



# Women in CLEVELAND

AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY



Marian J. Morton



# WOMEN IN CLEVELAND



*The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History: Illustrated Volumes*

Edited by David D. Van Tassel and John J. Grabowski



*Cleveland: A Concise History, 1796–1900*

by Carol Poh Miller and Robert Wheeler

*Sports in Cleveland: An Illustrated History*

by John J. Grabowski

*Fine Arts in Cleveland: An Illustrated History*

by Holly Rarick Witchev with John Vacha

*Women in Cleveland: An Illustrated History*

by Marian J. Morton





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Marian J. Morton

*An Encyclopedia of Cleveland History Project*

Indiana University Press  
Bloomington and Indianapolis

TO MY GRANDSON, JAMES W. GARRETT IV

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Manufactured in the United States of America

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Morton, Marian J., date

Women in Cleveland : an illustrated history / Marian J. Morton.  
p. cm. — (Encyclopedia of Cleveland history)

Includes index.

ISBN 0-253-32896-9 (cl). — ISBN 0-253-20972-2 (pa)

1. Women—Ohio—Cleveland—History. 2. Cleveland (Ohio)—  
Social conditions. I. Title. II. Series.






HQ1439.C5D39 1995

94-48852

305.4'0977132—dc20

1 2 3 4 5 00 99 98 97 96 95

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## EDITORS' PREFACE

When we were editing the *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, we decided to limit the illustrations to a few important charts and maps. This decision was made in order to conserve space for articles on many institutions, events, and people who played an important role in the development of the city and deserved to be included. However, we were conscious that we were missing a form of documentation that has become very important in today's world. Cleveland has an extremely rich array of photographic archives, from the 250,000 images in the library of the Western Reserve Historical Society to the extensive Cleveland Press Collection held at the Cleveland State University library and the extraordinary Cleveland Picture Collection at the Cleveland Public Library. We hope, therefore, to offer a series of illustrated volumes drawing on these collections and focusing on particular aspects of Cleveland's history—from sports and the fine arts, to women as well as many other topics important to Cleveland's history.

Marian J. Morton, in writing her history of women in Cleveland, has taken as her base point the *Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve*, produced by the Woman's Department of the Cleveland Centennial Commission in 1896. This work, a pioneering achievement in itself, sought to chronicle through biographical sketches the contributions, in the editor's words, "of our foremothers." Professor Morton chose not to tell the story in discrete biographical sketches but through a narrative synthesis which moves back in time to flesh out the nineteenth-century period of the earlier work and then ahead in time to the 1990s. She has produced a sweeping interpretive history that is both broad in scope and rich in detail. It is a localized story of national forces shaping and being shaped by women. The *Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve* noted that women had been largely left out of prior histories yet it, too, left out large segments of the female population which Marian Morton's account now includes. This brief volume chronicles the changing roles and varied contributions of women to the development and life of the city of Cleveland.

*Women in Cleveland: An Illustrated History* joins its predecessors, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1790–1990*, *Sports in Cleveland: An Illustrated History*, and *Fine Arts in Cleveland: An*

*Illustrated History* as part of a series of illustrated histories from the *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History* project. For this volume, as well as the earlier ones, we have carefully selected photographs and illustrations to support the text. Wherever possible we have chosen images never before published.

We have introduced, as a new feature in this volume, photographic essays that will supplement and enhance the images that illustrate the text. These groups of carefully selected photographs are designed to give visual evidence of the changes over time in the experience of the Cleveland woman during different phases of her life. These photo essays are placed at intervals throughout the volume, depicting the following subjects: growing up; sports and recreation; marriage and family; women in the workplace; fashion; clubs and associations; and growing old. Each unit has a brief introduction to give the reader some historical context, but the photographs speak for themselves. In this way, as the reader follows the narrative of the changing roles of women, as well as women's roles in changing the life and culture of Cleveland, he or she will be made visually aware of those changes in the everyday life of women. These illustrations are designed to evoke the flavor and character of the times and to augment the text-related images of outstanding women, events, and arenas over the years.

We, as editors, owe a debt of thanks to many institutions and people who made this and the other volumes possible. Thanks, first and foremost, go to the John P. Murphy Foundation and to the Bateman Fund of the Cleveland Foundation, which supplied the funding and helped make possible this and the other volumes in the project. We would like to give our thanks and appreciation to the many people who helped locate photographs and, in some cases, even donated them. Among these are William Becker, University Archivist of Cleveland State University; Genevieve Barnard of the *Plain Dealer* Promotion Department; Jennie Simmons, Librarian of the Dittrick Museum of Medical History, Case Western Reserve University; Ann Sindelar and Barbara Billings, Librarians of the Western Reserve Historical Society; the staff of the Cleveland Public Library Photograph Collection; the staff of the Case Western Reserve University Archives; and Jean Tussey and David Bernatowicz of the Greater Cleveland Labor History Society.

And lastly, we reserve special appreciation for the work of Sarah Snock, who served as Coordinator for the Encyclopedia Project; Michael Morgenstern, who served as research assistant and searched through many photograph collections; and Michael McCormick, who did the photographic copy work.

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# PREFACE

This should have been easier.

For the last decade and a half, I have researched and written about women's history, especially the history of Cleveland women. I thought I knew their story. Now at least I know some of it better than I did. I discovered many adventurous women who got their names in the headlines and learned about many who did not. I would like to have written about them all, but I haven't. I hope someone else will.

Special thanks to David D. Van Tassel and John J. Grabowski for inviting me to do this project, giving me editorial direction, and creating *The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*.

Thanks to Michael Morgenstern for tracking down the photographs.

Thanks for their special help to Mary Woodrich, Martin Hauserman, Kimberley Phillips, Jean Tussey, Anastasia J. Christman, the International Services Center, and especially to WomenSpace.

MARIAN J. MORTON  
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# INTRODUCTION

To celebrate Cleveland's one-hundredth birthday, the city fathers in 1895 formed the Cleveland Centennial Commission and, at the urging of the energetic Mary Bigelow (Mrs. William A.) Ingham, a separate Woman's Department of the Commission. As the members of the Woman's Department began to explore Cleveland's past, they were dismayed to discover "the prominence given to biographies of men . . . [and] little or no mention of their wives, who doubtless had performed an equal though different part in laying the foundations of future civilization and prosperity. . . . A fitting time had come," the women resolved, "in which to treat—not of the services, as usual, of our forefathers—but, if the term be admissible, of our foremothers." Their resolution bore fruit: the *Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve* was compiled to tell the epic story of these heroic "foremothers" who overcame, and sometimes succumbed to, the great obstacles and hardships of the frontier wilderness. (See Figure 1.)

The several volumes of the *Memorial*, written by 216 amateur historians scattered throughout the Western Reserve and edited by journalist Gertrude Van Rensselaer (Mrs. Samuel) Wickham, were themselves a heroic accomplishment. To celebrate that accomplishment, this book borrows the *Memorial's* purpose and theme: to tell the story of our foremothers and reaffirm their part in the first two centuries of Cleveland's development.

Because the story of Cleveland women is one chapter in the history of all American women, it is useful to begin with an overview of that larger context. In 1796, when Moses Cleaveland and his surveying party landed at the mouth of the Cuyahoga River, the United States was on the verge of sweeping economic and social changes which would transform the lives of American women and men. From the time of the earliest settlements through the eighteenth century, the country's economy was agricultural. Most farmers produced enough for their own use and bartered or sold the rest. Except for the very privileged, all family members, male and female, old and young, worked: men outside in the fields and forests, and women inside the home, where almost all necessities—food, clothing, medicine, and other household supplies—were produced. Women's labors at

the spinning wheel and hearth and in the kitchen garden were as essential to the family's well-being and survival as were the labors of men. Women also bore primary responsibility for rearing their large families: seven to nine live births were not unusual because children provided helping hands to the family and the larger community.

Despite these important contributions, even free white women did not enjoy equal status with men. The colonists brought from Europe a family structure in which the husband was the undisputed head of household. Married women could not own property since, according to English common law, wives had no independent legal existence apart from their husbands. Single women were seldom granted land by town fathers. Voting was restricted by property qualifications, which disenfranchised many men, but even propertied women could not vote. These disadvantages were compounded by Christian doctrine which taught that although men and women were spiritual equals, God was male, and therefore women could not become ministers or lay church leaders. Women had fewer opportunities than men to receive a formal education.

The American Revolution, which brought political independence to the colonies and expanded political opportunities for white men, brought neither to women. The end of British rule and restrictions on settlement did encourage the exploration of and migration to territories west of the Appalachians, including the Western Reserve of Connecticut.

FIGURE 1. View of the Woman's Department of the Centennial Parade, 1896. Cleveland State University Archives



In the earliest decades of the nineteenth century, when Cleveland was settled, the country's economy began the gradual transition from agriculture to commerce. Small towns such as Cleveland, located near water transportation, developed as mercantile centers. Men increasingly earned their livelihoods out of their homes, in shops, offices, or small manufacturing enterprises. Most white women still played their most significant role within the home and family. These became defined as women's "sphere," separate from and morally superior to the harsh realities of the competitive marketplace, as woman herself was supposed to be. Despite this circumscribed definition of womanhood, women in the commercial economy enjoyed greater chances for paid work outside the home, although they also ran greater risks of poverty. Growing towns and cities also created schools, voluntary associations, and especially churches, which provided women with roles outside their homes. Women became the majority of church members, although not ministers in conventional Protestant denominations. Sometimes through church activities and always with evangelical zeal, women joined the various reform movements of the antebellum decades, including temperance, abolitionism, and, less often, the women's rights movement. In many states, married women gained the right to own property. Although families were still large by today's standards, the birthrate, especially for middle-class urban women, slowly declined.

During the Civil War, women filled in on farms and in offices for absent soldiers and served both the Union and the Confederacy as army nurses. Northern women aided the Union's war effort through the United States Sanitary Commission, which raised funds for and ministered to soldiers away from home. Slave women were emancipated, freed to live with husbands and children at last, and often to join the paid workforce to support them.

In the longer run, the rapid industrialization and continuing urbanization of the post-Civil War era would be more transforming than the war itself for native-born black and white women and for the hundreds of thousands of immigrant women who entered the country in the late nineteenth century. In the immediate postwar years, women threw themselves into charitable and benevolent activities and joined dozens of women's organizations and clubs. Working-class women worked on the assembly lines in factories or behind the counters in department stores. Well-to-do women entered the growing numbers of women's colleges and coeducational state universities and the professions of nursing, teaching, librarianship, and social work.

During the twentieth century, women's horizons continued to expand, shaped more by large-scale and unplanned changes than by a purposeful re-visioning of women's rights and abilities. The reformism of the early twentieth century propelled women into public and political arenas and energized the suffrage movement. Women's support of the United States entry into World War I provided the political pretext for rewarding women with the vote in 1920.

Now enfranchised, women began new careers as political actors and enlarged their public activism. Also expanded were their work roles, for the hard times of the Great Depression and the military necessities of World War II pushed women, white and black, married and single, into the workforce in record numbers. In the postwar years a revitalized civil rights struggle inspired a new women's movement, which challenged traditional ideas and roles by the late 1960s and 1970s. Feminist political pressures opened doors in education and employment for many women, at the same time that many others struggled in poverty to raise their children.

In 1897, members of the Woman's Department of the Cleveland Centennial Commission enclosed memorabilia pertaining to their activities in a casket to be opened in 1996. At this ceremony, Kate Brownlee Sherwood made a bold prediction: "A century



from now the women of 1996 will assemble to celebrate the second century of the city of Cleveland. . . . In that great assemblage of educators and statesmen and women of affairs, there will be women governors and ex-governors and senators and legislators, and scientists and divines." She was too optimistic. (See Figure 2.)

