27, 1900, 2.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, December 28, 1902, 5, and December 29, 1903.

visited prisoners with flowers and literature and sent aid one year to poor families in Kansas and Nebraska. This discussion demonstrates a clear relationship between the socio-economic status of the women activists and their propensity to engage in benevolent work.

Reform

Reform, the second strain of women's activism, was exemplified by the work of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Their advocacy of prohibition, suffrage, public water fountains, and female rescue, spanned the gamut from conventional moral reform to a sophisticated role in municipal housekeeping. Through this process, the WCTU members became highly effective as political actors in the Kansas City, Jackson County, the State of Missouri, and the country. While all of the other women's organizations, save one – the WCA – participated in reform activity, none did so with the consistency, intensity, and ultimate effectiveness of the WCTU.⁸⁰ The WCTU mobilized middle class women and empowered them to assert their collective consciousness in the public realm. In many instances, the women's organizations worked in tandem; in others they did not. Following the death of Frances Willard in February 1898, however, the WCTU became intensely interested in the suppression of vice and censorship, in addition to Progressive measures

⁸⁰The WCTU was the only women's organization to attempt to organize in all states prior to 1890. After 1890, women's public culture experienced a massive expansion with the organization of local women's organizations into national organizations – GFWC, 1890; NCJW – 1893; NACW – 1896; National Congress of Mothers – 1897. See Judith McArthur, *Creating the New Woman: The Rise of Southern Women's Progressive Culture in Texas, 1893-1918* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 9.

such as child labor laws, compulsory school attendance, and juvenile courts⁸¹, while maintaining their interest in prohibition. No cranny, nook, nor crag that harbored vice in its actual or incipient form escaped the notice of the WCTU as it sought to extend female political power and the feminine sphere ever further into public life, without ever rejecting the sphere outright.⁸² That shift is evident in Kansas City, even as the organization struggled with its finances. The Missouri state office of the WCTU was located in Kansas City from the organization's founding until late 1900. At that time, the cost of the operation was too great to maintain the office, which was moved to Hannibal.⁸³ The numerous activities described in the section below are arranged topically, in the order that the topic appeared in the press, with a chronological discussion of events under each. This arrangement provides a sense of the development and evolution of reformist thought within the WCTU over time.

The drive to prohibit alcohol consumed much of the WCTU's time and resources. Prohibition, however, was only one of many reform measures advocated by the

⁸¹Jackson County developed a juvenile court in this time period. It is highly likely that both the WCTU and the GFWC had a hand in its creation. Whitney credited the GFWC. It was Jackson County Juvenile Court Judge E.E. Porterfield who secured passage of a law in Missouri authorizing the creation of mothers' pensions only in Jackson County – a first in the nation. Mothers' pensions were the forerunner of Aid to Dependent Children during the New Deal. Whitney, 629. See also Mark H. Leff, "Consensus for Reform: The Mothers'-Pension Movement in the Progressive Era," *Social Service Review* 47, no. 3 (September 1973), 400. On the GFWC's role in advocating mother's pensions, see Skocpol, 424-479.

⁸²Bordin, 115. Bordin's work looked at the WCTU from its founding through 1900, two years after Willard's death. As Parker argued and as mentioned above, Bordin's work understates the enduring effectiveness of the WCTU across many reform issues following Willard's death. It was not until the failure of probation in the 1920s that the WCTU lost credibility in reform. In addition, Parker argued that the WCTU sought to impose its own middle class values not only on the lower class, as would be expected, but also on the upper class. See Parker, 7-12.

⁸³*The Kansas City Star*, December 28, 1900, 10. The reason for the selection of Hannibal as the headquarters is unclear. Hannibal may have been the home of an influential state officer who as able to make office space available on a complementary basis.

organization. The WCTU's pattern of activity on the prohibition question – less active at times and more active at others – bears witness to the multifaceted reform interests of the organization. From the first reported meeting of the Central WCTU, perhaps the most active and influential of the Kansas City Unions, the activism focused on providing alternatives to the consumption of alcohol, rather than its outright prohibition. The body of news accounts indicated that this highly pragmatic approach recognized the difficulties involved in prohibiting the production and consumption of alcohol. At a meeting in October 1881, the Central Union discussed plans for a free coffee house and reading room. The energy devoted to the topic was evident in the fact that a committee was appointed not to study the matter, but rather “. . . to prepare a plan and report at the meeting next Friday afternoon.”⁸⁴

As evidence of the WCTU's pragmatism, the Union's next reported action in the direction of prohibition did not occur until July 21, 1888, when representatives of the Kansas City Unions inquired about the process of petitioning the county court to put a prohibition measure on the ballot to enact prohibition in Jackson County as a local option. In January 1889, the Missouri WCTU, rather than the Kansas City Unions, announced plans to have a bill introduced in the Missouri legislature to institute prohibition by statute,

⁸⁴*The Kansas City Star*, October 10, 1881, 1. To raise funds to support their activism, the Central WCTU held a speaker series that brought well known names to Kansas City. In the fall of 1884, Mary Livermore lectured on abstinence from alcohol and suffrage. Other speakers included Lew Wallace, author of *Ben Hur*; Zerelda Wallace, mother of Lew Wallace, a WCTU activist, and oldest member; and Henry Stanley, the famous explorer who found Dr. Livingston in Africa; among other speakers. See *Kansas City Evening Star*, February 6, 1884, 1; *The Kansas City Star*, January 18, 1887, 1; *The Kansas City Star*, April 9, 1889, 1; and *The Kansas City Star*, November 25, 1890, 1.

rather than through a constitutional amendment that would require a public vote.⁸⁵ On January 23, 1889, the Missouri Union indicated its intention to promote what the *Star* termed “radical” legislation to prohibit alcohol and the sale of tobacco to minors, enact the universal franchise, and require “scientific” alcohol education in all public schools.⁸⁶

The Central WCTU returned to the temperance theme in 1893 by staging a temperance opera, *Old Oaken Bucket*, in November of that year.⁸⁷ By 1894, the Kansas City Unions successfully inveighed upon the police commissions to refuse licenses to saloons that maintained wine rooms. This WCTU victory illuminated their logic that a triumph “over one branch [wine] of the evil is a long stride toward the consummation of their hope . . . to break up the sale of liquor entirely.” This success came as a result of a two-year effort by the Union. Ellen Morris, state WCTU secretary shared the hope that this victory would be a first step toward ending the sale of liquor entirely. The article noted that Miss Horrigan and Miss Brainer of the Ladies’ auxiliary, Knights of Father Matthew, a Catholic organization, attended the meeting and commented on the work of their society.⁸⁸ By August 1894, the WCTU challenged the licenses of roadhouses because they were “immoral resorts” and called for enforcement action against establishments in Kansas City

⁸⁵*The Kansas City Star*, January 15, 1889, 1.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, the article further noted that Kansas City was the only city in the state where the school board had made alcohol instruction compulsory. In 1897, legislation in the Missouri General Assembly to require the teaching of the effects of narcotics and alcohol was defeated.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, October 21, 1893, 6.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, July 20, 1894, 6. In his later years, James Pendergast embraced religion and encouraged young Roman Catholic boys to join the Father Matthew Temperance Society. Larsen, 35.

that were selling beer without licenses. The court directed the ladies to pursue a grand jury to investigate.⁸⁹

The 1895 WCTU national convention declared itself in favor of unfermented wine in the Christian sacrament of communion.⁹⁰ In late September 1897, Clara Hoffman attacked Christian churches and colleges as the most influential friends of “the liquor traffic.” Hoffman criticized churches that sent money to Princeton University, which had a saloon at its sesquicentennial banquet. She also placed blame on Drury College in Springfield, Missouri, a Congregational college, for accepting funds from August Busch of the Anheuser-Busch brewery.⁹¹ Frances Willard, from what was to be her deathbed, sent an appeal to President Dwight of Yale University to oppose the sale of liquor to students.⁹²

In 1901, Hoffman, state president of the WCTU, denounced the attitude of the press relating to liquor consumption in military canteens. The *Star* stood up for the press and argued that rigid regulation of liquor in the army would do much more good than a “hopeless” attempt to abolish its use. The *Star* further declared the WCTU to be “uncompromising radicals” who do harm to the cause of “feasible temperance.” The *Star* further opined that the anti-canteen law has been a failure as there is more drunkenness in the army than before the law was passed.⁹³ The *Star*’s ire may have been raised by the activities of Carrie Nation who took the enforcement of prohibition in Kansas quite literally

⁸⁹*The Kansas City Star*, August 7, 1894, 2.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, October 23, 1895, 8.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, September 13, 1897, 8.

⁹²*Ibid.*, February 15, 1898, 1.

⁹³*Ibid.*, July 15, 1901, 4.

into her own hands by destroying saloons in Kansas as they flouted state-wide prohibition.⁹⁴ In an article of February 15, 1901, Mrs. L. M. N. Stevens, Frances Willard's successor as president of the national WCTU, provided a tentative endorsement of Carrie Nation. When asked whether Willard would have approved of Nation, Stevens said: "By all means, she would have liked her work in Kansas."⁹⁵ In 1907, the WCTU worked to have payday moved from Saturday to Monday and paid in cash. The two changes would obviate the need to cash checks in saloons, where the money might float back across the bar.⁹⁶

Shortly after the death of Clara Hoffman in February 1908, a fissure erupted within the prohibition forces. In an article on February 13, 1909, the superintendent of the Anti-Saloon League, E. J. Moore, objected to the WCTU's advocacy of constitutional, state-wide prohibition. The Anti-Saloon League believed its strategy of local option prohibition and prohibiting brewers and distillers from having a financial interest in "dram shops" provided a more practical approach to curbing alcohol consumption. Moore hinted that the WCTU was being used for political purposes by the Prohibition Party, a charge they

⁹⁴According to an article in the Star about Nation, she was a resident of the Kansas town of Kiowa, who had spent her youth in Jackson County and had moved into Kansas City during the imposition of Order, No. 11. *The Kansas City Star*, December 31, 1900, 3.

⁹⁵*The Kansas City Star*, February 15, 1901, 1.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, September 20, 1907, 1.

adamantly denied.⁹⁷ By March 1914, the WCTU had enlisted the support of the Church Federation and the Athenaeum for the interstate prohibition rally to be held in Kansas City on March 29. The rally was the first of a series of rallies planned by the national WCTU. The Missouri WCTU organized the event with the active participation of the Kansas City Unions.⁹⁸

The Kansas City Unions' advocacy of public drinking fountains related directly to their commitment to reducing alcohol consumption and pitted these Protestant women of primarily Anglo-Saxon heritage against saloon owners who were predominately Irish Catholic or German. The saloon owners saw the WCTU's actions as a threat to their livelihoods and as an attack on their culture. The lack of access to public drinking fountains for people and animals in Kansas City captured the attention of the WCTU in May 1887.⁹⁹ The WCTU joined with the Humane Society in petitioning the city council for a public drinking fountain to be located on the public square.¹⁰⁰ More than a year later, Mrs. Ira Lewis, President of the Central WCTU, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Star* in

⁹⁷*The Kansas City Star*, February 13, 1909, 4. The WCTU had requested a special session of the Missouri legislature in 1907 to consider a prohibition amendment to the state constitution. *The Kansas City Star*, December 3, 1907, 2. A debate in the city council over whether to permit a saloon across the street from a Catholic school in 1911 provides insight into the thoughts of the reformers. Alderman Beach stated that the people of Kansas City were opposed to saloons. When it was pointed out that both Missouri and Kansas City had roundly defeated prohibition, the Alderman revised his statement to say that he was speaking for the great majority of thinking, moral people in opposing saloons. Larsen and Hulston, 50.

⁹⁸*The Kansas City Star*, March 12, 1914, 3.

⁹⁹Riis observed the same phenomenon among tenement dwellers in New York. “. . . the scandalous scarcity of water in the hot summer when the thirst of the million [sic] must be quenched . . . has in the past year more than all other causes encouraged drunkenness among the poor.” Riis, 172.

¹⁰⁰*The Kansas City Star*, May 13, 1887, 1. In his work on the tenements of New York, Riis blamed the “scandalous scarcity of water” in poor neighbors in New York for drunkenness among the poor. Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York 1890* (reprinted 1996 Boston: Bedford/St. Martin), 172. The public square was most likely the area around the city hall located at Fourth and Main streets.

support of public water fountains. She based her appeal on the convenient availability of public water fountains in Eastern cities and the shame of their absence in Kansas City. She noted that the WCTU had placed casks of water and ice in locations around the city. The working men in the West Bottoms specifically asked to have a cask of water “at the top of the long hill coming up the bluffs.” The casks, she said, were then broken up by “gamins” and “saloon bummers” without intervention from the police. She called on the public-spirited men of the city to petition the city council for 50 public fountains throughout the city and asked “Why ought our council to wait even for a petition?”¹⁰¹ Invigorated by the letter to the editor of the previous day, the Central WCTU decided to draft a petition requesting the installation of public water fountains to be presented to the city council.¹⁰² On August 4, 1888, a *Star* editorial endorsed the WCTU water fountain initiative as both “practicable and desirable.”¹⁰³

After a six-year hiatus, the issue of water fountains and interest in providing an alternative to the saloons returned to the pages of the *Star* in May 1894. The lack of action on the issue over the six-year period can be explained by a combination of opposition from saloon interests and the press of other issues that the Kansas City Unions tackled during that time, including the founding and operation of an industrial home for girls. During the summer of 1894, the Central Union installed water machines in the city hall, the stock-yards exchange, and on street corners. For one penny, the machine dispensed water with

¹⁰¹*The Kansas City Star*, August 2, 1888, 2.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, August 3, 1888, 1.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, August 4, 1888, 3.

cherry flavoring. Installing the machine at city hall required the permission of the board of public works.¹⁰⁴ The machines, however, were not without controversy. On June 6, Billy Long, described as “an irate German” and the owner a building that housed several saloons at the corner of Main and Missouri streets protested the installation of the machines so close to his establishments. The article noted that the WCTU women intended to establish more such fountains soon and had “placed” a small boy beside the one in city hall to keep the glasses clean. He sold 103 glasses the previous day and 47 by noon that day.¹⁰⁵ By late June 1894, the novelty of the fountain had worn off at city hall and the machine was removed for lack of customers.¹⁰⁶

With the arrival of warm weather in 1895, the WCTU returned the cherry phosphate machines to the streets. The *Star* justified its editorial support by noting the availability of the phosphate machines in other large cities. The *Star* described the need for the machines, saying that on a sultry day, it was easier to find any other liquid than cool, clean water.¹⁰⁷ The *Star* added to its endorsement in an editorial a few weeks later. It took to task the largely Irish immigrant community of the North End whom the *Star* accused of not believing in “humanitarian enterprises.” The machines were patronized by “small boys” who were prevented from drinking rum through the efforts of the WCTU.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴*The Kansas City Star*, May 26, 1894, 1.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, June 8, 1894, 2.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, July 1, 1894, 2.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, May 18, 1895, 8.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, June 1, 1895, 2.

The WCTU came before the city's Board of Public Works in late April 1896 to request permission for the placement of the water fountains on public property. Mr. Hardesty, a member of the board and a druggist, expressed the view that the fountains cut into the business of drug stores. Hardesty asked the WCTU representative why the WCTU undertook the fountain project, since it did not make a profit. She answered, "Simply to save drunkards."¹⁰⁹ The *Star* took exception to the druggist's argument and endorsed the cheap palatable refreshment as a benefit for people who cannot afford soda water at a drug store.¹¹⁰ At the board's meeting on May 8, the board found itself caught between a committee of druggists who did not want the machines within half a block of drug stores and the demands of the temperance women. The board again delayed a decision.¹¹¹ The board of public works finally approved the placement of the water fountains at their meeting of May 19, 1896.¹¹² By 1899, however, the WCTU's influence with the board of public works had run out. Rather than appearing themselves, the women authorized Judge H. S. Shields to speak on their behalf before the board. This instance is one of two where men spoke for the WCTU. Given the lack of reticence of the WCTU members to appear before public bodies, the appointment of a spokesman indicated the hostility of the board toward the organization. A respected man, such as Judge Shields was more likely to

¹⁰⁹*The Kansas City Star*, April 28, 1896, 1.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, April 29, 1896, 4.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, May 8, 1896, 1.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, May 19, 1896, 2. The board stipulated that the machines were allowed anywhere except in close proximity to Clay Arnold's drug store, as Arnold had been the chief objector to the fountains. Hardesty, in a shift of position from the previous month, offered that the WCTU could put a machine directly in front of his store.

advance the cause. This strategic assessment of the situation indicated a high level of political sophistication. Judge Shields argued that the fountains provided employment to “cripples and boys.” The fountains were also a “. . . boon to many persons who have only a penny to buy a drink.” The board did not concur. At the urging of a Mr. Watson, a member of the board, the request was denied.¹¹³

In 1914, the Kansas City Unions brought an end to the absence of public water fountains that had concerned them for nearly two decades. The Unions raised the funds themselves to install drinking fountains.¹¹⁴ The first fountain was dedicated in mid-June of 1914 at the Swope Settlement. The fountain was described as being made of “white stone material” and bore a gold plaque engraved with letters W.C.T.U. The next fountain was to be placed in front of the WCTU headquarters at 405 East 11th Street. Additional fountains were to be installed at the Italian Mission, Independence and Forest avenues, Ninth and Main streets, and at the stock yards as contributions allowed.¹¹⁵ In this way, the Unions in Kansas City worked to provide a practical solution to the lack of access to water.

As with alcohol, the WCTU in Kansas City and across the country sought to impose their middle class sense of sexual morality on working class women. Two strains of thought were at work in the arena of female working class sexuality during this period. Moral purity reformers represented the first strain and saw men as evil seducers and women as innocent, passionless victims who were enticed unwittingly into so-called white

¹¹³*The Kansas City Star*, July 14, 1899, 2.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, May 24, 1914, 1.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, June 16, 1914, 1.

slavery by evil men. A plethora of popular books, newspaper and magazine articles perpetuated the concern about white slavery that culminated in the passage of the Mann Act that prohibited the transportation of women across state lines for immoral purposes. The Progressive reformers, by contrast, did not blame men for female delinquency, but rather attributed their condition to adverse conditions in the family and society. The Progressive reformers tended to be college educated women who were less likely to affiliate with the WCTU and more likely to belong to the highly Progressive National Consumers League.¹¹⁶ These two strains of thought – moral purity and Progressive reform – are not neatly divisible, but rather overlapped and intertwined in time and in their commitment to controlling working class female sexuality.

The differing definitions of the problem led to different solutions that were both aimed at controlling working class female sexual expression. The moral purity reformers successfully pursued this goal by increasing the age of consent in states across the country from as low as ten years of age in some states to a high of eighteen years of age in Kansas as a way of restricting sexual expression among younger women. Girls' hotels became common in cities to house and protect young working women living in cities. The Progressive reformers, by contrast, advocated the creation of institutions to control the behavior of these women, often through public means, but also through private action. The Progressive impulse, thereby, had the effect of creating career opportunities for educated middle class women in the administration of industrial and correctional facilities for girls

¹¹⁶Odem, 97-98.

who strayed too far outside of social norms.¹¹⁷ Such institutions often treated young women much more harshly for their offenses than young men were treated for theirs.¹¹⁸

Eugenicists contributed a third strain of thought that permeates the other two. In their view, female moral offenders, both working class whites and African Americans, were inherently depraved and a threat to men and the future of society. Their sexual depravity, termed “feeble-mindedness,” was then passed down to their “defective, unfit” offspring in keeping with the understanding of LaMarkian genetics. Where white men perceived upper class and middle class women as pure and lacking in sexual passion, lower class white women and African Americans were seen as unruly and promiscuous.¹¹⁹

The WCTU’s efforts to address the influx of young working class women into Kansas City through rescue and prevention reflect these strains of thought and their intertwined qualities. The rescue of fallen women received the concentrated attention of the Kansas City Unions in 1887 just as it had briefly received attention from the WCA in the early 1870s. WCTU estimates showed that 7000 women in Kansas City were openly leading a “life of shame.” They further calculated that the women would survive only four years.¹²⁰ Dr. Bessie Cushman, one of several female physicians in Kansas City at the time, noted that “. . . every four years this vast throng must be entirely recruited . . . nearly 1800

¹¹⁷Odem, 8-99.

¹¹⁸This argument parallels Muncy’s argument that educated women in the social work profession gained professional and economic ground at the expense of less educated women. See Muncy, 156-163.

¹¹⁹Odem, 98, 32. This thinking clearly colors Clara Hoffman’s 1895 remarks during the suffrage catechism. For more information on LaMarkian genetic theory, see Bederman, 92-93, and Woods, 127.

¹²⁰Whether that estimate applies to the length of time the women will be engaged in illicit activity or to their life span is unclear. It is probable that the WCTU intended to claim that the women would live only four years after entering a “life of shame.”

women are annually forsaking the paths of virtue in this city.” In keeping with national trends, the WCTU planned to open a lodging house for the women who arrived each day in the city looking for wages. The WCTU also planned to have members of the WCTU or other Christian women at the depot during the day to meet the trains, interview women without escorts, and provide assistance as needed.¹²¹ The WCTU women met the trains, identified vulnerable young women passengers, and directed them to appropriate lodging and other services in the community. In this way, the WCTU sought to prevent the new residents of the city from “forsaking the paths of virtue.”

To ensure the appropriate treatment of women who had fallen into vice and had been arrested, the WCTU advocated the hiring of a matron for the Second Street Jail in 1888. As in their promotion of water fountains, the WCTU based a part of their argument on the experience of other cities, in this case St. Louis, which had a matron who received \$50 per month for her services, \$10 of which was paid by the WCTU.¹²² By August 8, the *Star* reported that the WCTU had failed in its efforts to have a matron appointed. Nonetheless, Police Chief Thomas M. Speers endorsed a police matron at police headquarters. Speers noted that women were arrested everyday and that a matron was needed to watch and search them otherwise they were locked up without a proper search. The weapons the women might possess were a danger to themselves and other inmates.¹²³

¹²¹*The Kansas City Star*, April 1, 1887 1; Odem, 26.

¹²²*Ibid.*, August 3, 1888, 1.

¹²³*Ibid.*, August 8, 1888, 1.

The Chief's solution, however, differed greatly from the one envisioned by the WCTU.

Chief Speers related that:

A suitable colored woman could be got for about \$25 month and she could help to keep the offices around the station clean. When we want a female prisoner searched here now we send for some colored woman in the neighborhood to do it.¹²⁴

In June 1889, less than a year from the time the WCTU first requested that a matron be appointed, the board of police commissioners named Mrs. Pattie Moore to the position at \$50 per month. Moore, according to the article, had long been associated with the work of the WCTU.¹²⁵ This appointment illustrates the fact that creating employment for middle class white women was an implicit goal of female Progressive reformers. By working to establish the position of police matron and then seeing one of their own appointed to fill it, the WCTU fulfilled this goal.

The WCTU also maintained an active interest in asylums, jails and the treatment of prisoners. In July 1893, the WCTU joined with other organizations, including the GFWC, in urging that the county courts send insane inmates at the poor house to the asylum instead.¹²⁶ In September 1896, a WCTU committee appeared before Judge Wofford for permission to speak with the grand jury. They sought to make complaints about the feeding and treatment of county prisoners, including women prisoners. The judge

¹²⁴*The Kansas City Star*, August 8, 1888, 1.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, June 10, 1889, 1.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, July 28, 1893, 6. This article indicated that Mrs. Merine, a member of both the GFWC and the WCTU reported on the GFWC actions at the Union's July meeting. GFWC was in the process of circulating a petition at that time to be presented to the county court. The GFWC actions were reported later that year, but started before the actions received press attention, *The Kansas City Star*, October 12, 1893.

conveyed the grand jury's willingness to speak with the women.¹²⁷ The tour of the jail with the grand jury took place on April 16, 1897. The WCTU urged that the county build cells for women in an unused wing of the building to separate them from the noise of the men.¹²⁸ By 1905, the WCTU was again involved with jail issues as related to morality. Mrs. W. C. Cook, superintendent of jail and prison work, protested to the county about jail conditions. Among her concerns was the fact that women visited men, including condemned prisoners.¹²⁹

Preventing criminality among the children of the lower class and shaping them into solid citizens were matters of immediate concern to the WCTU. Developing a patriotic and productive citizenry from the teeming multitudes of the cities was a vital task of Progressive reformers in general and the WCTU in particular. As a part of this effort, Progressives argued for the creation of additional facilities for girls in Missouri. The Missouri WCTU created an industrial home in Kansas City, which differed from the existing state home for incorrigible girls in Chillicothe in that no immoral or "vicious" girls were accepted. The local home was to have a reformatory emphasis as a training school and home. The Kansas City Unions sought a benefactor to donate land at the city's edge and far from the "excitement and noise" of the streets.¹³⁰ The industrial home opened on December 2, 1890 through the support of the Unions in the Fifth Congressional District and was separately incorporated and governed. Declared by the *Star* to be a new concept in

¹²⁷*The Kansas City Star*, September 9, 1896, 2.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, April 16, 1897, 9.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, August 1, 1905, 1.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, December 4, 1889, 2, and December 6, 1889, 3.