Perhaps because our vision is more inclusive, encompassing working-class and non-white women, or perhaps because ours is a more skeptical age, it is difficult to be as hopeful today as those women were a century ago. Women have become physicists and chemists, senators and governors, astronauts and chief executive officers of corporations, succeeding in arenas that our foremothers could not even have imagined. Equal opportunity, however, is still a goal, not a reality, for most women, and women today, like women two hundred years ago, are still among the poorest of the poor.

Nevertheless, as the Woman's Department presciently foresaw, all our foremothers—whether poor or rich, white or nonwhite, pioneer wife or single schoolteacher, Protestant missionary or Catholic nun, philanthropist or textile worker, politician or nurse—have played their parts in the city's first two hundred years.



**FIGURE 2. KATE BROWNLEE SHERWOOD,** member of the Woman's Department of the Cleveland Centennial Commission, ca. mid-1890s. Western Reserve Historical Society

# WOMEN IN CLEVELAND





# Pioneering Women

Hoping to profit from the Western Reserve land boom, James Kingsbury left New Hampshire in the fall of 1796 for the tiny settlement that would become Cleveland. Traveling with Kingsbury were his young nephew, his three small children, and his pregnant wife, Eunice. Leaving his family in the forests near Conneaut, Kingsbury returned to New Hampshire on business. There he became incapacitated by malaria. In his lengthy absence, Eunice gave birth as winter closed in. By the time her husband returned and could procure food, the newborn infant had starved to death. Eunice and the other children barely survived. The family finally reached Cleveland in spring 1797, and James Kingsbury went on to a distinguished career as a judge and state legislator. His wife bore and cared for six more children, served her family and community, and died in 1843. Like Eunice Kingsbury, Cleveland's pioneer women surmounted great hardships as they came to its forest-covered frontier on foot or horseback, in oxen-drawn covered wagons and lake vessels from small towns in New England, New York, and Pennsylvania.

In the earliest years of the republic, Americans went west, crossing the Appalachians into lands freshly won from the British and newly organized into territories. Some travelers speculated in the land, in search of profit; others planned to stay and build better lives for their families; some—like James Kingsbury—did both. For men and women, marriage, or at least life within a household, was crucial for the survival of indi-

Wives  
and  
Mothers,  
1796–1830

viduals and the community in this wilderness as it had been in the seventeenth-century colonies. As wives and mothers, women nurtured the tiny community of Cleveland and their own large families and struggled to survive and tame the wilderness.

No women owned stock in the Connecticut Land Company, which in 1795 purchased the Western Reserve from the state of Connecticut, and no women became owners of Cleveland's first lots when the intended capital of the Reserve was laid out in 1796. In 1798, however, the Land Company granted land to two women, acknowledging their importance to the community.

One recipient was seventeen-year-old Tabitha Stiles, who had accompanied the surveying party of Moses Cleaveland to the city's site in July 1796. She and her husband, Job Phelps Stiles, former schoolteachers from Vermont, were employed by the surveying party, Talitha as the cook. When the party returned to Connecticut in the fall, Talitha and her husband remained for the winter in a log cabin at Superior at West 6th Street, on the northwest corner of the area designated as the public square. Attended by American Indian women, Talitha gave birth to Cleveland's first white child, Charles Phelps Stiles, in the spring of 1797. When the company awarded Talitha more than a hundred acres of land, she and her family moved to higher and healthier ground near Woodhill Road, in the area that became the township of Newburgh. There they lived for about fifteen years before returning to their native Vermont.

Mrs. Anna Gun also received a land parcel near Woodhill Road from the Land Company. She and her husband, Elijah, had accompanied the original party of surveyors as far as Conneaut and remained there for the winter. In spring 1797 the Guns became the second family to settle in Cleveland. After three years they too fled the malaria-ridden swamps near the Cuyahoga River for Newburgh, where Anna Gun cared for her own family and acted as nurse and midwife to her neighbors.

Talitha Stiles, Anna Gun, and other women settlers of Cleveland in the earliest years of the nineteenth century played their chief roles within their own households. As husbands cleared the dense forests for pasture and crops of corn or wheat, wives spun and wove clothing, made soap, candles, and medicine, raised and prepared food for the table, and tried to keep the house clean. (See Figure 3.)

Cleveland's economy was already dependent on commerce. The first commercial enterprise was land speculation. The investors in the Connecticut Land Company did not intend to live in Cleveland, but bought stock only to sell to others. The grid design of the public square was supposed to make the lots easy to sell. Cleveland's site at the mouth of the Cuyahoga River had been chosen because it had possibilities as a trade center, linked to the farming interior of the Reserve by the river and to other towns on the Great Lakes. The main street, Superior, ran

down to the river banks, where goods might be easily stored or loaded onto vessels.

Farm and domestic goods, therefore, were produced to be sold, not just consumed within the household, and women were expected to help out in the family's commercial ventures. When Lorenzo Carter opened the city's first tavern on the river bank, his wife, Rebecca Fuller Carter, attended to the tavern's clientele in addition to her own family. She and her husband and three children had left Castleton, Vermont, in late summer 1796. They spent the winter in Canada; Rebecca bore another child in the spring and arrived in Cleveland in May. The Carters were considered the city's first permanent settlers, since they continued to live within the village limits rather than moving to Newburgh. Carter's tavern became the site for local celebrations such as the city's first wedding, on July 4, 1797. Carter also sold whiskey to travelers and native Indians, earning a reputation as a successful but slightly disreputable entrepreneur. Rudolphus Edwards also moved from the foot of Superior Street to Woodhill, where he opened a tavern. His wife, Anna, did the cooking, sewing, spinning, and cleaning for its guests as well as her own ten children.

Women's lives illustrate not only their economic significance but the hardships of life on the frontier. Travel to the

FIGURE 3. An 1800 sketch by Capt. Alan Gaylord shows the early settlement of Cleveland, looking north to mouth of the Cuyahoga River and Lake Erie. Western Reserve Historical Society



Western Reserve was always difficult and often dangerous. The roads taken by the first surveyors and settlers were Indian trails or paths made by wild animals across the rivers and along the natural ridges through the forests. Later travelers could reach the city from the east on the barely passable girdled road from Pennsylvania along the Lake Erie shoreline through the vast forests or from the south by the Portage Path, an old Indian trail. The trip might take weeks, depending on the weather and the stamina of the oxen pulling the Conestoga wagons or the horses bearing the travelers. When Josiah Barber, the first mayor of Ohio City and one of its chief developers, came from Connecticut to the Western Reserve in 1817, he was on the road for six weeks.

Most women began the trip with husbands, but as Eunice Kingsbury discovered, wives were occasionally left alone in the wilderness with small children. Sarah Thorp also had a narrow escape. When her husband, Joel, left her in Ashtabula County to return to New Haven, she saved herself and her children from starvation by shooting a wild turkey. Her husband, a carpenter, soon moved the family from Cleveland to Buffalo. He was killed in the War of 1812, and the family's possessions were burned by British and Indian forces.

Nor was travel on the lake much safer. Sudden storms capsized boats, costing travelers their possessions and sometimes their lives. As the family of Judge John Walworth sailed from Fairport Harbor to Cleveland, their boat was wrecked, and all aboard were cast into the water. Timothy Doan, with his wife, Mary, and six children, left Herkimer County, New York, to join his brother Nathaniel, the first settler of East Cleveland. From Buffalo, Doan and one son traveled on with some of the family's livestock and household goods, and his wife and remaining children began the rest of the trip on the lake. At the mouth of the Grand River, their rowboat overturned. An Indian guide pulled the children from the shallow water, and Mrs. Doan, with the help of three men, rescued the family's possessions. She insisted on making the rest of the trip by land, arriving in East Cleveland in April 1801 on horseback with a baby in her arms.

Safe arrival did not bring an end to difficulties or dangers. Cleveland's first dwelling places were log cabins, hastily assembled out of available timber. The interiors were small and dark. The central room of the one-story building contained simple furnishings and a large hearth for heating and cooking. The few windows were covered by greased paper or blankets. The housewife shared this cramped living and working space with her whole family.

Precarious health added to the burdens of wives and mothers, the makers and dispensers of home remedies and chief caretakers of the sick. Men, women, and children were stricken by the ever-present, debilitating malaria, which dis-

couraged early settlers such as the Stileses and the Guns from remaining near the Cuyahoga River, and many more families from moving to the city at all. Samuel Huntington, later elected Ohio's third governor, recorded that on his first journey to Cleveland, in 1800, all three families living near the stagnant abandoned channel of the Cuyahoga River had the ague. (Huntington moved his family to Fairport Harbor.) One settler recalled his own family's travails. "Our journey was attended with the greatest suffering. My youngest sister was sick all the way, dying three days after her arrival. Father was then taken down with ague, so our house was built slowly. With the greatest difficulty mother hewed with an adze the stub ends of the floor boards, and put them down with the little help father could give her. We moved in, toward the close of November, our house possessing neither door nor window. At that time, two of the children were sick with ague. Father worked when the chills and fever left him for the day."

Women experienced many pregnancies, and pioneer families were large, even though pregnancies sometimes ended in stillbirths and children often died in infancy. Anna Gun had four or six children; Sarah Thorp, seven; Eunice Kingsbury, nine. Rebecca Carter bore nine children; one died as an infant, two as small children, and a fourth drowned in the Cuyahoga River at age ten.

Cleveland also had sometimes-hostile neighbors. The white settlers' claim to former Indian lands had been established (at least to the settlers' satisfaction) by treaties in 1796 and 1805, but Senecas, Ottawas, Delawares, and Chippewas continued to come to the village to trade their furs. White and Indian children sometimes played together, and although Indian adults were usually friendly, when filled with rum or whiskey provided by Alonzo Carter or other traders, Indian men sometimes frightened white women living alone in the forest. Just as frightening were the wild animals—wolves, bears, and panthers—which roamed the woods and, according to local lore, sometimes chased women and children lost in the forests and even entered cabins uninvited.

British troops threatened Cleveland during the War of 1812, and many families fled to Newburgh, six miles farther from the lake. Several wives decided to remain, however, not to repel the British but to nurse the wounded. Oliver Hazard Perry's defeat of the British at the Battle of Lake Erie, and the United States' successful completion of the war, removed forever the British threat, and most Indians also moved from the Western Reserve.

Frontier life challenged emotional as well as physical hardihood, for pioneer women often found themselves isolated from kin and friends. Tabitha Stiles and her husband were the only family in Cleveland in the winter of 1797. In 1800 only seven people lived in the village; in 1810 only three hundred, and



only fifty-seven in the area nearest to the center of the settlement and the river. In 1814 Cleveland had only thirty-four dwellings and business places. Its public square, carefully laid out on paper by the original surveyors to resemble the New England towns from which they came, was in reality a pasture in which cows, pigs, and other livestock foraged for food through ruts and tree stumps. Settlers' homes were widely scattered around the periphery of the square, which was surrounded by forest. The two main roads leading in and out of the village—Superior and Water streets—were barely passable. (See Figure 4.)

Tied to home by domestic chores and child-rearing, women had even less chance than their husbands to escape this dreary solitude. There were few social organizations, no schools, and, more important, no churches, and only infrequent visits by missionaries. The *Memorial to the Pioneer Women* records the story of one intrepid woman so homesick that she hired a wagon and driver to take her and her three children back to Connecticut; when the driver became ill, she left him and the

FIGURE 4. Ahaz Merchant's map of 1835 shows Cleveland just prior to its incorporation as a city the following year. Western Reserve Historical Society



wagon and completed the journey herself, she and her children alternately walking and riding the horse.