Kansas City, the home accepted homeless women and girls as young as five years of age. These young girls most likely included orphans or girls who had been abandoned by their parents. The *Star* reported that the city had hundreds of such girls who were not able to support themselves and turned to a life of shame as a result.¹³¹ The children were to receive a common school education, training for occupations in which they could be self-supporting, and moral training. The home had eighteen residents or “inmates” as they were known. Dr. Pauline E. Canfield (a local physician and member of both the WCTU and the YWCA) and three consulting male physicians provided medical care.¹³² If the industrial home was to serve only morally-upright girls, an institution was also needed for the immoral, vicious ones. In 1894, the WCTU discussed the GFWC’s initiative to establish a home for “wayward” women and girls. The WCTU characterized the proposal as “in earnest.”¹³³

The WCTU returned to the topic of rescue in 1897 when Mrs. Westein, members of the Purity Department and two other WCTU women went into five brothels with police protection. Westein rejected the assertion that fallen women could not be reformed. They met “young, confident, and beautiful girls . . . some mother’s pride they once were.” She expressed the reformist side of the WCTU’s thinking by explaining that behind the divorces and criminal cases in the daily press existed appalling facts of social evil.¹³⁴

¹³¹*The Kansas City Star*, December 2, 1890, 2.

¹³²*Ibid.*, March 25, 1891.

¹³³*Ibid.*, September 12, 1894, 6.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, September 24, 1897, 2

These women, in other words, were the victims of male depravity and violence that had not been recognized by society or reported in the press.

The Kansas City Unions embraced many educational initiatives toward the goal of preventing female as well as male delinquency. In 1885, the Kansas City WCTUs conducted a sewing school from May 1 to October 1. The school had an average attendance of 45 students, who sewed 113 garments that were sent home with the students.¹³⁵ By December of that year, the WCTU operated a sewing school with a rapidly growing enrollment and soon opened a boys' night school.¹³⁶ As historian Sarah Gordon argued, sewing provided working class girls with an industrial skill or a domestic skill for employment or for use in their own homes. Girls who made their living through sewing did not compete with men for work.¹³⁷ The following year, the WCTUs operated a free kindergarten and the boys' school had been re-named the news-boys night school.¹³⁸ After a long absence from a focus on education in press coverage, the Kansas City Unions decided to increase their promotion of school savings banks as a means of instilling thrift. The Unions were to visit each school and provide a savings card to each pupil. In 1902, students saved more than \$12,000.¹³⁹ These educational initiatives responded to needs in the community by providing early childhood education for the children of the working

¹³⁵*The Kansas City Star*, November 2, 1885, 2.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, December 3, 1885, 1.

¹³⁷Gordon, 167. Gordon also argued that sewing represented different integration into the industrial structure for immigrant women, uplift for African Americans, Americanization for Native Americans, 173-180.

¹³⁸*The Kansas City Star*, November 11, 1886, 2.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, January 30, 1903, 9.

class, education and self-improvement for news boys who might otherwise fall into delinquency, aided in the assimilation of lower class by providing the industrial skill of sewing for girls who were often the children of immigrants. These activities were similar to initiatives undertaken in other cities.

The WCTU championed many other policy initiatives that were designed to either reinforce the organization's vision of how society should operate or to ameliorate social conditions. The national and local WCTU's long-time commitment to Sunday closing laws is one of many examples of the former.¹⁴⁰ These initiatives were aimed variously at closing all establishments on the Sabbath as well as focusing only on the closing of saloons on that day.¹⁴¹ The first mention of such laws reported by the *Star* came in an account of the Central Union's meeting of August 1888. Anna Sneed Cairns of Kirkwood addressed the Union on the topics of the dram shop licenses and the Sunday closing law in St. Louis.¹⁴² The national WCTU petitioned for a national Sunday closing law in November 1889. President Benjamin Harrison assisted by prohibiting military reviews or parades and the post office reduced, but did not eliminate, Sunday postal work.¹⁴³ By 1892, the national organization advocated a Sunday closing for the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

¹⁴⁰Parker, 225.

¹⁴¹Sunday closing laws have a long history in the U.S. and served religious ends as well as the secular purpose of providing a common day of rest for labors. The active promotion of closing services on Sundays coalesced with the passage of the Post Office Act of 1810, which continued to allow postal work on Sundays. State laws that prescribed Sunday closings often exempted certain retail and other activities. By the 1860s, Sunday closing laws across the country had been undermined by lack of enforcement. See Alan Raucher, "Sunday Business and the Decline of Sunday Closing Laws: A Historical Overview," *Journal of Church and State* 0021969X, no. 1 (Winter 1994), 36. Database: Academic Search Complete (accessed February 22, 2013).

¹⁴²*The Kansas City Star*, August 3, 1888, 1.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, November 13, 1889, 1.

The WCTU argued that keeping the Exposition open on Sundays would lead America to adopt the “continental Sunday.” The *Star* lambasted the suggestion, intoning that if people did not go the Exposition, they might find their way into a saloon.¹⁴⁴

Kansas City enacted a Sunday closing law for saloons by 1893, which suffered from a lack of police enforcement. To rectify the situation, the WCTU called a meeting with the Young People’s Society of Christian Endeavor and the Ministers Alliance to call on the police commissioners, the mayor, the city council or “all of them” to ascertain why the law was not enforced and to ask that it be enforced in the future. The *Star* reported that the GFWC would most likely discuss the matter at their meeting as well.¹⁴⁵ By 1895, the police made an attempt to enforce the Sunday closing law against saloons and a number of police officers were injured in the process. The Central WCTU thanked Police Chief Irwin and Police Judge Jones for their efforts and asked all churches and Christian organizations to encourage the moral movement.¹⁴⁶

The national WCTU at their annual convention in Baltimore in 1895 passed a resolution thanking Theodore Roosevelt, a police commissioner for New York City, for “his bravery in standing for the right” and demonstrating that saloons could be closed on

¹⁴⁴*The Kansas City Star*, November 3, 1892, 4.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, October 11, 1893, 2.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, August 16, 1895, 8.

Sundays in New York City.¹⁴⁷ The convention also commended the action of the Atlanta commissioners on the closing of the exposition on Sunday.¹⁴⁸

At the 1900 state convention of the WCTU, Sunday closings received additional attention. The chairman of the WCTU committee responsible for these efforts offered her view that it was difficult to require saloons to close on Sundays when groceries and meat markets were open. Christian people who patronize these stores on the Sabbath were taking part in its desecration.¹⁴⁹ By 1902, the Kansas City Unions were, however, ready to again demand the enforcement of the Sunday closing of saloons. They also pledged to give special attention to the sale of liquor by grocery and drug stores.¹⁵⁰ In 1905, the Missouri WCTU passed a resolution endorsing the actions of Governor Joseph W. Folk to enforce the Sunday closing law, which, according to the resolution had been unenforced for many years.¹⁵¹

In addition to attempting to impose its view of appropriate Sabbath observance, the WCTU strove to impose its own aesthetic sensibility when it came to popular culture and the arts. The WCTU ideal was that of morality and purity, which it perceived was

¹⁴⁷*The Kansas City Star*, October 23, 1895, 2. Roosevelt believed the law requiring the closing of the Sunday closing of the 12,000 saloons in New York City should be enforced. His action was extremely unpopular among working class New Yorkers, especially the approximately 30,000 New Yorkers of German extraction, who switched their party affiliation to the Democrats in the following election. Aida D. Donald, *Lion in the White House: A Life of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2008), 72-73.

¹⁴⁸*The Kansas City Star*, October 23, 1895, 8. It was at this exposition that Booker T. Washington made his well known address on race relations. For his account of the speech, see Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (New York: Viking Penguin, Inc. 1986), 217-237.

¹⁴⁹*The Kansas City Star*, October 30, 1900, 4.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*, January 19, 1902, 6.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, October 6, 1905, 12.

threatened by the bubbling up from working class culture and mores or dripping down from upper class licentiousness into the middle class. This issue dated back as far as 1883 with the founding of the national WCTU's Department for the Suppression of Vice.¹⁵² The WCTU expressed concern about "immoral literature and pictures" at the Missouri state convention in October 1900. The WCTU urged wearers of the white ribbon of temperance who discovered "flagrant examples of immoral and indecent printed matter" to write to Anthony Comstock and "lay the facts before him." The superintendent of the moral purity department suggested that another way to combat immoral literature was to establish free circulating libraries for the "dissemination of pure and high class reading matter."¹⁵³ The national WCTU at its 1895 convention expressed appreciation to Texas governor Culberson for preventing the "disgrace of a prize fight in that commonwealth,"¹⁵⁴ and

¹⁵²Parker, 6.

¹⁵³*The Kansas City Star*, October 30, 1900, 4. The WCTU did not specify the nature of the immoral literature, which may have dealt with contraception. Anthony Comstock and his wealthy benefactors who were involved in the YMCA movement in New York in the 1870s secured passage of a federal anti-obscenity law that prohibited the dissemination of information about contraception through the U.S. Mail. Nearly half of the states passed similar law. Among the last of these laws to be overturned – nearly a century later – was that of Connecticut through the Supreme Court's ruling in *Griswold v. Connecticut* in 1965. Nicola K. Beisel, *Imperiled Innocents: Anthony Comstock and Family Reproduction in Victorian America* (Ewing, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 3. Progressive women, such as those of the WCTU, also opposed contraception and abortion. They viewed both as encouraging male license. D'Emilio and Freidman, 60-64. The WCTU Department of the Promotion of Purity in Literature and Arts launched many purity campaigns in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including theater, prize fights, crime-story papers, and ballet, motion pictures, comic strips, among others. The middle class organization worked to censure both high and low culture with widespread public support and collaboration from both the YWCA and the GFWC. Obscenity and censorship were viewed quite differently during this period than they are today. Obscenity was broadly defined as having a quality that would corrupt individuals, especially children. Censorship was embraced even by the American Library Association, which asserted its right to determine which books would be accessible to the public. Parker, 1-3, 7-9, 36-37.

¹⁵⁴*The Kansas City Star*, October 23, 1895, 2.

passed a resolution that condemned bird shooting tournaments.¹⁵⁵ Kansas City's Central WCTU founded an anti-cigarette league in October 1894.¹⁵⁶ By January 1895, the Anti-Cigarette League had gained the membership of 125 boys, who pledged to boycott cigarettes until they were 21 years old. An Anti-Chewing Gum League was added at Chase School and had 60 girls as members. They also agreed to boycott the product until the age of 21 years.¹⁵⁷ Each product seemed to carry a similar disapprobation and an equivalent assessment of risk by the WCTU, which was concerned more about youth purity than adult abstinence from these products. In 1905, the Kansas City Unions worked to prohibit public dances at dance halls.¹⁵⁸ At the state convention in January 1909, the organization drafted resolutions condemning "comic sheets" in Sunday newspapers. The resolutions found the sheets to be "neither edifying nor humorous" and "demoralizing to young Americans."¹⁵⁹

Politicians whom the WCTU perceived as less than stringent in their personal and professional dealings were ostracized by the WCTU, which had demonstrated its political influence on numerous occasions. The Protestant WCTU again directed its ire at representatives of the Irish Catholic community. In May 1895, for example, the WCTU expressed its disapproval of the appointment of Alderman Jim Pendergast, a saloon owner, to attend the Congress of Religion and Education as a representative of the city. Alderman

¹⁵⁵*The Kansas City Star*, 8.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, October 26, 1894, 1.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, January 19, 1895, 6. In 1897, the WCTU sent a letter to the city clerk requesting the passage of an anti-cigarette and a curfew ordinance. *The Kansas City Star*, February 19, 1897, 2.

¹⁵⁸*The Kansas City Star*, November 17, 1905, 1.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*, January 28, 1909, 8.

Regan was also selected to attend. As a mark of the respect in which the WCTU was held by the public, the *Star* stated, “The oftener the ladies put themselves on record concerning the City Council the better for the city.”¹⁶⁰ Through their years of public advocacy on a variety of local issues and their ability to affect policy, the women of the local Unions gained respect and influence in the public realm. The extensive coverage they gained in the *Star* attests to their effectiveness in public life.

An expression of Willard’s pacifism, the national and local WCTU’s began a foray into the perceived militarizing of education and into foreign affairs. In January 1896, the *Star* characterized as “needless” a Missouri State WCTU protest again “military training” in Missouri public schools. The *Star* argued that no such training is “seriously contemplated.”¹⁶¹ In the same month, the Kansas City Unions provided a petition to the U.S. Senate. The petition protested against the establishment of a bureau of military education. The petition urged, “education for peace, not war; for citizenship, not soldiery.”¹⁶² At the same time, the petition called for action concerning Armenia and the “agony and outrage inflicted by the Moslem savages upon . . . Christians.”¹⁶³ Armenia remained on the minds of the WCTU. Frances Willard sent a communiqué to all American Unions asking them to call meetings to urge the U.S. government to join with England in

¹⁶⁰*The Kansas City Star*, May 15, 1895, 4.

¹⁶¹*Ibid.*, January 29, 1896, 4.

¹⁶²*Ibid.*, January 31, 1896, 2.

¹⁶³*Ibid.*

putting an end to the massacre.¹⁶⁴ By November, the Knights of Labor at their general assembly in Rochester, New York, criticized the WCTU, the Salvation Army, and other organizations for bringing Armenians into the U.S. to compete with American workmen. At the same time, the Knights of Labor expressed great sympathy for the Armenians.¹⁶⁵ In April 1898, the national WCTU sent a letter to President William McKinley commending him on his handling of the Cuban crisis and urging him to maintain peace.¹⁶⁶ In the aftermath of the Spanish-American War and in the midst of the American action in the Philippines, the WCTU passed a resolution at their 1899 convention in Seattle expressing concern about the U.S. occupation of the Philippines.¹⁶⁷ In response, the *Star* accused the WCTU of denouncing the U.S.¹⁶⁸

At the same time that the WCTU worked to structure society according to its sense of morality at the local, state and national levels, it also endeavored to ameliorate social conditions in Kansas City. In November 1894, a member of the Central WCTU, Mary Long, visited the Day Nursery to inquire about its operations and finances. She reported that the nursery served 28 children and provided two and sometimes three meals each day and that it merited support for this work. The WCTU also reported on the Doors of Hope that provided assistance to needy families. The Central Union asked its members who

¹⁶⁴*The Kansas City Star*, September 26, 1896, 1.

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*, November 13, 1896, 2.

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*, April 2, 1898, 2.

¹⁶⁷*Ibid.*, October 26, 1899, 4.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, November 2, 1899, 6.

wished to support these organizations to mark their gifts as coming from a member of the Central WCTU.¹⁶⁹ In July 1896, a national lecturer for the WCTU, Mrs. David Bruce Conklin, gave a lecture to benefit Doors of Hope at the English Lutheran Church. A local female minister, perhaps the only female minister in Kansas City at that time, the Rev. Lugenia F. St. John, also spoke.¹⁷⁰ Eleven years later, the Willard Union with 16 members developed a reading room for use by railroad workers in the Sheffield area.¹⁷¹ Funds for the reading room were raised by a performance of students of the School of Dramatic Art.¹⁷² The Hoffman Union provided a fresh air camp in Fairmont Park for children from the Salvation Army.¹⁷³ In 1909, the Willard Union in Kansas City successfully lobbied for the creation of a park in the Sheffield neighborhood and for playgrounds in the Blue Valley area.¹⁷⁴

The reform work of the Unions in Kansas City from their founding in 1881 through the early years of the twentieth century clearly reflected Frances Willard's "do everything" dictum. In pursuing its many and varied aims from temperance to purity, the Kansas City Unions developed the political skills – public speaking, lobbying and other forms of advocacy, and coalition building – to advance their agenda with public bodies such as the

¹⁶⁹*The Kansas City Star*, November 23, 1894, 8.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, July 19, 1896, 5. As described below, a female minister affiliated with the WCTU had spoken in Kansas City in 1888. Her appearance drew comment in the local press. *The Kansas City Star*, December 19, 1888, 1.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*, August 1, 1905, 1.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*, May 14, 1905, 9.

¹⁷³*Ibid.*, August 8, 1905, 2.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*, May 11, 1909, 4; December 4, 1909, 17. Sheffield Park is located at 12th and Ewing in Northeast Kansas City.

city council and state legislature. They became sophisticated political actors in their community and state on issues that pertained to the feminine sphere and received acclaim from the *Star*. Their efforts to ensure social and moral purity, to oppose militarism and foster peace, and to ameliorate social conditions through municipal housekeeping signaled their desire to reshape their city, state, country, and world according to their values and to align with the efforts of the national WCTU. When their activism fell outside the female sphere of the hearth and into the male sphere of military and foreign policy, however, the WCTU was rebuffed with hostility by the same publication. Even as the female sphere expanded, the test of appropriate activity remained. To paraphrase Kansas City historian Carrie Westlake Whitney, man must not have his virility threatened, nor must woman lose her tenderness.

Other organizations followed the WCTU's interest in reform. The YWCA of Kansas City, Missouri (YWCAKCMO), for example, led reformist efforts to provide a place of refuge in an otherwise hostile urban environment for white working women in the unwelcoming environs of urban Kansas City through a lunchroom and a women's hotel.¹⁷⁵ The annual report of 1889 revealed that the agency housed 40 women at the home, placed 30 more in homes through the employment agency, and provided dozens of meals to "the penniless" in the month of December alone.¹⁷⁶ By 1891, the YWCA boasted not only a hotel, employment agency, and a lunchroom, but also a library and gymnasium. By the end

¹⁷⁵The YWCA movement sought to offer women an alternative to having lunch in the saloon. McArthur, 93.

¹⁷⁶*The Kansas City Star*, January 25, 1890, 1.

of 1892, an estimated 9,000 self-supporting women lived and worked in Kansas City.¹⁷⁷

The YWCAKCMO sought to provide them with the services they needed to remain pure by avoiding the temptations to err that they found as single young women in the city and to be socialized into a middle class existence. The YWCAKCMO received assistance in its work from many sources, including the local druggists who gave one day's receipts from their soda fountains,¹⁷⁸ and the county court, which gave it \$50 in 1897.¹⁷⁹

The YWCA international secretary, Miss Harriet Taylor, used explicit prevention and rescue language in appealing to a small group of "well known" Kansas City men and women at the Coates House in 1899. At that time, the YWCAKCMO was without a hotel or other facility due to a disagreement with a building owner. Taylor indicated that it was difficult to reach working women through churches and Sunday schools. Rather, they wanted physical training and education. Taylor went on to say that providing for those desires was "the safeguard against their downfall." She indicated that hundreds of women have fallen because they were "unguarded against the temptations that surrounded them" in

¹⁷⁷*The Kansas City Star*, November 7, 1892. The WCTU estimated that 7000 women lived in shame in Kansas City in 1887. It is possible that shame was defined by working and living without the protection of a man. The 9000 number may represent an increase in that population. The growth of the lunchroom operation was exponential in the years from 1889 through 1907, increasing from a few dozen lunches in December 1889 to 92,712 lunches in 1903, and 115,000 lunches in 1906. *The Kansas City Star*, January 11, 1904, 6. *The Kansas City Star*, January 19, 1907, 10. By 1909, 25,000 wage earning women lived in Kansas City. *The Kansas City Star*, May 15, 1909, 3. The YWCA became an adoption agency, if only briefly, in 1897 when two children of about six years of age were picked up at the train station and offered for adoption to responsible parties. *The Kansas City Star*, July 10, 1897, 2.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*, April 19, 1895, 12. Five druggists participated, including Mr. Hardesty, who had initially opposed the WCTU's placement of water fountains on the streets in this period.

¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*, February 23, 1897, 8. The county court also gave \$250 to the Provident Association and \$50 each to Doors of Hope, House of the Good Shepherd, the Orphans' home [sic], and German hospital [sic].

the cities. Taylor encouraged her audience to help “prevent rather than to try to cure.”¹⁸⁰

The focus on working women expanded beyond office workers with the arrival of Miss Lilly Strong, the new general secretary of the Kansas City, Missouri, from Milwaukee in 1905. Strong indicated that the YWCAKCMO would continue to offer educational classes and would extend its activities into the factories and large stores.¹⁸¹

While the YWCAKCMO did not engage overtly in political matters until 1910, it made its meeting space available to a variety of reform causes and occasionally advocated specific actions it desired the city government to take. In 1908, Eugene Chafin, billed as a noted temperance speaker from Chicago, spoke at an interstate temperance meeting at the YWCAKCMO. Later that year, Frank Walsh, the noted reformer, spoke to the Four Corner Club, a subset of YWCAKCMO members. In 1910, the YWCAKCMO appealed to the board of police commissioners to fund five positions to be directed by the YWCAKCMO to serve as matrons at the Union Depot. The matrons were to greet young women who “came to the city as strangers” just as the YWCAKCMO’s depot matron had done for the past few years. As justification for this city expenditure, the YWCAKCMO president indicated that other cities furnish similar workers.¹⁸² By June, the conversation with the board of police commissioners had culminated in the hiring of five women – at the same salary as male police officers – to greet “strange girls” at the depot and exercise supervision

¹⁸⁰*The Kansas City Star*, March 19, 1899, 5. During the period when the YWCA lacked a hotel, they sent women in need of lodging to the Sisters of Mercy, further evidence of the ecumenical collaboration in Kansas City. By 1901, the YWCA had obtained facilities for a lunchroom where “girls who work may avoid the publicity of public restaurants.” *The Kansas City Star*, January 25, 1901, 14. A YWCA hotel opened on September 15, 1902. *The Kansas City Star*, September 7, 1902, 11.

¹⁸¹*Ibid.*, September 1, 1905, 7.

¹⁸²*Ibid.*, May 12, 1910, 12.

over “girls” who frequent wine rooms and similar places.¹⁸³ By December 22, 1910, six prospective police women and a new matron for police headquarters began the necessary instruction for new members of the police force, including first aid, rules of traffic and arrest, among other topics, just as the male officers did. The new officers, referred to as matrons by the *Star*, served primarily at the train depot and in the large department stores.¹⁸⁴

As time progressed, the YWCAKCMO experienced greater difficulty limiting its involvement in politics. In 1911, Mrs. Hugh Ward, a member of several YWCAKCMO committees, charged at a board meeting that the YWCAKCMO focused on small, internal issues, while it should have focused on big issues. There was rarely an opportunity, she said, “. . . for discussion of the big problems which we, more than any other organization, should be interested in.”¹⁸⁵ The YWCAKCMO took steps to endorse, with the collaboration of many other women’s groups, the creation of the position of a mediator in divorce cases, known as a divorce proctor, to make divorces less contentious and more equitable. The YWCAKCMO considered whether to assist in the payment of the annual salary of \$1200. Mrs. Frank Hagerman, YWCAKCMO president, endorsed the idea and surmised that the other board members would as well. Yet the organization’s constitution prohibited the use of funds for purposes that did not directly benefit the members.

¹⁸³*The Kansas City Star*, June 23, 1910, 1.

¹⁸⁴*Ibid.*, December 12, 1910, 13. A female police officer was hired in Los Angeles in September of that year to work with delinquent women and girls. Odem claims she was the first female officer hired on a permanent basis in the U.S. By 1914, five female police officers were at work there. Odem, 110.

¹⁸⁵*The Kansas City Star*, March 4, 1911, 1.

Hagerman expressed confidence that members of the board would contribute, if the local government would not provide the salary.¹⁸⁶

The YWCAKCMO moved further toward a reform agenda when Florence Kelley, then-general secretary of the Consumers' League of Boston, came to Kansas City in November 1911. The nationally-prominent reformer spoke before the local clergy, the Jewish Women's Club, the Athenaeum, and the YWCAKCMO.¹⁸⁷ By February 7, 1912, the local branch of the National Consumers' League, the Juvenile Court, and the Board of Public Welfare met to confer on approaches to supervising child labor in Kansas City. The *Star* quoted Mrs. Hugh Ward as endorsing action on child labor, because the current regulation was wrong. Mrs. Ward suggested that the superintendent or another responsible party should supervise the labor of children.¹⁸⁸ In March, the Consumers' League held a meeting at the YWCAKCMO to address child labor and the minimum wage.¹⁸⁹ As a further example of political interest, the YWCAKCMO held an open house on election night 1912. At the open house, the YWCAKCMO received the election results and offered music and refreshments.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶*The Kansas City Star*, October 30, 1911, 4. The national WCTU expressed interest in issues of divorce when it passed a resolution in 1895 asking "for a place for women on the divorce commissions of the various states." *The Kansas City Star*, October 23, 1895, 2.

¹⁸⁷*Ibid.*, November 3, 1911, 2.

¹⁸⁸*Ibid.*, February 7, 1912, 2.

¹⁸⁹*Ibid.*, March 24, 1912, 1. The National Consumers' League enjoyed its greatest strength in the East and Midwest. Its membership consisted mainly of elite married women in major cities as well as college professors and some members from women's colleges. The GFWC and WCTU endorsed the minimum wage in 1912. Skocpol, 393, 414.

¹⁹⁰*The Kansas City Star*, November 3, 1912, 9.