Occasionally women's loneliness on the crude and desolate frontier was documented in their correspondence with absent husbands, such as Hannah Huntington's with husband Samuel. Hannah Huntington had been born in Norwich, Connecticut, the daughter of a prosperous merchant and judge, Andrew Huntington. (She was distantly related to her husband.) She bore the last of their six children just before the family moved to the new settlement from Connecticut in 1800. She was fortunate to have a cabin waiting for her family on her arrival in Cleveland and to have servants to help her with chores. Nevertheless, her husband was frequently away from home on business for the Connecticut Land Company or in pursuit of political office. "My dear husband," she wrote in April 1805, "what am I to think this month is over & you are not return'd & I have nothing from you[.] [C]onjecture is lost in itself—I feel as though I was quite out of the reach of any communication of a public nature." Alone, she survived family bouts of malaria, the death of one child, and the unmarried pregnancies of a female servant. She continued to manage the family finances and farm as Samuel served on the Ohio Supreme Court, as governor from 1808 to 1810, and in the legislature.

As the *Memorial to the Pioneer Women* noted, few historians have taken notice of these brave and resourceful first settlers. Nevertheless, their labors as wives and mothers were essential in Cleveland's earliest years. Husbands and wives worked the family farm or family tavern together, and even white middle-class women did whatever was necessary for their families' survival, whether that was shooting a turkey, building a log cabin, or traveling alone in the wilderness. As the frontier hamlet became a small town in the first decades of the nineteenth century, women's lives would change too.



# Defining Woman's Sphere

## Women's Work, Religion, and Reform, 1830–1865

Catherine Plunket, washwoman, residing at Cleveland Center; the Misses H. and C. Ludlow, schoolmistresses at 10 Ontario Street; and the Martha Washington and Dorcas Society, provider of charity to the needy, were listed in the 1845 city directory. All were doing “women’s work,” closely associated with what mid-nineteenth-century society defined as woman’s “sphere,” her home and family.

The rigors of the frontier had permitted little differentiation between men’s and women’s tasks and responsibilities. By the 1820s, however, Cleveland was no longer a frontier outpost but a thriving commercial town, which supported a host of religious and cultural institutions and a substantial middle class. The community could also afford to redefine woman: no longer survivor in the wilderness, she became homemaker and child-rearer in parlor and kitchen. Here she was supposed to cultivate her feminine virtues of piety, domesticity, nurturance, purity, and submissiveness to male authority. Always more of a middle-class ideal than a reality, this female sphere nevertheless limited women’s economic options to providing domestic goods and services. At the same time, however, it enlarged women’s social responsibilities, their female virtues encouraging them to make the community a more virtuous place. (See Figure 5.)

The isolated frontier phase did not last long, and by the 1820s Cleveland had begun to resemble the New England towns of its first settlers. Newcomers built frame homes, not log cabins. A few brick mansions appeared on Public Square, and in



FIGURE 5. An early formal portrait of Jane Wolverton Ingraham by Cleveland artist Jarvis Hanks, 1838. Western Reserve Historical Society

1828 the log and clapboard courthouse was replaced by a handsome Federal-style brick and stone structure. Ambitious town fathers optimistically cleared some existing streets and planned new ones as the residential neighborhood expanded south and east from the square, now ringed by homes and retail stores. In the mid-1840s the wealthy began to build gracious mansions on Euclid Avenue eastward from the square. (See Figure 6.)

The city's population became larger and more heterogeneous. In 1825, Cleveland's 500 residents were predominantly native-born; in 1845, about half of the city's 9,500 inhabitants were foreign-born, most from Germany and Ireland. Cleveland also had a small African American population of free men and women.

The chief engine of this change was the city's thriving commercial economy. When the Ohio Canal opened in 1827, Cleveland's prosperity as a commercial center was assured. On its docks were exchanged farm goods, especially wheat and flour, from the south and lumber and manufactured goods



FIGURE 6. Thomas Whelpley's illustrated depiction of Cleveland in the 1830s, looking east from the corner of St. Clair and Bank St., shows a resident tending to her garden. Western Reserve Historical Society

from the north. Enterprising merchants built new warehouses on the river front and stores and hotels on Superior Street. Sailing vessels transported goods to and from other Great Lakes ports, and the city became a center for shipbuilding. Small factories also produced iron products and steam engines, foreshadowing the city's later industrial capabilities.

The enumeration of the "principal businessmen" in Cleveland's first city directory, published in 1837, reveals this transition to commercial village. Few farmers were listed, but many men described themselves as artisans such as carpenters or masons, some simply as laborers, and growing numbers as merchants or dealers in hardware and especially groceries.

As these men left family farms for work in the marketplace—store, factory, or office—many women remained at home. As men became defined as principal breadwinners, providers of financial support, women became defined as housekeepers and child-rearers, providers of emotional and moral support to their family and community.

In theory, women did not join the paid workforce; in reality, they did, especially if they were young and single. The commercial economy and the more complex society provided new opportunities to earn money, although the goods and ser-

vices that women sold were almost always related to domestic skills. The handful of women “businessmen” listed in the 1837 directory included three schoolteachers, two Irish laundresses, three dressmakers, and two milliners. Their customers, the city’s middle-class women, could afford to pay someone else to do the wash and no longer spun and wove but bought their clothing. Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Slade, and Mrs. Sloan ran boardinghouses near the river and canal, whose clientele were probably lake and canal sailors. The 1845 directory included more women with paid jobs, although these had changed little. Neither directory listed as wage earners wives such as the German Jews who worked in their husbands’ businesses or who washed or sewed for wages in their own homes as many of the Irish women probably did. (See Figure 7.)

The 1857 directory indicates not only the rising number of working women but the growing class stratification and ethnic diversity of the city. Elizabeth Grisell, M.D., appears in this directory, as do many women teachers and a few store clerks. Women’s surnames reflect the working-class Irish population:



FIGURE 7. Esther Thorman and Edward Budwig on their wedding day, ca. 1860. Theirs was one of the first Jewish weddings performed in Cleveland. Western Reserve Historical Society, courtesy of Mrs. Ethel Kendis

Almost 900 immigrant-generation Jews came to Cleveland between 1839 and 1861, most young and not wealthy, fleeing religious as well as political persecution. Most women married, bore large families, and often worked in the family store as well. Women, like men, sent money back to their homeland, making possible the emigration of other family members.

Mrs. Mary Cary, washwoman; Mrs. Ellen Clancy, widow, washwoman; Catharine Conover, widow, seamstress; Mrs. Bridget Kelley, plain sewing. Irish women owned saloons, including Catharine Cratty and Mrs. Blochboylan. The following entries speak volumes about the economic dependence of most women, especially nonwhite women: Mrs. Mary Bulkhardt, widow, washwoman; Charlotte Armstrong, widow, seamstress; Henrietta Brumback ("colored"), widow of Noah, washwoman.

Most working women in Cleveland were live-in domestic servants. Their names were not listed in the city directories but did appear in the federal census data. The 1850 census listed only the occupations of males over the age of fifteen, but a household's domestic servants can be easily identified by their ages and by surnames different from the rest of the household, as here:

L. B. Canfield, 39, Clergyman  
Sarah W. Canfield (no age or occupation listed)  
L. S. Canfield, 9  
C. J. Canfield, 4  
Frederick W. Canfield, 2  
Sarah Dennis, 19, English

Many servants were Irish, encouraged to leave their poverty-stricken homeland but arriving in this country with little money and few urban job skills.

The 1860 census provides even more detailed information, noting the occupations of all who were gainfully employed, as well as the value of the householder's real estate and personal estate. Edmund Clark, sixty, described himself to the census taker as a "gentleman" who valued his property at \$30,000 and whose household included his wife, his daughter, and Bridget Smith, thirty-two, a domestic servant from Ireland. Former mayor and prominent lawyer and judge Samuel Starkweather, whose real estate was valued at \$20,000, lived with his wife, two children, and Kate Hubbard, twenty-nine, a "domestic" from England. Mayor George B. Senter employed three servants: an Englishman (perhaps a butler) and two Irish women. Not all female servants lived with their employers, however; the census lists five Irish servants living together in a large boardinghouse.

As the directories indicate, teaching became an increasingly attractive career for women. The common school movement, which developed in the 1840s and 1850s as the nation tried to create an educated citizenry and a productive workforce, created a demand for teachers, especially female teachers, since they could be paid less than men. Caring for children was considered to be one of women's natural skills, and a female teacher required little more than a grade-school education herself.

Cleveland's earliest schools were small and were conducted in private homes. In 1810 there were two teachers, both women, for the village's two dozen students: Sarah Doan,

whose pupils met in a log cabin in Newburgh, and Clara Spafford, who conducted classes in the front room of Alonzo Carter's log cabin. The city soon built two schoolhouses, the first a one-room country district school building in 1817, and in 1821 a larger, two-story structure with a steeple and bell, the Cleveland Academy. Neither, however, was free, except for the very poor. Many children enrolled in the city's several private schools, including the Cleveland Free School (or Colored Free School) for black children, opened in 1832 by John Malvin.

When Cleveland became a city in 1836, it was given authority to establish a public school system for white children. (Before 1848 the state of Ohio did not provide for the education of black children.) By the 1837–38 school year, the city had set up eight schools, four for boys and four for girls, which enrolled 840 pupils. Although the intent was that women should teach the girls and men the boys, there were actually five female and only three male teachers because women also taught younger children of both sexes. Soon women also taught older boys. The preponderance of women was a practical necessity for the perennially short-funded school system, since female teachers were paid five dollars a week and male teachers forty dollars a month. (Teachers were also expected to sweep and dust their own classrooms, and in winter to keep the fires going in the stoves, although in the high school these chores were done by students.) In 1845 the boys' and girls' senior departments at the various schools were merged, improving the boys' department, according to the school board report, and also allowing for the employment of more female teachers. In 1846 the city's thirteen schools, with fifteen hundred students, were taught by four male and thirteen female teachers. The Cleveland City Council refused to fund a separate public school for black children, so by midcentury the public schools were racially integrated.

In 1846 also, despite vocal opposition from well-to-do taxpayers, Central High School was opened, the first public high school in the state, under principal and later school historian Andrew J. Freese. Initially only male students were enrolled, but in the summer of 1847, responding to public pressures, the high school admitted its first class of girls. Girls' attendance soon was better than boys', according to Freese. Boys and girls apparently studied the same curriculum: algebra, arithmetic, American history, chemistry, philosophy, reading, penmanship, vocal music, and bookkeeping. Teachers also tried to teach both sexes good habits and middle-class Protestant morality. Among the first female graduates was Laura Spelman, later the wife of industrialist John D. Rockefeller. The city also opened evening schools in 1850 for young people who had to work during the day.

Numbers of schools, pupils, and teachers continued to rise. In 1845 the Board of Education oversaw thirty-four schools with 3,161 pupils and employed eleven male and thirty-six



female teachers. In 1857, after Cleveland merged with Ohio City, the faculty was overwhelmingly female: only twelve of the city's eighty teachers were men. No women became school principals during this period, however, and none served on the school board.

Female teachers' salaries, moreover, remained considerably below their male colleagues'. The high-school superintendent earned a princely \$1,000 a year, and other male teachers from \$600 to \$800. Female teachers, however, were paid according to the school board's judgment of their professional qualifications; their salaries ranged from \$250 to \$300 per year. Most male teachers had college degrees—from Dartmouth, Yale, and Williams, for example—and their teaching jobs were preparatory to second, more lucrative careers such as law, medicine, or college teaching. Since there were very few colleges that admitted women, most women teachers were graduates only of female seminaries. This pioneer generation of women schoolteachers included Laura M. Ayer, a graduate of Mt. Holyoke Female Seminary, who served as an assistant teacher in the high school, and Martha M. Barnett, a graduate of Brockport Female Seminary. Catharine Jennings had graduated from Oberlin College but left Cleveland schools to do missionary work with her husband in the Middle East.