Political engagement continued in 1913 and 1914. The Housewives' League called a meeting at the YWCAKCMO to discuss the prices of meat, butter, and fruit. The league leader, Mrs. Willard Q. Church blamed high food prices on speculation and price fixing.¹⁹¹ The Consumers' League scheduled a meeting at the YWCA on May 16, 1913, to discuss the results of their six-month study of Kansas City's milk supply.¹⁹² The Housewives League scheduled another meeting at the YWCAKCMO in December 1913 to discuss the price of eggs and to request action by Congressman William F. Borland concerning the statistical reporting of the eggs held by cold storage warehouses.¹⁹³

Though existing in side-by-side communities, the YWCAs of Kansas City, Missouri, and Kansas City, Kansas, operated with different programs and different priorities. The YWCA in Kansas City, Kansas (YWCAKCK) received far less news coverage in the *Star*. The coverage it did receive sketched the image of an organization that was concerned with meeting the needs of immigrants and women who worked in factories. By contrast, the national YWCA and the YWCAKCMO organization focused primarily on native-born women and white collar workers.¹⁹⁴

The YWCAKCK first appeared in the pages of the *Star* on November 9, 1902. The occasion was a prayer meeting to be held jointly with the YWCAKCMO at the

¹⁹¹*The Kansas City Star*, January 4, 1913, 6.

¹⁹²*Ibid.*, May 15, 1913, 2.

¹⁹³*Ibid.*, December 4, 1913, 1.

¹⁹⁴Robertson, 14-16.

YWCAKCK settlement house at 27 Central Avenue in KCK.¹⁹⁵ The *Star* reported no other joint meetings or common activities. By 1903, however, the YWCAKCK had moved from Central Avenue in front of the Armour building to 601 Minnesota Avenue. The children of the packing house district in Kansas City, Kansas, were without a mission school until the Bethel Evangelization Society organized one under the direction of Rev. L. A. Halbert, later to lead the Board of Public Welfare, with the support of the Kansas Congregational Home Missionary Society.¹⁹⁶

The YWCAKCK, like her sister organization, permitted its meeting space to be used by at least one organization representing a Progressive cause – education. Teachers in Kansas City, Kansas, used the meeting space to organize what the *Star* characterized as a “fight” for higher salaries. According the *Star*, the teachers sought to persuade public sentiment in their favor to gain a higher rate of property assessments and, thereby, more tax revenue for teachers’ salaries.¹⁹⁷ In spite of this tacit support and the YWCAKCK’s action to protest the reduction of the salaries of young women employees of the city in 1909, the board president, Dr. Emma S. Cooper, declared that the YWCA does not enter politics:

The purpose of the YWCA is to better the conditions of young women. We do not intend to enter politics, but we consider it our duty to protest against a reduction in the already inadequate salaries of the young women employed at the city hall.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵The YWCA’s was not the only settlement house in the Kansas City area at this time. The Swope Settlement house served Kansas City, Missouri.

¹⁹⁶*The Kansas City Star*, November 9, 1903, 10.

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*, April 14, 1904, 12.

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*, October 7, 1909, 2.

While the YWCAKCMO focused on lunchrooms, a hotel, a gymnasium, and educational coursework geared toward office workers, the YWCAKCK offered less programming. The organization taught courses designed to meet the educational needs of young women who were not in school and women who were foreign born and wanted to learn English. Courses included English, arithmetic, grammar, reading, and spelling. The YWCAKCK also offered instruction in sewing, embroidery, needle-work, china painting, water colors, music and languages, stenography, bookkeeping, penmanship, and drawing. It launched the physical department in 1904, although the program offerings were not specified.¹⁹⁹ Further demonstrating its commitment to female factory workers, the YWCAKCK provided “Christmas pies” for approximately 800 women at area factories. The “mammoth” pies were a container of gifts covered by a crust. The crust was cut to reveal gifts for the women provided by the members of the YWCAKCK. The workers at the Loose-Wiles cracker department received a pie on December 22, 1909. The following day, the process was repeated for the women in the candy department, and then at the Armour, Peet Brothers, and Schwarzschild & Salzberger plants.²⁰⁰ In addition, the YWCAKCK held an exhibition of work of the factory women in the extension classes on

¹⁹⁹*The Kansas City Star*, October 6, 1904, 8.

²⁰⁰*Ibid.*, December 22, 1909, 9.

April 13, 1911. The exhibition included hats, dresses, typewriting, stenography, and music.²⁰¹

By the end of 1913, the progressive spirit of the YWCAKCK could no longer be stifled. On New Year's Eve, Congressman Victor Murdoch of Wichita, gave an address providing the "Progressive view" of the Wilson administration. Congressman Murdock discussed, in particular, recent tariff and trade legislation.²⁰²

The Kansas City Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) joined with the WCTU and YWCAs in reform with a particular emphasis on municipal housekeeping. The first meeting of the GFWC reported in the *Star* took place on October 11, 1893. The matters that this association of women's clubs addressed belied Ruth Bordin's assertion that club women were: "Conservative upper middle class women . . . drawn to the GFWC, which concentrated on education, self-improvement, and sociability, rather than an activist program."²⁰³ Rather, the organization decided to advocate on behalf of the insane inmates of the poor farm, whom they believed should be sent to a "properly conducted" insane asylum. They also determined to lobby the city council on the behalf of the police matron at the county jail through a committee that included Sarah W. Coates, Dr. Martha C. Dibble, and Mrs. J. C. Merine, among others. In addition, the Federation discussed the

²⁰¹*The Kansas City Star*, April 13, 1911, 12. Daily life for women in these factories is difficult to determine. Some insight can be gained from the inspections of 331 factories by the Kansas City, Missouri, Board of Public Welfare from April 1911 to April 1912. The BPW issued citations to more than half of the factories (176 citations) for safety and sanitary violations and for failure to comply with child labor laws. Clearly, conditions in the factories were short of ideal. BPW *3rd Annual Report*, April 19, 1911-April 15, 1912, 10, 117.

²⁰²*The Kansas City Star*, December 31, 1913, 1.

²⁰³Bordin, 149.

prohibition on wine rooms that the WCTU advocated. No action was taken. Moreover, Dr. Dibble and Mrs. Roundtree – echoing the discussion at a WCTU meeting more than a decade earlier – suggested the establishment of a coffee house on the market square.²⁰⁴ Bordin’s description could be adapted for club women of Kansas City by saying that these women of the upper and upper middle classes were involved in reform, but structured their involvement in such a way as to keep their hands from getting terribly dirty.²⁰⁵ They advocated positions, such as hiring of a matron at the county jail, but were not at all interested in the street level work that organizations such as the WCA undertook early in its history or that the WCTU carried out rescue activities in brothels.

By 1896, 21 women’s clubs in Kansas City, representing 500 women, belonged to the GFWC.²⁰⁶ Those clubs met with club representatives from across Missouri at the State convention in Springfield in 1897. Among the reforms discussed by the convention were child labor, education, and changing the law to allow women to serve on school boards.²⁰⁷ In 1898, the Missouri Federation started a program of traveling libraries that were administered in Kansas City by local clubs.²⁰⁸ The Athenaeum, a large and prominent club, worked actively on behalf of public kindergartens. In 1895, the board of education had

²⁰⁴*The Kansas City Star*, October 12, 1893, 7. A police matron was already serving at the police station.

²⁰⁵O’Neill argued that the GFWC was most effective at the state and local levels in their lobbying on behalf of women’s and children’s issues. While the women participated in the ‘search for order,’ they were not interested in the larger economic issues of the day such as trusts and labor law reform. O’Neill, 88-103.

²⁰⁶*The Kansas City Star*, December 27, 1896, 6.

²⁰⁷*Ibid.*, January 20, 1897, 2.

²⁰⁸*Ibid.*, March 13, 1898, 14.

agreed to kindergartens in public schools with the cost of supplies to be provided from private sources. The school district operated thirteen kindergartens by 1900.²⁰⁹ In addition, the Athenaeum actively supported the Mothers' Unions of Kansas City, which had been founded by Mary Harmon Weeks, a prominent member of the Athenaeum, in 1889.²¹⁰



Figure 10. Mary Harmon Weeks

Source: Kansas City Athenaeum

The clubs inserted themselves more directly into matters of municipal housekeeping in 1898. The Athenaeum called the meeting, attended by 100 women, to discuss “the needs of our city,” including free swimming “tanks,” public playgrounds, and echoing the

²⁰⁹*Calvin*, 8.

²¹⁰*Ibid.*

language of the WCTU, entertainment to “draw idle men away from saloons.” The lack of such amenities signaled that Kansas City was well behind the cities of the East in installing such public amenities.²¹¹ Dr. Henry Hopkins, pastor of the First Congregational Church and former Provident Association board member, presented a paper and informed the women of the public playgrounds in New York and Brooklyn. Phoebe Jane Ess, another prominent member of the Athenaeum, discussed the public playgrounds in Philadelphia. The Athenaeum members believed that Kansas City needed to emulate the example of Eastern cities by providing more and better public amenities. At the same time, Weeks expressed the view that women were quite capable of dealing with municipal problems.²¹² These women felt confident in working for improved public facilities that would benefit children and families.

The dearth of newspaper accounts of the GFWC between 1898 and 1908 suggests that it took a hiatus from municipal housekeeping during that period. Municipal housekeeping returned as a focus of activity in 1908 and continued for the next half dozen years. In March of that year, a delegation of club women, concerned about milk quality,

²¹¹The discussion of public amenities such as parks dated back to at least 1872 when concerns first appeared in the press. In 1893, landscape architect and urban planner George Kessler issued a report to the city on plans for a park and boulevard system. As William H. Wilson argued, the City Beautiful movement did not originate with the 1893 Columbian Exposition, but rather with the plan for New York City’s Central Park by Frederick Law Olmsted in the 1850s. Neither did the City Beautiful movement in Kansas City have its origins with William Rockhill Nelson, but rather pre-dated his 1881 arrival in Kansas City. It is significant that Tom Pendergast supported the park and boulevard system as a means of increasing access to patronage positions. Construction began in earnest in 1901. As a part of the implementation of the parks plan, playgrounds were built in densely populated neighborhoods. William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement in Kansas City* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1962), xiii-xvii, 121, 138. The City Beautiful movement reached its apogee from 1900-1901 as middle and upper class city dwellers reshaped their cities through a political movement that re-oriented the public’s orientation toward urban beauty. William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 1.

²¹²*The Kansas City Star*, November 16, 1899, 4.

decided to inspect the dairies on the northeast side of the city.²¹³ Later that year, seventeen clubs came together to form a “council of clubs” to perform “charitable and sociological” work. One of the first projects the council undertook was the creation of a girl’s hotel.²¹⁴ The GFWC hosted a traveling exhibit of the work of Missouri painters in 1909 as a part of their advocacy of a municipal fine arts museum. The state president delivered an address on conservation in Kansas City in 1911.²¹⁵ In 1913, the Athenaeum took an active interest in the egg boycott that was led by the Housewives’ League²¹⁶ and in 1914 was involved in the state-wide promotion of Arbor Day.²¹⁷ In 1915, the Athenaeum joined with the National Council of Jewish Women to prevent blindness in babies through the application of silver nitrate in the eyes of each newborn. The proposal required each physician in Kansas City to use this treatment or explain why the treatment was not used in each case.²¹⁸

Whitney credited the Athenaeum with many achievements in municipal housekeeping. Some were verified in the pages of the *Star* and the Athenaeum’s centennial history while others were not. Whitney’s list goes beyond the actions provided above to include encouragement for the establishment of manual training in city high schools and the creation of summer vacation school programs in the city’s public schools. Whitney also credited the Athenaeum as having been instrumental in the placement of a matron in

²¹³*The Kansas City Star*, March 8, 1908.

²¹⁴*Ibid.*, June 13, 1908, 9.

²¹⁵*Ibid.*, September 25, 1911, 2.

²¹⁶*Ibid.*, November 29, 1913, 1.

²¹⁷*Ibid.*, March 22, 1914, 7.

²¹⁸*Ibid.*, March 13, 1915, 6.

the jail.²¹⁹ This substantial record of achievement, then, accords with Bordin's view that the women who belonged to the GFWC, like the majority of the WCTU members, were interested in improving their world, rather than overturning it.²²⁰ Through the operation of the women's clubs, club women in Kansas City learned how to speak in public, transact business, run for office, and work with public bodies. In this way, these women learned to think politically, as Judith McArthur observed of the Texas GFWC, and act collectively to improve their communities.²²¹

Reform provided the focus for the National Association of Jewish Women (NCJW) chapter in Kansas City. The first mention of the NCJW in the pages of the *Star* occurred on April 15, 1896, when the organization hosted a performance of the opera *Faust* as a benefit for several projects of the organizations, including the free bath, the industrial school, and the kindergarten.²²² In November, the NCJW opened a free night school at the temple. The announcement in the *Star* did not elaborate on what was to be taught or to whom.²²³ A newspaper announcement of November 1902 indicated that the industrial school and kindergarten remained in operation in 1902.²²⁴ In 1906, the trend of women's

²¹⁹Whitney, 629. The discussion above illustrates that the WCTU was responsible for a matron at police headquarters and that the YWCA led the creation of women police officers to serve at the train depot, among other places.

²²⁰Bordin, 118.

²²¹McArthur, 21. This pattern of effectiveness in municipal housekeeping fits with O'Neill's assessment that GFWC members were most effective in local efforts and concentrated on issues that affected the women and children. O'Neill, 88.

²²²*The Kansas City Star*, April 15, 1896, 1.

²²³*Ibid.*, November 12, 1896, 8.

²²⁴*Ibid.*, November 1, 1902, 12.

appropriate participation in municipal housekeeping was explored through a lecture by former mayor H. M. Beardsley on the topic of “the woman and the home.”²²⁵ The NCJW took a strong interest in medical inspection in schools in 1909. Each month, NCJW representatives visited six schools that had a large Jewish enrollment to confer with the teachers about the physical condition of the children. As a result, many “defective” children were treated, most commonly for difficulties with sight, hearing, and malnutrition. The NCJW indicated its dedication to continuing the inspections with the hope that the board of education would begin performing the inspections. The school inspections also resulted in assistance for destitute families through the United Jewish Charities and better bathing and sanitation facilities in some districts.²²⁶

In December of 1909, the NCJW hosted a lecture by the organization’s national secretary, Sadie American, on the topic of saving girls.²²⁷ While not an appeal for rescue, the lecture focused on elevating young women’s tastes in entertainment and making a “clean life” attractive to them. American shared the experience of providing girls from correctional homes with tickets to the opera twice each week. The opera, she indicated, was a substitute for the “moving picture” shows with scenes that adversely affect young women and an “unnecessary degree of darkness” that has negative effects on them.²²⁸ Dance halls, amusement parks and movie theaters constituted the unholy trinity of

²²⁵*The Kansas City Star*, January 30, 1906, 2.

²²⁶*Ibid.*, May 18, 1909, 2.

²²⁷American was born in Chicago in 1862. She was active at the founding of the NCJW in 1893 and helped shape the organization’s work with immigrant women. Rogow, 225.

²²⁸*Kansas City Times*, December 10, 1909, 14.

diversions available to working class woman. Reformers such as Sadie American feared the effects of commercial, hetero-social amusements on these women.²²⁹ The 1915 campaign by the NCJW for the use of silver nitrate in the eyes of newborns provides the final example of the organization's involvement with reform in the pre-war period. The NCJW initiated the campaign. As stated, above the Athenaeum then joined in support of the initiative.²³⁰

Catholic women also conducted reform activities. The Catholic Women's League operated the Catholic Women's Hotel at 1736 Missouri Avenue in 1914. The article in the *Star* mentioned nothing about the hotel or its operation, but rather provided an account of the meeting held at the hotel to discuss the creation of a Catholic settlement house. The first steps in the creation of the settlement house were for the League to survey the section of the city around the area to be served. Services envisioned for the settlement house included a day nursery, supervised play, story hour, and "classes in all kinds of work which will equip both children and older members . . . for life in the community." The summary of the meeting stated that the aim was the making of "good citizens" who were "good, clean, Christian men and women, equipped for a useful life."²³¹ Five years later, a Catholic women's club founded a volunteer clinic and school on the west side of Kansas City,

²²⁹Odem, 104. The WCTU shared this concern about the effect of motion pictures on the purity of the nation. See Parker, 134-143.

²³⁰*The Kansas City Star*, March 12, 1915, 6.

²³¹*Ibid.*, January 16, 1914, 3. The making of good citizens from the members of the lower class was a substantial concern during this era. Among others, see Riis, stated "Good citizen hung upon that issue. [rescue of the home imperiled by the slum] Say what you will, a man cannot live like a pig and vote like a man," quoted in David Leviatin, *Introduction to How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1996), 34. This language also echos that of DeVol in Chapter 4.

Missouri, to serve immigrants from Mexico.²³² Whether members of the club were part of the Catholic Women's League is unknown. It is certain, however, that the concepts of settlements and assistance to impoverished immigrants were well known to the Catholic women.

Equality

Equality – the third strain of women's activism received the most intense and sustained attention from the WCTU. Obtaining access to the ballot box, both for its own sake and as a means of enacting prohibition, provided the WCTU with a cause in which it engaged other women's organizations over time. As a demonstration of its commitment to equality, the WCTU included African Americans in their work. In February 1884, the WCTU held a lecture by nationally known suffrage supporter, Mary Livermore.²³³ A significant tactic in the WCTU's work for female equality involved public lectures by women and their appearances in church pulpits across the country. In 1884, WCTU women spoke at churches in St. Louis in connection with their national convention in that city.²³⁴ In 1888, an article in the *Star* made special mention of "A Female 'Reverend.'" The Reverend Ann Shaw, a Methodist minister and superintendent of the national WCTU's

²³²<http://www.guadalupecenters.org/history.asp> Smith observed that the Church responded to the needs of the Mexican community was "belatedly and indifferently." Local parishes regarded them as curiosities. In 1913-14, a women's group from the Disciples of Christ established a soup kitchen to serve immigrants affected by unemployment. Michael M. Smith, 'Mexicans in Kansas City: The First Generation, 1900-1920,' *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies*, 2, (1989), 39-43.

²³³*The Kansas City Star*, February 6, 1884, 1. Livermore was a Unitarian and president of the Massachusetts WCTU. Bordin, 48. As indicated in Chapter 2, Livermore also lectured in Kansas City in 1871.

²³⁴*Ibid.*, October 6, 1884, 1.

franchise department visited Kansas City on December 18, 1888. Preferring not to reference Shaw by her title, the *Star* noted that “Mrs. Shaw” replaced Mrs. Zerelda Wallace in that position. The article did, however, acknowledge Shaw’s reputation as “. . . one of the most forceful pulpit orators in the country.”²³⁵ In 1897, the Hoffman Union of Kansas City conducted the Wednesday evening service of the Olive Street Baptist Church. Instead of the regular service, the Hoffman Union told of its work.²³⁶

In addition to extending the female sphere into church pulpits, the Union sought to advance the cause of female equality in any way possible. The description of the platform at the Missouri WCTU’s sixth annual convention, held at the Grand Avenue Temple in Kansas City, illustrated the point. In addition to filling the altar with flowers, plants, and large portraits of Frances Willard and Clara Hoffman, the decorations also featured a “bannerette” inscribed with the words, “No Sex in Citizenship.”²³⁷ By 1889, the Missouri WCTU was preparing legislation, deemed “radical” by the *Star*, to provide for equal suffrage, among other measures.²³⁸ A significant justification for suffrage was offered by a resolution from the convention of the Twelfth Congressional District WCTUs. The resolution stated the good men were in the minority and would not be able to pass

²³⁵*The Kansas City Star*, December 19, 1888, 1. By the 1880s, through the work of the WCTU, women were accepted as platform speakers even in the South. Bordin, 81.

²³⁶*Ibid.*, March 18, 1897, 10.

²³⁷*Ibid.*, June 13, 1888, 1.

²³⁸*Ibid.*, January 23, 1889, 1. Bordin argued that women’s rights were more important to Willard than prohibition. Just as Catharine Beecher used school teaching as a means for women to enter the public sphere, so too did Willard and the WCTU use suffrage. That strategy is reflected in the work of the WCTUs of Missouri and Kansas. Bordin, 14, 58. Beecher turned the submissive role of women into a superior moral sensibility unlike the position of the Grimke sisters who embraced sexual equality. Sklar, 136.

prohibition by themselves; therefore, women must be given the ballot to cast their votes against liquor. As an additional step toward equality, the convention resolved that married women “. . . shall retain their own Christian name always.” The *Star* quoted “Mrs. John Merine” as saying that “. . . if her husband had given more honor to the family than the wife, then she would adopt the husband’s name.”²³⁹ By 1895, the Missouri WCTU used the ‘suffrage catechism’ in their meetings, which included responses to questions such as what is a vote, what is a ballot, on what principle was our country established, and who are the sovereign citizens.²⁴⁰ By 1911, the Unions fixed their focus firmly on suffrage. The neighboring Wyandotte County, Kansas WCTU declared that the vote for women was the way to implement prohibition. The WCTU asked ministers in the county to preach sermons in favor of suffrage.²⁴¹ Thus, the WCTU led in making suffrage respectable for middle class women to embrace while never repudiating the ideology of separate

²³⁹*The Kansas City Star*, September 14, 1894, 7. The Missouri Non-Partisan WCTU, a splinter group that objected to what they saw as the support of the WCTU for the Prohibition Party, also adopted the use of women’s Christian names as opposed to using the husband’s name at their convention at the Grand Avenue Temple two months later. The use of the husband’s name, they argued, caused the loss of individuality. *The Kansas City Star*, November 2, 1894.

²⁴⁰*The Kansas City Star*, January 19, 1895, 6. The narrative of the unbroken arc of female empowerment suffered in two instances. In April 1898, the Reverend Dr. J.W. Hancher of the Grand Avenue Temple appeared before the board of police commissioners, on behalf of the Central WCTU, requesting the enforcement on an ordinance prohibiting saloons and disorderly houses within proximity of churches and schools. *The Kansas City Star*, April 30, 1898, 10. The following year, Judge H.S. Shields represented the WCTU, unsuccessfully, before the board of public works with regard to their application to locate phosphate water fountains on public property. *The Kansas City Star*, July 14, 1899, 2. The reason for this male advocacy is unclear in light of the fact that the women represented themselves in other instances. Bordin argued that the WCTU made suffrage a respectable cause for many white protestant women to embrace by the 1890s. Bordin, 120.

²⁴¹*The Kansas City Star*, August 20, 1911, 3. Nancy F. Cott argued that the decade of the 1910s was the only decade when woman suffrage attained the status of a mass movement. Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 30.

spheres.²⁴² The WCTU and other woman's organizations advocated prohibition largely as a means to their desired end – suffrage.

As consistently active as the WCTU was at all levels on the matter of equal suffrage, the record is less uniform with regard to racial and religious equality. As historian Gail Bederman described in her chapter on African American anti-lynching advocate Ida B. Wells, Willard and Wells clashed on responses to lynching because Willard insisted on the construction of white women as pure. Wells, by contrast, propounded the view that widespread licentiousness among white women caused them to enter into consensual, clandestine relationships with African American men. If discovered, the white woman's claim to honor and purity required that she claim that she had been raped. Wells' tour of Britain in 1893 and 1894 succeeded in inciting British religious organizations to call their American counterparts into question about the rule of uncivilized lynch law in America and their failure to take action against it.²⁴³ Wells visited Kansas City in March 1895 as part of her tour of the country in 1894 and 1895. She spoke to a group of ministers in Kansas City.²⁴⁴ She also spoke to the influential Central WCTU, which was among the most active and influential Unions in the area. In a brief account of the meeting published in the *Star* on March 22, 1895, Wells' renown is evident by the fact that the article does not introduce or describe Wells' work. At the conclusion of her talk, the Central Union passed resolutions condemning recent lynchings, including that of a

²⁴²Bordin, 115-120.

²⁴³Bederman, 45-76.

²⁴⁴Bay, 204.

woman, presumably a white woman, by cattle thieves in Nebraska and that of “an old negro woman” who was lynched on suspicion of arson in Tennessee.²⁴⁵ It is significant, but not surprising, that the Central Union did not mention any of the much more common instances of lynchings of African American men. The WCTU, from Willard to the Central Union, refused to back away from the deeply held and absurd view that African American men posed a predatory danger to the purity of white women and the white race, especially among the lower class.²⁴⁶ The lynching controversy gained additional coverage in the *Star* several months later. On June 18, 1895, the newspaper published a brief account of “a large and enthusiastic gathering” of the British Women’s Temperance Association. At the meeting, Miss Florence Balgarnie accused Willard and the WCTU of “being apologists for the lynchings in the Southern parts of the United States.” The article indicated that Willard and the WCTU were “amply exonerated” by Willard’s speech in defense of her actions and those of the WCTU.²⁴⁷

While Bordin argued that African American women had a role in the WCTU,²⁴⁸ the organization’s interaction with the African American community in Kansas City appears to have been limited, if not non-existent until 1896, when work among African Americans gained new-found emphasis. In Kansas City, Kansas, for example, WCTU speakers were sent to speak at local churches, including the “Colored Baptist Church” during a state

²⁴⁵*The Kansas City Star*, March 22, 1895, 1.