By 1860 most students attended Cleveland's public schools, but there were educational options. Almost five thousand young people between the ages of five and twenty-one did not attend school at all. About two hundred enrolled in private Protestant schools; two thousand attended Catholic parochial schools.

As Cleveland's public schools became more inclusive, the city's Protestant elite maintained private schools for their children. Most of these were small and short-lived. In 1854 the Cleveland Female Seminary, the city's largest private school, enrolled 120 girls whose families could pay the \$300 annual tuition. Like female seminaries elsewhere, the Cleveland institution was intended to provide girls with a secondary education comparable to boys'. In 1871 the school was reincorporated as the Cleveland Seminary for Girls, but it was forced to close in 1883 because of continued financial problems.

The Cleveland Female Seminary produced the city's best-known female educator, Linda Thayer Guilford. The oldest of the six children of a shoemaker, she went to work at age sixteen in a paper mill until friends financed her education at Mt. Holyoke Seminary, from which she was graduated in 1847. Guilford came to Cleveland in 1848 and was principal of two small private schools for girls before becoming the vice-principal of the Cleveland Female Seminary in 1854. Guilford left the Seminary in 1860, opened her own school in 1861, and in 1866 became the principal of the second Cleveland Academy, organized and funded by some of the city's wealthy businessmen. (See Figures 8 and 9.)



FIGURE 8. Cleveland education pioneer Linda (Lucinda) Thayer Guilford, ca. 1896. Western Reserve Historical Society

**LINDA (LUCINDA) THAYER GUILFORD** (22 Nov. 1823–1 Mar. 1911). When she retired as an educator in 1881, Guilford became active in the Cleveland Woman's Christian Temperance Union and sat on the advisory council of the College for Women of Western Reserve University. She also published her recollections of teaching young women, entitled *The Story of a Cleveland School from 1848-1881*. One of those young women, Flora Stone Mather, in 1892 gave the college a dormitory, which she named Guilford Cottage to honor her admired teacher.

FIGURE 9. The Cleveland Female Seminary on Woodland Ave. near Willson St. (now E. 55th) in the 1860s. Linda Guilford played an important role in its establishment. Western Reserve Historical Society



The overtly Protestant (and sometimes anti-Catholic) tone of the public and private schools encouraged the establishment of parochial schools for the city's rapidly growing Catholic population. Cleveland's first bishop, Amadeus Rappe, appointed in 1847, hoped that each parish would have its own school. The city's first parochial school, located in the new Cathedral, opened in 1849, and later schools followed the patterns of Catholic settlement: St. Mary's and St. Patrick's schools on the near west side and St. Peter's and St. Joseph's on the east side. Some schools, like the churches with which they were associated, educated specific ethnic groups such as Germans or French.

Almost all of the teachers in Catholic schools were nuns. In 1850 Rappe went to France and recruited five Ursuline nuns, including their religious superior, Mother Mary of the Annunciation (Mary Beaumont), after whom the Ursulines would name the girls' school that they established in 1942. The Ursulines' earliest teaching assignments were at the Cathedral school, at St. Patrick's Church, at Immaculate Conception parish, and at St. Mary's and St. Malachi's schools. In addition, the Ursulines opened their own boarding school and academy. Other teaching orders soon joined the pioneer Ursulines: the Daughters (or Ladies) of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, another French order; the Sisters of the Holy Humility of Mary; and the Sisters of the Society of Mary.

As in the public schools, older boys and girls in parochial schools were supposed to be taught separately, and in general nuns, like other female teachers, were not supposed to teach older boys. However, nuns far outnumbered male religious in the United States, and since there were not enough male teachers, nuns soon taught both boys and girls. The crying need for teachers in the Catholic schools forced the bishop to relax the rules confining nuns to the cloister so that they could go from one parish to another.

Possibly the least attractive job for women, unnamed in either the census or the city directories, was prostitution. Prostitutes served the city's sailors along the canal and river fronts. Keepers of "houses of ill fame" and "disorderly houses" appeared regularly in Cleveland's police court. In May 1853, for example, a madam was fined fifty dollars; three prostitutes were fined five dollars each. Prostitution continued to flourish, however, and two years later, twelve women were fined for keeping houses of ill fame and twenty-five men for visiting them.

The economic powerlessness that drove some women to prostitution is also suggested by the fate of the Female Protective Union, organized in 1850 by some of the approximately four hundred women who sewed piecework for Cleveland merchants. Sewing at home was a common female occupation, and there were similar unions in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. The union's objective was to raise sewing women's

wages—they worked sixteen-hour days for approximately two dollars a week—and to ensure payment in cash rather than in store orders or credit. The union publicized its members' cause and employed another common strategy of organized labor, establishing a Female Cooperative Union Store in 1851. Despite an initial gift of four thousand dollars from middle-class supporters, the store was short-lived, and the union itself disbanded soon afterwards, defeated by opposition from influential merchants who employed seamstresses.

The perilous economic situation of working-class Cleveland women and men in midcentury is most poignantly revealed in the rolls of the city poorhouse. Like other cities, Cleveland provided poor relief to its dependent population, and in 1827 the township had built a small poorhouse for a handful of residents incapacitated by disease or misfortune. As the city grew, so did the numbers of those who could not care for themselves, and in 1855, acknowledging the persistence of poverty amid its new affluence, Cleveland built a large poorhouse, called the Cleveland Infirmary because the institution provided some medical care. The all-purpose Infirmary then sheltered not only the ill but also the criminal and the insane, male and female, old and young, permanently disabled, or temporarily down on their luck.

When their occupations were noted on the Infirmary's register, the women were most often domestic servants. Almost the only exception were the prostitutes, who sometimes entered the institution for medical treatment of syphilis or other diseases. Like male inmates, women seem to have been disproportionately Irish: the registers list many Kates and Maggies, Bridgets and Marys. Also like male inmates, women were often transients, new to town and unable to find shelter. They used the Infirmary as a temporary way station for themselves and the children who often accompanied them. In 1857 a young Irish woman, who had arrived from Toronto only three days earlier, was admitted to the Infirmary; after a short stay she was discharged with her two children, one of whom had been born seven months before in the Cincinnati Infirmary. Sometimes pregnant and abandoned by spouses or sexual partners, inmates bore their children in the poorhouse. In 1867, for example, the pregnancy of a twenty-five-year-old schoolteacher, born in the Isle of Man but a resident of the city, compelled her to seek admission to the Infirmary.

Women's sphere defined their religious activities as well as their work. The prescriptive literature of the period described women as especially pious, having a unique responsibility to maintain and proselytize their faith. Women probably constituted a numerical majority of church members, as they did elsewhere, and participated in the organization of early Protestant churches, including a Congregational church in 1811, First Presbyterian in 1820, First Methodist in 1827, and First Baptist in 1833. Black women helped to found St. John's African

Methodist Episcopal Church in 1848, Shiloh Baptist in 1849, and Mt. Zion Congregational Church in 1864. Women did not, however, become ministers or lay leaders in these mainstream Protestant denominations.

Within the North Union Shaker Community founded in the 1820s, however, women played unique roles as community leaders and missionaries. The Shaker church, or the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming, was founded by Mother Ann Lee (1736–1784), who taught that God embodied both feminine and masculine characteristics. Accordingly, the Shaker ministry was carried on by both men and women, designated as Fathers and Mothers by their communities. Both also acted as missionaries to gain new followers, especially necessary since Shakers practiced celibacy. Celibacy may in fact have explained the appeal of the Shaker religion to many women, who were fearful of unwanted pregnancies. The North Union Shaker Community, "the Valley of God's Pleasure," was organized by Jacob Russell and his family, converts to the faith, and they were joined by Shaker immigrants from the East. The Shakers supported themselves by farming and handcrafting household items such as furniture and textiles. Despite their leadership positions, women worked at traditional domestic tasks and lived separately from men. The community declined after the Civil War and sold its thirteen hundred acres to a land syndicate in 1892.

Because most charitable activities were linked to churches, they also fell within women's sphere. Public support for the poor was minimal; most nineteenth-century Americans believed that poverty resulted from moral inadequacies which should not be rewarded by public subsidies. The strict regimen and meager accommodations at the Cleveland Infirmary were intended to discourage indigent Clevelanders from using it. Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish organizations, therefore, provided important relief to the indigent, especially to their coreligionists.

German women organized the Jewish Ladies' Benevolent Society in 1860, which sponsored fundraisers to support the Jewish poor. Women's relief societies also helped to raise the necessary moneys for the Jewish Orphan Asylum (now Bellefaire), which opened in 1868.

Nuns staffed the Catholic orphanages, which church officials preferred to the Infirmary because it, like the public schools, had a vigorously Protestant aura. The Ladies of the Sacred Heart of Mary opened the city's first orphanage, St. Mary's Female Asylum for young girls, in 1851, and in 1863 St. Joseph's Orphanage for older girls. The Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, organized by Bishop Rappe and directed by a former Ursuline nun, Catherine Bissonette, opened St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum in 1853.

Cleveland's leading Protestant activist was Rebecca Cromwell Rouse. (See Figure 10.) Her husband, Benjamin, left a suc-



FIGURE 10. Rebecca Rouse, prominent Cleveland temperance and moral reformer, during her tenure as president of the local chapter of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, ca. 1865. Western Reserve Historical Society

**REBECCA C. ROUSE** (30 Oct. 1799–23 Dec. 1887), born in Salem, Mass., married her husband, Benjamin, in 1821 and moved with him to New York City in 1825 before coming to Cleveland. Rouse was described appropriately by Mary Bigelow Ingham as “the founder of woman’s work in Cleveland.”

successful career as a building contractor in New York City to travel to Cleveland as the agent for the American Sunday School Union, and with their three children the couple arrived in Cleveland in 1830. His journal described the city as “a beautiful village” with only one “Church Edifice” (Trinity Church on Public Square) and six stores. The Rouses’ home on Public Square became a repository for Sunday school tracts, and Rebecca Rouse founded the Ladies Tract Society, a local branch of the American Tract Society. She was also a founder of the First and Second Baptist churches.

Rouse almost singlehandedly directed several charities. She helped to establish and administer the city’s first significant private poor-relief organization, the Martha Washington and Dorcas Society. Founded in 1842 and linked initially to the Washingtonian temperance movement, this organization of two hundred middle- and upper-class women sought to emulate the Dorcas of the Bible, who aided the sick and needy. Members raised funds by visiting the offices and businesses of

well-to-do Cleveland men, and Rouse visited the homes of the poor and distributed clothing, food, or fuel to those regarded as worthy of charity, especially women and children. When responsibility for poor relief was taken over by the male-run Society for the Relief of the Poor, Rouse became an agent of that Society. She also organized financial and moral support for the Cleveland Protestant Orphan Asylum, which opened its doors in 1852 in the wake of a cholera epidemic and which operates today as Beech Brook. (See Figure 11.)

Rouse's public career also illustrates the close connections between woman's sphere and women's reform activities. As her prominent role in the Martha Washington and Dorcas Society indicates, Rouse supported the cause of temperance, and in 1850 she helped to form the Cleveland Ladies Temperance Union, which two years later claimed fourteen hundred members. The most popular of the antebellum reform movements, temperance drew its support from a wide variety of constitu-

FIGURE 11. The Protestant Orphan Asylum in the 1880s. Western Reserve Historical Society



encies: native-born Americans who associated excessive drinking with immigrants, especially Irish; employers who blamed employees' poor work habits on the use of alcohol; doctors and health reformers who argued that drinking caused physical and mental illness. The movement was especially appealing to women, who saw drinking as a male vice that destroyed families and temperance as a strategy for improving male behavior. Rouse was also instrumental in founding the Cleveland Female Moral Reform Society in 1842, which tried to preserve female purity by protecting female newcomers to Cleveland from urban vices, particularly prostitution. Linked with moral reform societies in several other young cities, the Cleveland group soon merged with the Martha Washington and Dorcas Society, but it laid the groundwork for the post-Civil War efforts by the Woman's Christian Association and Woman's Christian Temperance Union to rescue women from prostitution.

A significant minority of the members of the Cleveland Anti-Slavery Society, founded in 1833, were women, offended by the sexual exploitation of slave women. In 1837 leaders of the Cleveland Anti-Slavery Society formed the Cuyahoga County Anti-Slavery Society, apparently to replace the older organization as antislavery sentiment grew nationally. Presumably women belonged to this second group. Cleveland women also probably knew of the active female antislavery societies in Canton and especially in Oberlin.

Middle-class Cleveland women were apparently more eager to improve men and working-class women than to reform their own circumstances. Perhaps because of particularly strong connections between mainstream Cleveland churches and women's reform activities, there seems to have been little enthusiasm in Cleveland for the strongly anticlerical women's rights movement, which began at a convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. The women and men assembled there asked for legal, economic, and political equality for women; their most controversial demand was for the vote. Important women's rights conventions were soon held in Ohio: in 1850 at Salem and in 1851 at Akron, the site of the famous speech by the black abolitionist and feminist Sojourner Truth. In 1853 Cleveland women hosted a women's rights convention, which featured the well-known leaders Lucy Stone and Antoinette Blackwell, but Clevelanders did not form their own women's rights organization.

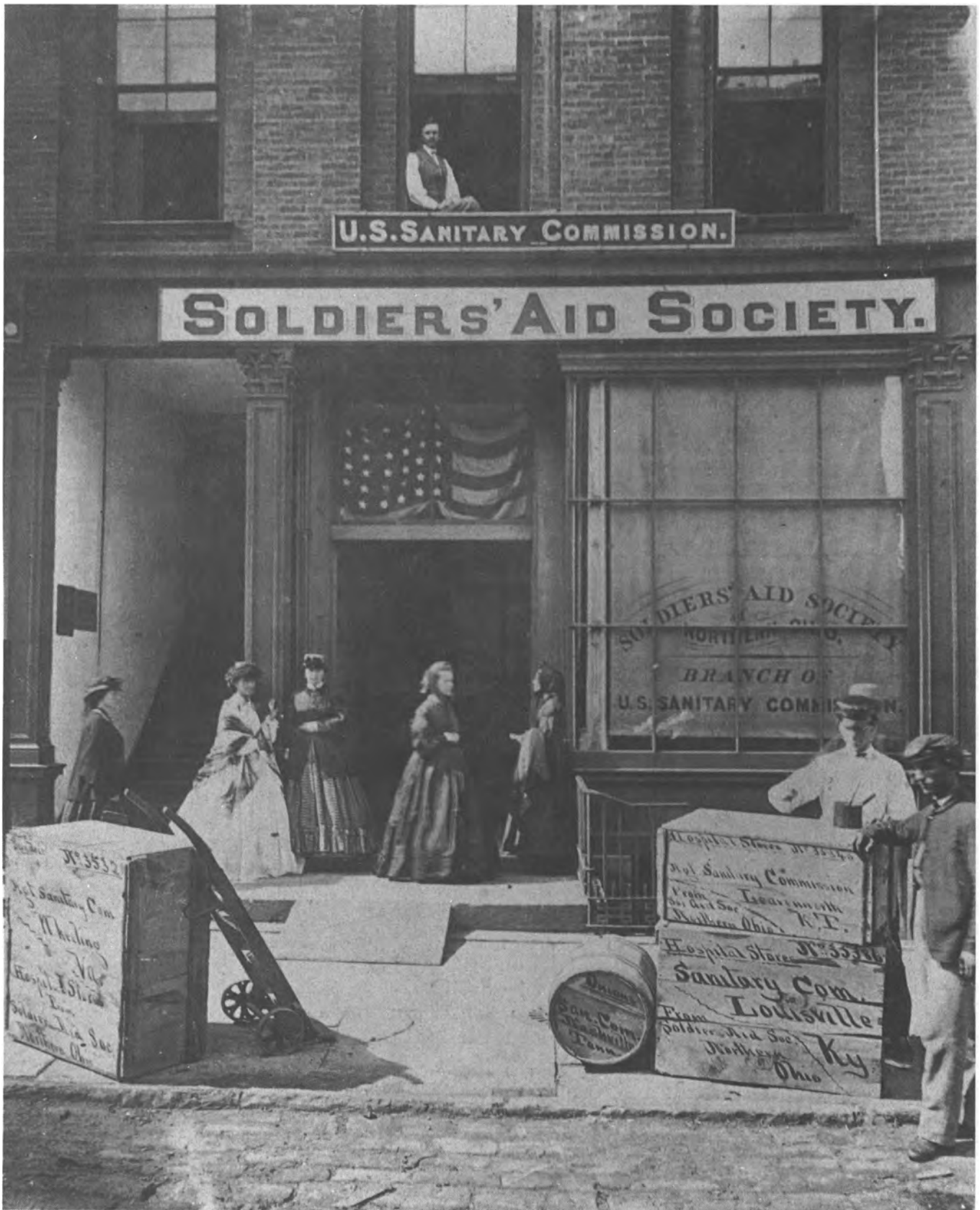
From 1861 to 1865 the energies of Cleveland women were diverted from churches and charities to the Civil War. When President Abraham Lincoln called for volunteers in April 1861, Cleveland men responded enthusiastically; about 10,000 of the city's 15,600 eligible men served in the Union Army. Cleveland women served the Union cause in the Soldiers' Aid Society of Northern Ohio. (See Figure 12.) Only five days after Lincoln's declaration of war, Rebecca Rouse, driven by the same religious impulse that had motivated her to help destitute women



FIGURE 12. The Northern Ohio office of the Soldiers' Aid Society and U.S. Sanitary Commission, located in Cleveland on Bank St., in 1866. Western Reserve Historical Society

and children, organized a Ladies Aid Society to help soldiers and their families. In recognition of her efforts, her figure is included on the Soldiers and Sailors Monument on Public Square. The Cleveland society, which joined the United States Sanitary Commission, provided Union soldiers and their families with food and other supplies and, after the fighting began, with medical and ambulance service. Women raised funds by selling baked goods and handcrafts. The largest of the fairs raised \$100,000 in 1864, which was used to build a depot hospital in Cleveland. After the war, the society operated an employment agency for returning veterans until 1868.

The challenges of the war years, met by the Sanitary Commission, prepared the next generation of women in Cleveland to organize to meet the new challenges of urban life.





# Saving the City

## Hospitals, Homes, and Settlement Houses, 1860–1930

At the Cleveland Centennial celebration, its director, General Wilson M. Day, paid this lavish compliment: “Were the women of Cleveland to withdraw for even a brief period their influence and activity from our city life, our churches would be depleted, . . . hospitals would close their doors, the temperance and rescue work would cease, our day nurseries would send the helpless babes back to the crowded tenements, the aged and infirm would be cast into the streets, the poverty-stricken would be left to their fate, . . . and fresh air camps and sewing schools and kindergartens and retreats for the fallen . . . would either fail utterly or be . . . helplessly crippled.” He exaggerated only slightly.

As the city’s population and problems grew in the postwar years, women expanded the scope of their charitable activities, embarking on collective efforts to save the city from dependence and vice. Capitalizing upon traditional beliefs about woman’s pious and nurturing nature, women also expanded their own sphere to include the city’s saloons and slums and their own responsibilities to include hospitals, homes, and settlement houses which served the dependent sick, women, and children.

City government could not begin to solve the multitude of social and economic problems created by Cleveland’s rapid, unplanned growth. The demands of the Civil War had stimulated Cleveland’s shipyards, grocery businesses, and textile industry, and its new iron and steel and oil industries continued

to grow. So did its population: in 1860 the city had 43,000 residents, in 1870 almost 93,000. The city's poor crowded into neighborhoods blighted by the dirt and noise of encroaching factories and railroads, living in the unhealthy slums created when housing stock deteriorated before it could be replaced. Unimpeded by local police, scores of disorderly saloons flourished, and houses of prostitution, once confined to the Flats, now moved into neighborhoods near the Public Square abandoned by the middle class. With neither adequate funds nor expertise, Cleveland's city fathers could barely provide garbage collection and clean water; they could do little about public health, and nothing about air pollution. Public remedies for poverty—the Infirmary or minimal outdoor relief, which had barely served a smaller, more homogeneous population—became clearly inadequate.

Private charities, usually linked with organized religion and often founded and administered by women, provided crucial social services and institutions. Seeking as much to proselytize the poor as to relieve poverty, these were characterized by sectarian rivalries between the three major religious traditions. They were also racially segregated.

Having the advantage of greater numbers and greater wealth, Protestant women took the lead. The small charitable societies of the pre-Civil War period, such as the Martha Washington and Dorcas Society, were replaced by organizations with hundreds of members, many of them with affluent and generous husbands or fathers who underwrote social-welfare institutions.

Cleveland's hospitals were perhaps the most significant of these institutions. Since most health care was provided at home, private as well as public hospitals were intended only for the destitute and homeless. This clientele in turn meant that a hospital's chief task was to provide long-term shelter rather than medical care. Even formally trained doctors had little expertise in diagnosing or treating illness, which they, like most Americans, believed might be explained by moral failings. The customary long confinements in hospitals were intended to improve patients' moral as well as physical health.

In 1863 members of the Ladies' Society of First Presbyterian (Old Stone) Church had established a Home for the Friendless, specifically for refugees driven out of the South by the war. Beginning as a small medical facility in a private home on Wilson Street, the Home became the Wilson Street Hospital. After the withdrawal of homeopathic doctors from the staff, the facility became known as Cleveland City Hospital and then, in 1888, as Lakeside Hospital to differentiate it from the public facility, Cleveland City Hospital. Several women served on the hospital's board of trustees, composed of philanthropists and civic leaders, not doctors. Only women served on the board of managers, which raised funds and managed the hospital's daily operations, including hiring the staff.

The most active Protestant women's organization was the Cleveland Woman's Christian Association (WCA), established in 1868 at a meeting of six hundred evangelical churchwomen. Its motto was "Everything we do is religious." Sarah Fitch, by profession a teacher and school proprietor, was association president from 1868 until her death in 1893. (See Figure 13.) In 1893 the local organization affiliated with the national Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA).

The primary concern of the YWCA was the physical and spiritual welfare of working women. Association founders hoped to rescue them from the urban environment, accurately perceived as perilous to a young woman's health and morals. The YWCA remedies for economic and sexual exploitation included decent, respectable employment and safe, inexpensive housing. The Cleveland YWCA established an employment bureau, classes in domestic skills, and, most important during this period, sheltering institutions which could provide working women with the moral and religious guidance of the homes they had left.