²⁴⁶Bay, 206. While white Americans largely accepted the myth of the African American male as a sexual predator that preyed on white women, two-thirds of the lynchings of African American men did not involve accusations of rape. Bay, 5.

²⁴⁷*The Kansas City Star*, June 18, 1895, 1.

²⁴⁸Bordin, 160.

convention in September 1896.²⁴⁹ The Kansas City Unions had among their officers a superintendent of colored work, Mrs. M. P. Coleman.²⁵⁰ Mrs. Lucy Thurman, the national superintendent of work “among the colored people” attended the Missouri State WCTU convention held in Bethany, Missouri, in October 1896.²⁵¹ Thurman then came to Kansas City. She spoke at the “Colored Baptist Church” at 10th and Charlotte streets in Kansas City, Missouri, on October 30, 1896.²⁵² Mrs. Sophie S. Grubb was identified as the superintendent of work “among the colored people” for the Missouri WCTU in November 1896.²⁵³

Interfaith and ecumenical outreach received attention in 1895 during the consideration of a resolution to invite Catholic and Jewish organizations to send fraternal delegates from their annual conventions and to establish branches of the White Ribbon Society. In response to concerns about the affiliation of “Hebrews” with the WCTU, Willard shared her experience that both Catholics and Jews had “exhibited sympathy” with the WCTU’s work and “extended every courtesy . . . especially in the South.” Willard argued that the WCTU should extend such sympathy and courtesy in return.²⁵⁴ The WCTU did not extend such interfaith solidarity to the Muslims, however. Rather, in regard to the Armenian crisis, the WCTU of Kansas City, in a petition to Congress, had described “the

²⁴⁹*The Kansas City Star*, September 27, 1896, 7.

²⁵⁰*Ibid.*, October 14, 1896, 1.

²⁵¹*Ibid.*, October 23, 1896, 7.

²⁵²*Ibid.*, October 30, 1896, 10.

²⁵³*Ibid.*, November 18, 1896, 8.

²⁵⁴*Ibid.*, October 23, 1895, 2.

agonies and atrocities inflicted by Moslem savages [sic] upon our brother and sister Christians.”²⁵⁵

The YWCA, by contrast, empowered women through education, peer networks, and athletics, yet remained officially non-political and not ready for sexual or racial equality by the late 1890s. The most substantial direct involvement of the organization was to allow various reform and equality groups to use the meeting space in their building. An editorial in the *Star* expressed discomfort in the public realm with the “advanced woman” and the “proper, rightful and expedient limits of her “advance.” At the same time, the *Star* endorsed “the activity of women in the line of doing good.” The *Star* listed among the laudable examples of the YWCA’s activity “the support, relief, elevation, and protection of women.”²⁵⁶ Noticeably absent from this list of attributes was anything that advanced the cause of equality or furthered the cause of suffrage. The WCTU had not yet made the YWCA’s middle, upper middle, and upper class women constituents comfortable with equality.

General Secretary, Lilly Strong, in August 1905, began to expand YWCA programs beyond officer workers to serve categories of women whom the organization had not yet

²⁵⁵*The Kansas City Star*, January 31, 1896, 2. For more on the white supremacist “alchemy of race” placed Muslims, like African Americans, low on the ascending scale of humanity, see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 118-135.

²⁵⁶*The Kansas City Star*, January 11, 1895, 4. At the same time that the YWCA worked in the direction of advancing women, the organization also relied heavily on male support for their buildings and operations. The board of trustees, which let contracts for buildings on behalf of the YWCA, was comprised of nineteen. Among the names were some of the most prominent business and civic leaders of Kansas City – E. F. Swinney, H. M. Beardsley, R. A. Long, and Frank Faxon. *Kansas City Times*, March 31, 1901. The *Star* editorial comment is no doubt referring to the “New Woman” in speaking of the advanced woman. The New Woman frightened some elements of society by rejected conventions such as marriage. Smith-Rosenburg, 176.

served, including department store clerks and factory workers. Strong included women in lower status occupations such as factory and department store workers.²⁵⁷ Later that month, Strong announced expanded hours for the reading room to provide a place of refuge for women. In the past, the “rest and reading rooms” had been open only during lunch and gymnasium classes; now they were opened from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Classes in French, German, Spanish, and “commercial subjects” were offered as well. An additional claim to space and equality for women came in the declaration from Strong that the Sunday afternoon services were to resume. In apparent contravention of past practices, “. . . all addresses will be delivered by women.”²⁵⁸

By 1913, the political environment had changed. YWCA supporters had become not only comfortable with the concept of gender equality, but also now numbered among its advocates. That year, the YWCA hosted one of many “suffrage suppers” that took place in Kansas City. At each suffrage supper, a prominent man spoke on suffrage. The suppers were part of a larger strategy by the Equal Suffrage Association of Kansas City and the statewide suffrage movement to submit a suffrage amendment to a vote at the next general election. A similar initiative during the prior legislative session received committee approval, but was “turned down” by the legislature.²⁵⁹

Throughout this period, the Democrats, more or less evenly divided between the Pendergast “goats” and Shannon “rabbits” factions, were far more successful than the

²⁵⁷*The Kansas City Star*, September 1, 1905, 7.

²⁵⁸*Ibid.*, September 26, 1905, 1.

²⁵⁹*The Kansas City Star*, November 9, 1913, 2. Theodore Roosevelt endorsed suffrage for women in 1912 in keeping with his long-held views in support of his views on the topic that dated back to his senior thesis at Harvard. Donald, 29, 130.

Republicans in winning highly contested races for the mayor's office. A Republicans won only when the Democrats were split. The political chicanery in voter registration and the conduct of the elections was clearly not favored by the YWCA, which favored Progressive reform. In an overtly political act, the YWCA lent its space in 1914 to women who were working to keep Kansas City's voting lists clean.²⁶⁰ The YWCA location served as the staging area for women with cameras to photograph the proceedings at each registration booth. Confirming the link between suffrage and prohibition, many of the activists and cameras in this campaign were also involved in the "dry campaigns" in Independence and rural Jackson County. Fifty women with cameras were expected from Independence. An equal number of new cameras were to be delivered to the YWCA. The *Star* described the photography of registration booths as "a battle between [the women] and the old time machine organizations that have been manipulating elections and registrations for years."²⁶¹

The YWCA's actions with regard to racial equality proved far less impressive. In an era in which minstrelsy recalled a lost pastoral way of life and false nostalgia for an idealized plantation society in the face of an industrialized world, the YWCA hosted minstrel shows on two occasions and a review by YWCA members in black face. The first minstrel show took place in May 1903 and raised funds for the acquisition of a "home for

²⁶⁰ The Pendergast machine consolidated its control of Kansas City through the use of unprecedented violence in the elections of 1916 and 1918. See Larsen, 52-59.

²⁶¹*The Kansas City Star*, October 12, 1914, 2. For more information on registration and voter fraud at the hands of the Pendergast machine, see Lawrence H. Larsen and Nancy J. Hulston, "Criminal Aspects of the Pendergast Machine," in Diane Mutti Burke and John Herron, *Kansas City, America's Crossroads: Essays from the Missouri Historical Review, 1906-2006*, 206-219.

business women.”²⁶² The YWCA workers themselves staged the next minstrel show in June 1908. According to the *Star*, the young women were “arrayed in gorgeous costumes with bandana handkerchief caps to represent real darkey [sic] characters of the ante bellum days.”²⁶³ Proceeds defrayed the expenses of delegates to the YWCA convention.²⁶⁴ The “club girls” of the YWCA staged a minstrel show and craft fair in 1913. Once again, the purpose of the event was to raise funds to attend the annual convention.²⁶⁵ Sandwiched between the second and third minstrel shows was a performance by members of the Fisk Training School – an African American institution of higher education in Nashville, Tennessee. Their appearance was held in conjunction with the opening meeting of the Missionary Institute at the YWCA.²⁶⁶ The middle and upper class women and men who supported the YWCA clearly saw no incongruence in these activities.

The YWCA did not, however, exclude African American women entirely. Rather, the YWCA formed a system of branch organizations in cities across the country, starting

²⁶²*The Kansas City Star*, May 24, 1903, 5.

²⁶³ Roediger, 118-119. The quest for false nostalgia in post-bellum America was manifested in “The Southern Restaurant” at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia at which African Americans were otherwise excluded. The restaurant featured banjo-playing “old-time plantation ‘darkeys’” singing odes to “Ole Virginny.” Bay, 131.

²⁶⁴*The Kansas City Star*, June 16, 1908, 9.

²⁶⁵*Ibid.*, December 19, 1913, 3.

²⁶⁶*The Kansas City Star*, January 19, 1910, 3. Robertson argued that the YWCA members were interested in African-American women in the same way they were interested in “Indian girls,” and “Heathen women” in other countries. By 1907, African American community YWCA’s in four cities and college chapters at African American colleges were granted affiliation with the YWCA. The focus of the YWCA remained on white women and girls until well after World War I. Robertson, 12-27. For more than half of the twentieth century, minstrelsy endured as what one author argued was “America’s pre-eminent form of entertainment.” Mel Watkins, Foreword, *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth Century Blackface Minstrelsy*, Edited by Annamarie Bean, James V. Hatch, Brooks McNamara, (Hanover, NH: New England University Press, 1996), ix.

with Brooklyn in 1903. By 1912, YWCA branch system had extended to Kansas City. Under this system, a representative of the white central organization served on each branch board and actions of the branch were subject to the approval of the central organization, which was also responsible for any debts the branch incurred. While the branches placed African American women in an unequal position in relation to their white YWCA members, the branch members gained important organizational and leadership skills.²⁶⁷

The GFWC and its Kansas City affiliates, not unlike the YWCA, skirted politics in favor of self-improvement, sociability, and municipal housekeeping for much of the period from its founding in 1889 and until suffrage became a mass movement in the 1910s. At the same time, the clubs supported the progressive inclination.²⁶⁸ In 1897, the Missouri Federation envisioned modifying the law to allow women to serve on school boards.²⁶⁹ The next action on the equality front that was reported by the *Star* occurred nearly seventeen years later. On October 27, 1914, Mrs. George Bass, retiring president of the Chicago Woman's Club, spoke on suffrage before an invited audience of brewers and trade unions in Kansas City. While the text of her remarks is not available, she undoubtedly worked to reassure these groups that female suffrage would not threaten the brewing industry. She also spoke that day to a diverse range of groups - employees of the Loose-Wiles factory, members of the Livestock Exchange, and the Second District meeting of the

²⁶⁷Robertson, 32.

²⁶⁸O'Neill indicates that clubs were a place for women to learn public life through meetings, speak in public, make reports, work with strangers, and think community wide. O'Neill, 85-86.

²⁶⁹*The Kansas City Star*, January 20, 1897, 2.

State Federation of Women's Clubs.²⁷⁰ In 1914, Mrs. Weeks served as chairman of the local branch of the National Council of Defense. While not a part of her work with the GFWC or the National Conference of Parents and Teachers, her association with those organizations lent credibility to her work as she led the effort to register 83,000 women in Kansas City. The purpose of the registration, as described by the *Star*, was “. . . for home work and to fill such places as they can in the industrial and commercial life made vacant by the men going to war.” In her letter to the women of the city, Weeks asserted that the registration would correct “the census idea” that housewifery is not an occupation and encouraged all women to register. She implored women not to “. . . fail women in women's finest hour.”²⁷¹

As uneven as the record of the GFWC was on sexual equality, the record on racial equality was worse. A story in the *Star* in April 1895 noted that the Women's Literary Club of Baltimore had decided to sever its ties with the GFWC when the national organization decided to admit “colored” women.²⁷² By 1901, the Georgia GFWC had proposed an amendment to the national GFWC constitution to limit membership into clubs to white women. The Massachusetts GFWC strongly opposed the move. Mrs. Edwin Harrison, president of the Missouri GFWC, promised in a letter that the matter would be discussed at the next state convention in St. Joseph, Missouri in October.²⁷³

²⁷⁰*The Kansas City Star*, October 27, 1914, 3. The endorsement and active participation of GFWC members in the suffrage movement signaled the support of middle class women for suffrage. O'Neill, 167.

²⁷¹*The Kansas City Star*, July 10, 1917.

²⁷²*Ibid.*, April 10, 1895, 6.

²⁷³*Ibid.*, April 14, 1901, 21.