FIGURE 13. Miss Sarah Fitch, president of the Cleveland Woman's Christian Association from 1868 to 1893. Western Reserve Historical Society

The Cleveland YWCA founded three long-lasting institutions for women. The first, opened in 1869, was a boarding home for working women on Walnut Street, named after its principal benefactor, Stillman Witt; his wife and his daughter, Mrs. Daniel P. Eells, served on the WCA board. The home provided not only room and board but religious services and strict discipline to safeguard its residents. Almost simultaneously the WCA opened the Retreat, intended for women who, in the Victorian parlance, had “fallen”—that is, had engaged in premarital sex, or were apparently in danger of doing so. WCA missionaries scoured the city’s red-light districts, jails, and poorhouse in search of women at risk and prevailed upon some to enter the Retreat, where both their souls and their bodies would be saved through instruction in religion and domestic service. The Retreat’s first residence was donated by industrialist Jacob Perkins, and its second site, on St. Clair Avenue, adjoining the Protestant Orphan Asylum, was a gift from Leonard Case. By the 1890s the Retreat had become a home for unwed mothers and their infants. The YWCA also administered a home for elderly women, which had initially been endowed in 1876 by Amasa Stone and in 1888 was named the Eliza Jennings Home after the donor of its site on Detroit Road. (See Figure 14.)

WCA president Sarah Fitch also initiated women’s post-war temperance activities in March 1874 when she called the meeting that formalized the establishment of the Women’s Temperance League of Cleveland. Temperance activists in Cleveland, inspired by the bands of praying women who in 1873 closed down saloons in small Ohio towns, had already begun their own crusade with marches and dramatic confrontations with local barkeepers and distillers. The league affiliated with the national Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) after it was founded in Cleveland in 1874. The WCTU would soon be the largest women’s organization in the country.

In 1885 some Cleveland women split from the national WCTU to form the local Non-Partisan WCTU. Although the Non-Partisan did not abandon its original strategy of “gospel temperance,” or conversion to sobriety through conversion to Christ, the religious goal was combined with the provision of social services.

Like the WCA, the Non-Partisan WCTU established care-taking institutions. The first was Central Friendly Inn in the Haymarket District, an immigrant neighborhood adjoining “Whiskey Hill,” the site of dozens of saloons. The inn, similar to YMCA facilities and other temperance inns, initially provided cheap food and lodging and abundant temperance tracts for men. A variety of other social services such as a babies’ dispensary, public baths, and later a gymnasium and playground were added. By the 1920s, the institution had become Friendly Inn Settlement. (See Figure 15.)



FIGURE 14. The Home for Aged Women, an institutional residence founded by the WCA to administer to the moral and physical needs of Cleveland women, ca. 1870s. Western Reserve Historical Society

Most WCTU institutions were for women. From 1878 to 1890, the temperance organization maintained the Open Door, a shelter for homeless and sexually endangered women. This was replaced in 1890 by a Training Home for Friendless Girls, similar to the YWCA boarding home. This facility in turn was succeeded by the Mary B. Ingersoll Club, which housed working women.

The WCA also spawned the Cleveland Day Nursery and Free Kindergarten Society. In 1882 a Young Women's Temperance League, founded by Linda Thayer Guilford, became the Young Women's Branch of the WCA and opened several nurseries and free kindergartens for the children of working mothers. In 1894 the society incorporated separately from the YWCA and conducted a wide variety of services for children, the most important of which were its kindergartens. After 1897, when the Cleveland public school system began its own kindergarten programs, the society focused on day nurseries.

The proselytizing of Protestant charities stimulated the Cleveland Catholic Diocese to establish parallel institutions and services, most administered and staffed by nuns. The Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, the nursing order organized in Cleveland by Bishop Rappe, opened St. Vincent Charity Hospital in 1865 (see Figure 16), the city's first permanent general hospital, and in 1893 St. Ann's Infant and Maternity Asylum for unwed mothers so that Catholic women would not have to give birth in the Retreat. St. Ann's began to receive significant numbers of married women by the 1910s, and two separate facilities, St. Ann's Hospital for married patients and DePaul Infant and Maternity Home/DePaul Family Services for unmarried mothers, eventually developed. The Sisters of Charity also continued to staff Cleveland's larger Catholic orphanages, which in 1925 moved to Parma and merged as Parmadale.

Jewish women also played significant roles in organized charity. The impetus for founding Mount Sinai Hospital came from the Young Ladies Hebrew Association, formed in 1892 and in 1902 renamed the Jewish Women's Hospital Association.

FIGURE 15. The Central Friendly Inn in the downtown Haymarket District, ca. 1890s. Western Reserve Historical Society





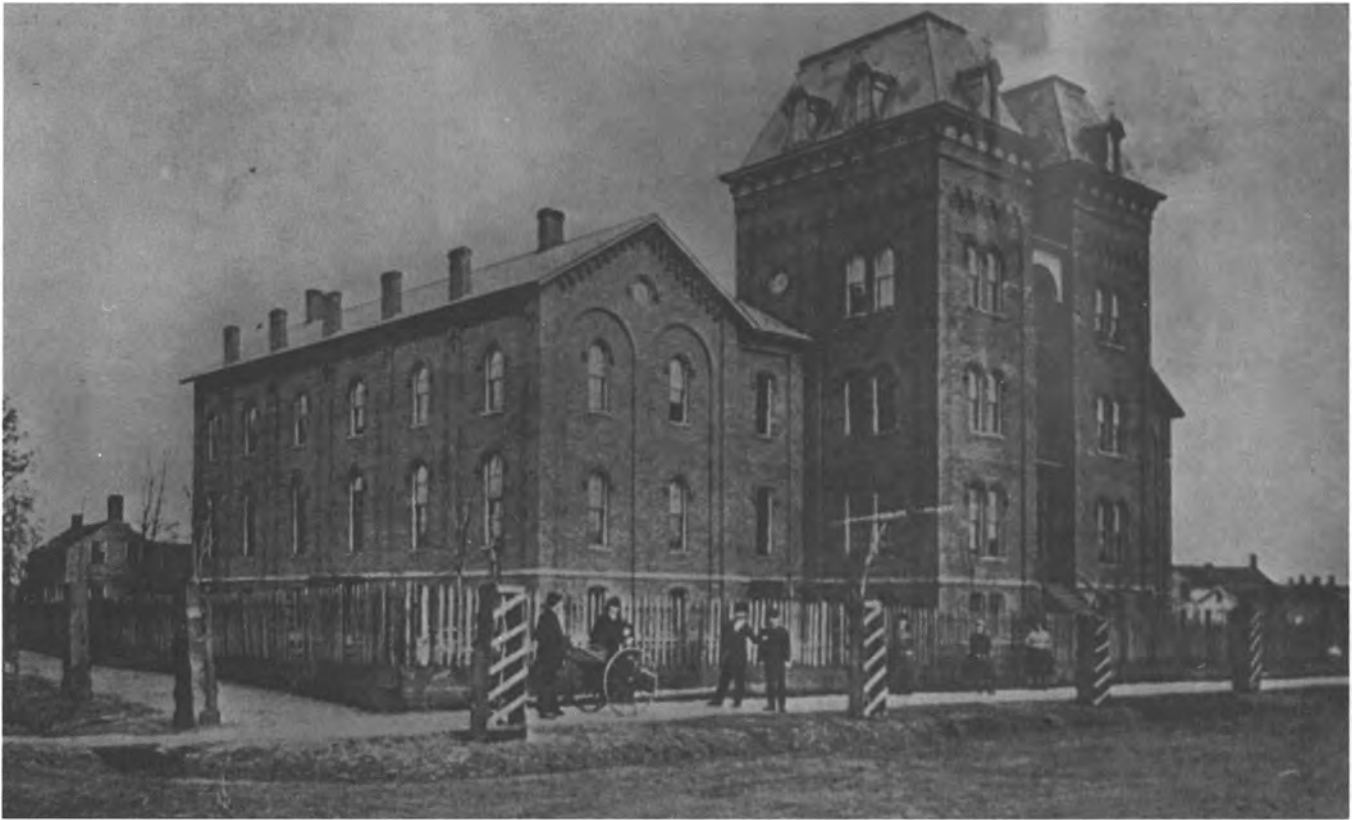


FIGURE 16. St. Vincent Charity Hospital, Cleveland's first permanent general hospital, on Perry St. (now E. 22nd) in 1867, two years after its construction. Cleveland Public Library

The association opened a twenty-nine-bed medical facility on East 37th Street. In 1912 this hospital opened a free dispensary on East 55th Street, much expanded its plant, and took the name Mount Sinai Hospital. In 1916 the hospital moved to its current site at East 105th Street and Wade Park Boulevard.

In 1894 Jewish women formed the Cleveland section of the National Council of Jewish Women by merging three earlier organizations, the Ladies Benevolent Society, the Ladies Sewing Society, and the Personal Services Society. In 1907 the council opened the Martha House for working girls, the Jewish equivalent of the YWCA Stillman Witt Home. (See Figure 17.)

Barred from Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish social-welfare institutions, African Americans opened their own. Here too women took the lead. Guided by Eliza Bryant, a former slave and long-time resident of the city, black women raised funds for the Cleveland Home for Aged Colored People, which opened in 1896. The home's officers and trustees were almost all women.

In 1911 Jane Edna Harris Hunter opened the Phillis Wheatley Association for young black women. The facility was an alternative to the YWCA Stillman Witt Home, which was racially segregated. Arriving in Cleveland from South Carolina,

Hunter soon found work as a trained nurse but also discovered the dangers facing a young black woman in the city: her inexperience and poverty “too often ended in [her] moral degradation.” Her most pressing need was inexpensive, respectable housing. “In the average rooming house of that period,” Hunter recalled, “the Negro girl had to pay one dollar and a quarter a week for a small, low-roofed, poorly furnished room. She was charged extra for the use of the laundry and gas. If she wished to invite a caller, she was frequently required to clean the whole house in payment for the privilege. The use of the bathtub, when there was one, was discouraged.” (See Figure 18.)

Hunter initially faced opposition from blacks who favored integrated social service institutions, but she received moral support from some black clubwomen and considerable financial support from wealthy whites. In return, white men and women sat on the association’s board of trustees.

FIGURE 17. A “Big Sister” advertisement from 1915, sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, depicts a lonely single woman seeking refuge from the mean streets. Western Reserve Historical Society



FIGURE 18. Jane Edna Harris Hunter, founder of the Phillis Wheatley Association, ca. 1930. The association, established in 1911 and named for the eighteenth-century Boston slave poet, emphasized teaching service skills. Western Reserve Historical Society

**JANE EDNA HARRIS HUNTER** (13 Dec. 1882–17 Jan. 1971) became a prominent figure among black clubwomen. In 1925 she affiliated her Phillis Wheatley Association with the prestigious National Association of Colored Women, and in 1934 she created a Phillis Wheatley Department within the association, which helped to establish nine additional homes for women modeled on the Cleveland facility. Hunter served as executive secretary of the Cleveland Phillis Wheatley Association until 1948 and after her retirement administered the Phillis Wheatley Foundation, which provided scholarship funds for black high-school students. Hunter earned a law degree from Cleveland's John Marshall School of Law and received several honorary degrees. She wrote an autobiography, *A Nickel and a Prayer* (1940).



By the 1880s middle-class women were more likely to join clubs than church-linked organizations. The national women's club movement, the second great wave of women's institutions, was a product of black and white middle-class women's growing leisure and education and their desire to participate in the public arena without flagrantly violating norms about women's appropriate domestic roles. Although clubs had interests that ranged from the promotion of art and literature to professional improvement, many sustained the charitable activities of earlier sectarian organizations.

The Federation of Women's Clubs of Greater Cleveland, founded in 1902, initially included eighteen clubs with seven hundred members; by 1910 it had sixty clubs with a membership of four thousand. The federation's earliest activities reflected members' interest in culture, but by the 1910s, the federation provided garments for needy children at Christmas and thousands of school lunches to children in the city's public schools throughout the school year.

The Junior League of Cleveland, established in 1912, sought to encourage the charitable activities of its members, "young ladies of leisure and opportunity," who in earlier decades might have joined the YWCA or the WCTU. In order to gain full mem-

bership, women had to volunteer in a social-welfare agency, settlement house, or public health facility. In 1914 Cleveland Junior League members attended the annual meeting of the National Conference on Charities and Corrections, where public officials and social-work professionals gathered to exchange information and expertise. Like the older women's organizations, the league administered a home for working women from 1919 to 1946, League House at 2344 Prospect Avenue, on a property donated by Mrs. Dudley Blossom and Mrs. Chester Bolton.

Excluded from these clubs as they had been from the YWCA and the WCTU, African American women organized their own, many of which provided social services for blacks. The National Association of Colored Women (NACW), organized in 1896, soon dominated black charity work. Member clubs founded homes for the aged, orphanages, kindergartens, and day nurseries. NACW's members belonged to the black elite, such as Cleveland's Lethia C. Fleming, wife of Republican politician Thomas Fleming, or Dorothy Chesnutt, wife of author and lawyer Charles Chesnutt.

Cleveland NACW affiliates and members were prominent in local charities. NACW members had undertaken a short-lived black settlement house and had supported the Phillis Wheatley Association. In 1923 a NACW affiliate from Mt. Zion Congregational Church made an unsuccessful attempt to organize a home for delinquent girls.

In 1924 the Cleveland Council of Colored Women, under president Cora (Mrs. Elmer F.) Boyd, pressed the Cleveland Federation for Charity and Philanthropy for funds to open a home for black unwed mothers, then accepted only by the Cleveland Salvation Army Rescue. Unwilling to grant moneys to the black women's organization, the federation did agree to underwrite the Mary B. Talbert Home, which was administered by the Salvation Army but continued to receive some financial assistance from the Cleveland Council. This small segregated facility, opened in 1925, also served married black women whose black obstetricians could not deliver their patients elsewhere. Named for a prominent civil-rights activist and NACW vice-president, the Mary B. Talbert Home was closed in 1960 because racially segregated facilities were in disfavor.

Black churches also sponsored women's clubs. Some, such as the St. James Literary Club, had cultural interests. Others were charitable organizations which collected food and clothes for the needy. African American women also joined the female auxiliaries of fraternal orders, such as the Glenara Temple and the Elks.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, as thousands of southeastern European immigrants arrived in the city, ethnic women also formed charitable organizations. These were more likely to be mutual benefit or relief societies—such as the Saxon's Women's Benefit Society or the Slovenian Society of Women—than clubs. But like clubs, these were often linked to national orga-

nizations. Czech women belonged to two large societies: the *Sesterska Podporujici Jednota* (Benevolent Sisterhood Union), which had 211 local chapters with 2,000 to 3,000 members, or the *Jednota Ceskych Dam* (Union of Czech Women), organized in 1870 with 22 local branches and 3,000 members. Italian women might belong to one of several branches of the National Ladies Catholic Benefit Association, which met at several parish churches.

The Association of Polish Women in the U.S.A., a mutual benefit and insurance organization, engaged in a variety of charitable activities for the Polish-American community. The group, which held its first convention in 1913 and was incorporated in 1917 with 146 charter members, had split from the national Polish Women's Alliance so that local dues might be spent in the Cleveland area. By 1935 this fraternal benefit society had almost 9,000 members in 49 Cleveland chapters and assets of more than \$250,000.

Gender-based social service culminated in the settlement-house movement, which began in the 1880s. Although the YWCA and the WCTU continued to administer homes for women, institutional care no longer seemed a viable solution to the more complex problems of Cleveland's larger, more ethnically heterogeneous population. In 1890, 97,095 of Cleveland's 261,353 citizens were foreign-born; by 1910 almost three-quarters of the city's 561,000 residents were immigrants or the children of immigrants. Thousands were from southeastern Europe—Italians, Russians, Hungarians, Poles, and Slovaks. Their cultures and religions were markedly different from those of native-born Protestants or Irish and German immigrants, and the newcomers clustered in distinctive ghettos such as Big Italy or Warszawa. As the middle class began to leave for outlying urban or suburban areas, the city became divided by both ethnicity and class.

Located in working-class and immigrant neighborhoods, settlements were intended to re-create the cohesiveness and community of the past by teaching American middle-class values and skills to their neighbors, especially women and children. The emphasis on women and children almost guaranteed that the staffs would be mostly female, as did the fact that settlement workers initially volunteered their services. Settlement founders and workers were well-educated middle-class women who wanted to put their educations and their religious principles to good use.

Cleveland's first settlement, Hiram House, was founded in 1896 by a group of recent graduates of Hiram College, where they had absorbed the social gospel teachings of the Disciples of Christ and had heard lectures by settlement-house workers from Chicago and New York. Hiram House became most closely identified with George Bellamy, its headworker from 1897 until 1947. However, three of the six original founders were women, including the settlement's first headworker, Maude Thompson. Briefly located in the Irish-Catholic neighborhood of Whiskey Island, where the settlement won few converts, Hiram House

moved to the Haymarket district, a heavily Jewish neighborhood, where the settlement opened a day nursery, conducted clubs and classes for children, and ran a summer camp. The few adult programs were for neighborhood women: the kindergarten mothers' club and the Philanthropic Sewing Club. Hiram House's full-time resident staff from 1896 to 1926 numbered about 250; almost half were women. Nonresident volunteers, probably women, also helped out. Women worked in the kindergarten and girls' and children's activities, men with boys or in the gymnasium. (See Figure 19.)

The city's second settlement, Goodrich House, was a gift from philanthropist Flora Stone (Mrs. Samuel) Mather. (See Figure 20.) Mather had intended simply to provide more room for the classes and clubs for boys in the basement of First Presbyterian Church (the settlement was named for its pastor, William H. Goodrich). But having become interested in the settlement movement, she decided instead to endow an entirely new facility. (See Figure 21.) Goodrich House opened in 1897 at East 6th Street and St. Clair Avenue and moved in 1914 to East 31st Street. A 1908 newsletter announced the settlement's wide range of services. A public laundry and public baths were open every day; two kindergartens—one for neighborhood children and one for crippled children—a visiting nurse, and a public reading room for men and boys were available daily except Saturday. The settlement hosted several clubs for girls, including the Busy Bees Girls Club, the Rosebud Club, the Villet Club, the Little Women Club, the Florence Nightingale Club, and the Martha Washington Club, and fewer for boys: the Roosevelt Club, the Franklin Club, and the Washington Club, and even fewer clubs for young men and women. Vocational and gymnasium classes were also segregated by sex. The settlement housed a branch of the Cleveland Public Library and sponsored Saturday morning story hours for young children.

From 1917 to 1947 Alice Gannett, former associate director of the Henry Street Settlement in New York City and prominent in the national settlement-house movement, was director of Goodrich House. The settlement is now named Goodrich-Gannett Neighborhood Center.

The Day Nursery and Free Kindergarten Association initiated the work that became Alta House in Little Italy. The association's day nursery for the children of mothers working in the vineyards to the east outgrew its small cottage, and the association also began to provide activities for older children. John D. Rockefeller agreed to donate a new building, which was named for his daughter, Alta Rockefeller Prentice, when it opened in 1900. Alta House continued to emphasize clubs and programs for the Italian children of the neighborhood. As in the other settlements, the kindergarten director and her assistant, the teachers of the domestic science and music classes, and the trained nurse were women. (See Figure 22.)



FIGURE 19. Children from Hiram House cross the street at E. 22nd and Woodland, ca. 1910. Western Reserve Historical Society

FIGURE 20. Flora Stone Mather reads to her sons Samuel Livingston Mather and Amasa Stone Mather (*standing*), ca. 1887. Mather, principal sponsor of the Goodrich House, also helped to endow the Western Reserve College for Women. Western Reserve Historical Society

**FLORA STONE MATHER** (6 Apr. 1852–19 Jan. 1909) had been born to wealth—her father was Cleveland contractor and financier Amasa Stone—and in 1881 she married more—her husband was Samuel Mather, an industrialist and prominent philanthropist. Flora Stone Mather’s fortune combined with her Christian conscience to make her Cleveland’s most generous female philanthropist. She made gifts to many local institutions, including the YWCA, Lakeside Hospital, and the Cleveland Day Nursery and Free Kindergarten Association, and to colleges, including Tuskegee and Hampton Institutes and Oberlin. To Western Reserve College for Women she donated Guilford Hall, named for her teacher at the Cleveland Academy, and Haydn Hall, named for her pastor at First Presbyterian (Old Stone) Church and the president of Western Reserve, who had barred female students from Western Reserve but had opened its College for Women.





FIGURE 21. Young girls play on the swings at the Goodrich House Farm Camp for children in 1908. Western Reserve Historical Society

FIGURE 22. Alta House nursery school students listen attentively during story hour, ca. 1930. Western Reserve Historical Society





FIGURE 23. Part of the group of deaconesses who helped to found the West Side Community House, ca. 1904. Cleveland State University Archives

FIGURE 24. Children play “ring-around-the-roses” at Camp Wise, a summer camp established through the Council Educational Alliance, ca. 1908. The Alliance was the predecessor of the Jewish Community Center. Western Reserve Historical Society

West Side Community House had explicit beginnings in women’s religious activism. Sponsored by the Women’s Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the facility opened in 1890 as the Methodist Episcopal Deaconess Home on East 79th Street. Methodist deaconesses were lay persons but were expected to pursue missionary or charitable work or nursing. The Cleveland home became a residence from which the women, wearing their distinctive dark dresses and white caps, proselytized their neighbors and visited the sick. After 1909 the deaconesses relinquished their nursing activities to the Visiting Nurses Association, but ran a day nursery and kindergarten classes, a babies’ dispensary, and other children’s activities, as well as religious meetings and Bible classes. After several moves, their activities were centralized at West Side Cottage at Bridge Avenue and West 30th Street. In 1922 a new facility was named West Side Community House. (See Figure 23.)

In 1899 the Cleveland Council of Jewish Women opened the Council Educational Alliance, a settlement which formalized the council’s existing services and classes for newly arrived Eastern European Jews in the lower Woodland Avenue neighborhood. The alliance was intended to keep Jews out of the other settlements, especially nearby Hiram House. Although technically nonsectarian, most settlements were Protestant in spirit and personnel. The alliance housed a very popular branch of the Cleveland Public Library, opened a large playground, and served as a gathering place for various Jewish organizations, including Zionist groups. By 1910 the settlement provided not only the usual clubs and classes for children but also Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services, citizenship classes, and a printshop and a cloakshop to teach traditional Jewish trades. (See Figure 24.)

In 1919 Cleveland’s only Catholic settlement, Merrick House, was opened, funded by the National Catholic War Council (now the National Catholic Welfare Conference). Located in the industrial neighborhood of Tremont, then home to several Eastern European groups, including Poles, Russians, and Ukrainians, the settlement operated in rented quarters until 1923, when Catholic Charities purchased a building at West 11th Street and Starkweather Avenue. Catholic Charities in 1950 provided funds for a new building there, the settlement’s current location. Merrick House became a training site for students from the Western Reserve University School of Applied Social Sciences and maintained services for neighborhood children, including daycare and camping. The settlement was named for Mary Merrick, founder of the national Christchild Society, a Catholic women’s service organization. The Cleveland Christchild Society, founded in 1916 by social worker Mabel Mattingly, provided funds and is still represented on the settlement’s board of trustees, although the settlement is nonsectarian.