The compromise was not to allow African Americans at the conventions. The GFWC and the nation at large were eager to heal sectional wounds and reunite, often by acceding to Southern demands. The North eschewed insistence on emancipation as the narrative of the Civil War and accepted race, rather than section as the dividing line of American society.²⁷⁴

The *Star's* article recounting the lying in state of former Confederate general Jo Shelby in February 1897 reflected this drive to toward reunion, as well as the enduring presence of people who identified with the Confederacy in Kansas City and the solidarity of former Confederates. The viewing took place in courtroom of the U.S. District Courthouse where former Union and Confederate soldiers stood at the head of the casket. While the viewing lasted until midnight, an estimated 2,000 people viewed the body just between the hours of 9 a.m. and noon. Not all were reconciled to the Confederate loss of the war. The *Star* quoted one elderly former rebel as saying, "I never marched behind it [the U.S. flag] livin' and I'll not be carried behind it dead I'm a Johnny Reb to the backbone. 'Rah for Old Secesh!'"²⁷⁵

The *Star* reported very little about the equality activities of the CLA, the NACW, and the NCJW. The *Star* noted in September 1911 that the CLA had elected officers as well as delegates to the National Conservation Congress. As with the other organizations,

²⁷⁴Blight, 1-59. O'Neill, 87. Beginning in the 1890s, the United Confederate Veterans, United Daughters of the Confederacy, and Sons of the Confederate Veterans condemned what they termed the sectionalism of Northern historians and began producing Lost Cause literature that reflected their viewpoint. National women's organizations strove for the reunion of north and south and therefore did not challenge this southern interpretation of the War. See Fred Arthur Bailey, "The Textbooks of the 'Lost Cause': Censorship and the Creation of Southern State Histories," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 75, no. 3 (Fall 1991).

²⁷⁵*The Kansas City Star*, February 17, 1897, 4.

electing officers, conducting meetings, speaking, and presenting reports provided a political education for these women and allowed them to claim a degree of autonomy within a faiths governed by a male hierarchy.²⁷⁶ Josephine Silone Yates founded the Women's League of Kansas City, an organization of African American women. The League joined the NACW in 1896. Yates took advantage of the irritation of the NACW with the fact that Yates' two opponents, including Mrs. Booker T. Washington, were not present at the election. Rather, they attended a meeting of white club women at that time.²⁷⁷ The NCJW leadership supported suffrage based on domesticity arguments of protecting the home and extending women's influence into politics.²⁷⁸

Following the shift in the priorities of the WCA to a singular path of benevolence, activist women found avenues for the expression of their concerns through local chapters of national organizations. These organizations advanced the women's interests and helped them lay claim to space in the civic arena. By joining with the WCTU over time, the YWCA, GFWC, and other organizations achieved a brief and singular moment of female unity. Through their benevolent, reform, and equality work, these women created their own social and political worlds and worked to shape their community, state, and country in their own image. The women of the WCTU, the GFWC, the YWCA, the NCJW, NACW, and CLA all expanded the arena of their interests by enlarging the feminine sphere. The

²⁷⁶*The Kansas City Star*, September 25, 1911, 5.

²⁷⁷*Ibid.*, July 14, 1901, 1. For more information on the life and work of Mrs. Yates, see Gary R. Kremer and Cindy M. Mackey, "Yours for the Race: The Life and Work of Josephine Silone Yates," *Missouri Historical Review* 90, no. 2 (January 1996), 199-215. For a description of the complexity of social relations among elite white and African American club women in the Northern city of Chicago at this time, see Wells, 267-268.

²⁷⁸Rogow, 78.

organizations they joined did not pursue a single interest such as benevolence, reform, or equality. Rather, each organization embraced each of these interests, but focused with greatest energy on one pursuit. The religious affiliation of these women provided a tendency to select one organization over another. Religious affiliation was by no means proscriptive in the cases of the Protestant and Jewish women. Catholic women did not, however, participate in organizations with non-Catholics, nor were they reported as active on such issues as suffrage and prohibition. Through their activism, these women expanded their sphere, provided assistance to the needy, accommodations and amenities for young women, improved treatment of female and male prisoners, established parks, and educated the young, among other activities. The women also helped lead their community into national discussions of pressing issues through their membership and leadership in local chapters of national organizations. In this way, Kansas City became increasingly like other cities and its residents gained an identity as Kansas Citians. Like a message written in sand, however, their unity, influence, and many of the reforms would not prove permanent.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Between 1871 and 1921 activist women in Kansas City gained a voice, a place for themselves in society, and a new understanding of themselves as political actors. They were no longer hesitant to join together and take collective action. Rather, they extended the hearth into the streets, exercised the skills of effective advocacy, and demanded political equality. As the society of the frontier town became established, the women's unusual model of housing all three strains of activism in one organization evolved. They became like the more established cities of the North and East by acting on their specific interests by forming local chapters of national organizations and in some cases becoming recognized leaders at the state and national levels. In fact, these women reflected the larger desire of the community to pattern its growth, development, and response of issues of poverty on the example of established cities. In this way, the "Eastern thesis": that women's organizations formed to address poverty and were then supplanted by male organizations in response to financial or economic crises did not apply in the Kansas City experience. The men took over relief only reluctantly and in the absence of a precipitating event.

To return to the central question of this dissertation, how did that happen? The principle factors were the expansion of the feminine sphere to include poor relief, moral reform, and equality and Progressive reform; the organization of women into local chapters of national organizations; and activism on behalf of many causes, most notably

suffrage and prohibition. These latter two issues united women across confessional and socio-economic lines.

Yet, success in obtaining the vote did not unify the three strains of women's activism on an ongoing basis; suffrage was the only common bond among the groups.¹ Without unity, women's groups were unable to respond effectively to threats to their progress. While women's groups continued to act locally for civic improvement in Kansas City, which had grown to a population of 300,000 people by 1920, a number of other factors contributed to women's voices becoming less effective on the national level in the 1920s and beyond.² The WCTU's loss of credibility as a result of the failure of Prohibition was one factor.³ Other factors illuminated by the dissertation included the attack on female progress in the 1920s that derived from the desire of American business to have women in the homes to act as consumers, rather than in the workforce. Closely related was the desire of men to reduce female competition for employment in traditionally-male occupations. Two key expressions of these desires combined to discourage women from entering public life starting in the 1920s. Marriage, rather than a career, was increasingly defined as the appropriate life for women. Marriage became the expectation for the well-adjusted woman and same sex relationships, thereby, fell into the category of maladjustment and deviance. Women who pursued higher education and the professions were mocked as mannish lesbians. As a consequence, women lost ground in

¹O'Neill, 264.

²U.S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1924), 42.

³Parker, 12.

the professions and the academy in the 1920s and 1930s.⁴ The watershed of women's entry into the professions and the pursuit of advanced degrees had occurred in the years immediately before and after World War I. The number of women in the professions declined precipitously after those years; the number of women with advanced degrees would not recover previous levels until the 1970s.⁵

Even in the realm of municipal housekeeping, women's effectiveness was limited. They benefited from organization and the work of committed, effective volunteers such as Mary Harmon Weeks in her advocacy of pure milk and other causes. Yet women were not effective in challenging the political machines, which took actions that reflected their unchecked power and the negative effects of machine control of politics. First, the machines gutted the Board of Public Welfare. The concerns of L. A. Halbert, the BPW's superintendent, about political influence and effects of patronage were well founded. While disavowing a political motive, Mayor Cowgill, a machine politician who was elected in 1918 to replace a one-term Republican mayor, appointed a successor to Halbert on June 8, 1918, even while Halbert held the office. Two of the three members of the BPW would have had to agree to make the change. The Chamber of Commerce immediately launched a campaign to prevent Halbert's removal. Halbert remained adamant in his refusal to resign. His refusal, he indicated, derived from a desire to protect the integrity of the civil service system and not from a personal desire to stay.⁶

⁴Cott, 148-159, 223.

⁵Smith-Rosenburg, 34, 281.

⁶*The Kansas City Star*, June 8, 1918, 1.

Within the week, the city council eliminated the position of Superintendent of the BPW and Mayor James Cowgill named a new person to lead the agency with the title of “court sergeant.” Weeks earlier, the BPW film censor had been removed and replaced by a protégé of an alderman who was in the motion picture business. As *The Kansas City Star* reported:

The attitude of the factional politicians was shown in the upper house of the council Monday night after the ordinance (eliminating Halbert’s position) had passed the lower house. Charged with manipulating titles of positions for the sole purpose of legislating out of office worthy civil service employees and inducting therein political workers, Alderman George Harrington, a “goat,” speaking for the administration, without hesitation admitted the fact.⁷

The BPW as a Progressive, Social Gospel experiment in urban reform ended.⁸

Second, the public health response in Kansas City to the 1918 Spanish influenza epidemic, a global pandemic that killed as many as 100 million people and eight to ten percent of young adults,⁹ was hampered by the machines’ accommodation to business interests, which stridently argued for the operation of movie theaters, street cars, and other places of public accommodation during the crisis, and the continued adherence to the 50-50 patronage compromise between the machines. The public health director, Dr. Bullock, made his decisions based on concerns about the security of his position, rather than on his medical judgment. As a result, Kansas City, Missouri, experienced a far

⁷*The Kansas City Star*, June 13, 1918, 1.

⁸Brown and Dorsett, 157.

⁹John M. Barry, *Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History*, (New York: Viking, 2004), 4-5.

higher death rate during the epidemic than either Kansas City, Kansas, or St. Louis, which acted in accordance with good medical judgment.¹⁰

The need of relief services for the poor proved a constant element throughout the period even as attitudes toward the poor shifted in light of new social and economic realities. The Provident Association ran an advertisement in the special Columbus Day edition of *Il Messaggero*, the newspaper of the Italian-American community in Kansas City on October 12, 1931. The advertisement stated that 25,000 people in the community were unemployed and listed the numbers of people who were being served by the Provident Association through family services, health care, and care of the aged, among other segments affected by the dire economic conditions. The plea of the advertisement was that everyone who had a job needed to help those who, through no fault of their own, were unemployed: “We who have jobs MUST divide up with the jobless.”¹¹

Today, the Provident Association provides a broad range of services to individuals and families throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area as the Family Conservancy. The Women’s Christian Association exists as the umbrella organization for Gillis, a home for troubled youth, and the Armour Home, a facility for the care of the aging. The WCTU survives as a greatly diminished organization with a national headquarters and organizations in most states. The GFWC survives at both the national, state, and local levels. The Athenaeum, once Kansas City’s largest and most prominent

¹⁰Susan Sykes Berry, “Politics and Pandemic in 1918 Kansas City” (University of Missouri-Kansas City Master’s Thesis 2010) <https://mospace.umsystem.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10355/7521/SykesBerryThesisPolPan.pdf?sequence=1>, 102-112.

¹¹*Il Messaggero*, October 12, 1931, 3. Vertical files Kansas City Public Library.

club, maintains a much reduced membership and a clubhouse at 900 East Linwood. The YWCA struggles to maintain a presence in Kansas City. The National Council of Catholic Women serves 3,000 affiliated Catholic women's organizations across the country.¹² The NACW continues its work in 36 states, and the NCJW operates with 100 sections, section branches, and state affiliate groups.¹³

This case study of Kansas City – a meeting place of divergent regional cultures, a crossroads of commerce, and a border community in a border state – illuminates the process of women's empowerment through their involvement in benevolence, reform, and equality as they strove to create community in a frontier city and influence its social, cultural, and moral development. Their work within an environment that held civic unity as an imperative of growth holds comparative lessons for other frontier communities in the Midwest and West. However impermanent female empowerment during this period may have been, it served as a model for action once feminism re-emerged after a 40-year period of latency in the 1960s. This study also demonstrates the continuity of public-private partnerships in which governing bodies such as the city and county governments make grants to private nonprofit agencies to achieve specified aims such as assistance to the poor. The study further illustrates that political structures make a significant difference in political outcomes and that gender is an inextricable thread that runs through public policy. By looking at the ideas and events that anteceded women's empowerment, this study opens the door to better understanding its causation.

¹²<http://home.catholicweb.com/NCCW/index.cfm/about>.

¹³<http://www.nacwc.org/>; http://www.ncjw.org/ncjw_near_you.cfm?navID=214.

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While working as a legislative assistant for a member of the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington, D.C., he began a master's program at The George Washington University. He was awarded the Master of Arts degree in Congressional Affairs in May, 1990.

In 1990, Mr. Hanzlick returned to Topeka, where he served as the state lobbyist for a professional association. In 1999, he joined the staff of the UMKC School of Medicine as the Director of Advancement. In 2010, he became the Director of Development for Sheffield Place, a treatment and transitional living program for homeless mothers and their children in Northeast Kansas City, Missouri. Also in 2010, Mr. Hanzlick became a member of the adjunct faculty of the Nonprofit Leadership Program at Rockhurst University. Upon completion of his degree requirements, Mr. Hanzlick plans to continue his career in philanthropy while pursuing research, writing, and adjunct teaching.

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