General Day accurately noted the significance of women's efforts to make Cleveland a kinder, healthier, safer place. He did not remark on the significance of the movement of women out of their parlors and kitchens, from the care of their own families to the care of others. Equally important would be women's continued movement into the workplace



# Going to Work

In 1890 an eleven-year-old Polish Jew, Rose Pastor, took her place beside other children and women at a long wooden table in a Cleveland cigar factory. After two weeks of unpaid work chopping tobacco and rolling cigars, she received seventy-seven cents for her fifty-hour week. (When the factory inspector visited, she and the other underage children were sent home.) Rose went on to better things. She left Cleveland to write for the *Jewish Daily News* in New York, where she met and married millionaire J. G. Phelps Stokes. Both joined the Socialist Party, and she joined the birth control and woman suffrage campaigns and later became a founder of the Communist Party. Nevertheless, her background, her first job, and her exploitation were typical of many women factory workers. (See Figure 25.)

Women's work underwent both change and continuity during these years. As Cleveland became an industrial giant, thousands of immigrant women, like Rose Pastor, took newly created factory jobs, many of which, however, were still associated with domestic skills. Work opportunities also reflected the city's increasing class and racial stratification: growing numbers of white women, native-born and immigrant, worked in stores and offices, while black women stayed in domestic service. Poverty and dependence remained the lot of many.

Cleveland's booming factories employed tens of thousands of men, who made steel and iron products and, as the city became a leading automotive manufacturer, automobiles and

Operatives,  
Clerks,  
and  
Servants,  
1870–1930



FIGURE 25. Rose Harriet Pastor Stokes (*back row, third from left*), spring 1896. A child laborer at the Gleichman Cigar Factory in Cleveland (where this photo was taken), Stokes later moved to New York City and became a writer, a suffragist, and cofounder of the American Communist Party. Courtesy of John M. Whitcomb Collection, University of Georgia Press

automotive parts. Industrialization also created less skilled, less physically arduous jobs for women and children. In 1900 almost 20 percent of the five million American women in the paid workforce were in manufacturing, and more than a third of Cleveland's female workforce (10,600 women) were factory operatives. They worked in all industries, including ship-building, iron and steel, and the manufacture of paints, oils, and chewing gum.

In 1908 the Consumers League of Ohio (CLO) published a detailed study of the working conditions and wages in the industries in which women most commonly worked. These included laundries, cigar factories, and especially clothing manufacturers.

The most strenuous jobs, and those most closely identified with housekeeping, were in commercial laundries. More than

sixteen hundred women and girls worked in the city's thirty-two steam laundries and laundries which supplied towels and linens to hotels, restaurants, and factories. A laundress's work began with sorting and marking heaps of soiled garments, which were first carried to the washing machines, then lifted into huge steaming mangles, and finally carried to the dry-house, where women hung the still-wet garments on racks. Most ironing was done on heavy machinery, operated by women and girls. Laundries employed few young girls because the work was so strenuous. The CLO report nevertheless included this illustration: "A girl of 14 hops upon the pedals of a cuff-ironing machine 11 1/2 hours one day every week, and 10 hours other days. Her pay is \$4.50 per week." More typical was this: "A woman of 45 shakes sheets 12 1/2 hours at least one day of the week, and her weekly total of hours is sometimes 70. Her weekly pay is \$4.50."

Industries employing women usually employed children as well. Paperbox and candy factories employed the youngest girls, although the work was often dangerous or unpleasant. In 1908 a league inspector discovered "a girl of 17 [who] works 10 hours a day regularly and 12 hours for several weeks [in a paperbox-manufacturing firm] at a corner-staying machine that will cut off or crush her fingers if she is not continuously careful." Inspectors were dismayed in 1913 to find young girls hand-dipping chocolates in candy factories with no clean water in which to wash their hands. (They were also dismayed to discover that candy ingredients included lampblack, coal-tar dyes, glue, arsenic, paraffin, and radiator lacquer.)

Garment making employed the largest number of female operatives in 1908, 3,125 women, not including those who worked in sweatshops or did homework. Within the industry, however, men did the more skilled work such as tailoring or the more difficult machine work, or acted as supervisors; women did the less skilled and less well paid tasks. Men earned approximately twice women's wages.

Unlike the laundries, garment making was seasonal: eight factories which employed 1,085 women at their busiest employed 380 in the slack season. In addition, much was piecework. This meant that women's wages varied widely: for skirt-operators, from \$5 to \$15 a week, averaging \$9.05; for finishers, from \$2 to \$12 a week, averaging \$5.79.

The large number of female workers in garment making almost certainly explains why, according to a study of the wages of all industrial workers, Cleveland's clothing workers were the worst paid. A comparison of wages in 1914 and 1919 shows that workers in both men's and women's clothing earned less than those in other Cleveland industries, including automobiles, chemicals, iron and steel products, paint and varnish, foundries, and machine shops. The average annual wage for all industries in 1914 was \$679, and in 1919, \$745; for workers in

men's clothing, \$534 and \$684, and in women's clothing, \$595 and \$713.

Although less back-breaking than laundering, garment making nevertheless often meant long hours of physically arduous labor, as in these two illustrations. "A girl of 17 folds coats 12 to 13 hours a day several times a week throughout the season. Some days her work begins at 6 o'clock in the morning and lasts until half past eight at night. No compensation is made for overtime. . . . A middle-aged woman supports herself and three children by skirt-making. During the season she makes 25 to 35 skirts per week."

In 1919, at the request of the Ladies' Garment Manufacturers' Association, the CLO inspected association members' factories, where 60 percent of the workforce was female. The league rated the factories "fair" but had many criticisms, including the unsanitary cuspidors and tobacco spitting. Some factories provided separate toilet facilities for men and women, but others did not; in some, the toilets were dirty and smelly, and there was no toilet paper. Few manufacturers provided adequate lunchrooms or fresh drinking water. Association members were the city's larger manufacturers, where working conditions were probably better than in smaller shops.

One of those large manufacturers, Joseph and Feiss, took pride in its paternalistic treatment of its employees, two-thirds of whom were female and many of whom were immigrants from Hungary and Germany. (See Figure 26.) Interviews with new employees stressed "regularity of attendance, simplicity of business dress, and the value of paying attention to health. . . . Cooperative spirit and high moral standards" were essential. Employees who were sixteen and seventeen years old worked a forty-four-hour-week; those over eighteen put in a forty-eight-hour week. Pay ranged from nine to ten cents an hour to eighteen to twenty cents an hour for experienced workers. Hoping to increase workers' efficiency, the company provided lunchrooms and inexpensive meals, showers, recreation facilities, a dispensary, a penny savings bank, and classes in English. (See Figures 26–28.)

On the other hand, the Socialist, trade-unionist *Cleveland Citizen* lambasted Joseph and Feiss as a "sweatshop" and "a penitentiary." The newspaper accused the manufacturer of paying "wages that are a disgrace to the city" and levying outrageous fines on employees who were "one minute late" or failed to "line up . . . in lock-step style" when they left the plant.

Joseph and Feiss's concern extended to its employees' living conditions, and an informal study, probably done in the 1910s, provides a rare and possibly too positive picture of homes on the west side and in the Bohemian neighborhood near Broadway, where female workers lived with their families. The one- or two-story frame homes had small front and side yards with well-tended gardens and occasional chicken coops. Homes

often sheltered two families or two generations of one family. Homeowners tried to save one room for a parlor in which to display the family bric-a-brac and valuables, so family members had to crowd into bedrooms or sleep in kitchens. The company visitor noted with dismay "a girl sharing a little bedroom with two full-grown brothers and a tubercular sister."

Women workers were difficult to unionize. Even if single, women were likely to have family responsibilities, which limited time for union activities. Union dues were difficult for women to pay out of their meager wages. Sharing the expectations of their culture, most women also viewed their employment as temporary—until marriage—rather than as a long-term activity worth the investment of union membership or activism.

Moreover, most male unionists did not support with consistent enthusiasm the organization of women's unions. At the turn of the century, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) was the city's only large labor organization: 62 of Cleveland's 100 unions were AFL affiliates, as was the Cleveland Central Labor Union. The AFL usually organized only skilled workers—most women were semiskilled or unskilled—and did not welcome female members. Most important, most men, like most women, believed that a woman's real job was to be a wife and mother, not a union member or labor organizer.

Women did join auxiliaries of their husbands' unions, but even these subordinate organizations did not always receive male approval. For example, the short-lived Women's Federal Labor Union, formed simply to promote the use of the union label by employers, was forced to disband in 1904. Union treasurer Barbara Bandlow, whose husband, Robert, was an organizer for the Central Labor Union and business manager of the *Citizen*, chided union men for not grasping "the importance of women's auxiliaries to the trade unions." Another leader of the union, Marie H. Geiger, provided this insightful explanation for its failure in the pages of the *Citizen*: "I have upon various occasions questioned union men why they did not urge the women portions of their families to ally themselves with the Women's Federal Labor Union, and the answers were something like this: 'Women have no business in labor unions, their place is in the home.'"

Both Bandlow and Geiger were Socialists, and the causes of organized labor and socialism were closely allied in Cleveland, as elsewhere. *Citizen* editor Max Hayes was a founder of the Socialist Party of America in 1901, and as early as 1907 there were over a dozen Socialist organizations in the city, many of them identified with specific immigrant groups such as Poles, Germans, or Bohemians. Some of these had women's auxiliaries. By 1912, 10 to 15 percent of the Socialist Party of America membership was female, and women occasionally served as local officers—Geiger, for example, was secretary of a Cleveland branch of the party. Although the party endorsed





woman suffrage in 1904, it did not consider women or women's issues particularly important. Geiger, on the other hand, saw clear connections between socialism and women's equality in the workplace and in the home, as she explained in this 1907 speech to a party local: "Socialism is primarily an economic proposition; its effect upon woman and home life is noteworthy. That socialism would greatly elevate woman is generally admitted by all. Under the new regime woman would be placed economically upon an equal footing with man. . . . The average man (trade unionists . . . not excepted) considers the woman a household drudge, and that she has no other ambition outside of marrying the first fellow that asks her and rearing a family, which nine cases in ten, he is unable to support and educate."

Later efforts to create women's labor organizations were as ineffectual as the Women's Federal Labor Union. In 1910 Barbara Bandlow was elected president of the local branch of the national Women's Trade Union League, which had been formed in 1903 by middle-class women to promote (with halfhearted help from the AFL) women's unions. The Cleveland branch, headquartered at Goodrich House, even got the hearty endorse-

FIGURE 26. On the job at Joseph and Feiss Co., a prominent Cleveland clothing manufacturer, during World War I. Western Reserve Historical Society

FIGURE 27. An example of "Good Posture versus Bad Posture" as demonstrated by Joseph and Feiss Co. seamstresses, ca. 1920. Western Reserve Historical Society

FIGURE 28. As a measure of worker productivity, a 1920 time study at Joseph and Feiss Co. pits Rose Csaky's sewing machine against Oswald Kromer's stopwatch and notepad. Western Reserve Historical Society



ment of the *Citizen*: "Women who are interested in the organization of workers into trade unions, equal pay for equal work, an eight-hour workday, and a minimum wage scale, will find themselves in sympathy with this league." The national Women's Trade Union League not only organized women but supported women strikers, most notably on the picket lines in garment strikes in New York in 1909. But by the time Cleveland garment workers struck in June 1911, the local chapter was dead.

In 1913 members of the waitresses', housemaids', and garment workers' unions joined with some professionals, including nurses and teachers, to form a Women's Industrial and Welfare League. Its purpose was "to better the conditions of women in all lines of work . . . irrespective of religion or nationality." This organization got the endorsement of the Central Labor Union, but apparently did not survive more than a few months. Class and ethnic loyalties obviously outweighed gender concerns for Cleveland's working women in this and other instances.

Women were not invisible in the labor movement. Their growing numbers—they were 15 percent of the workforce in 1890 and 18 percent in 1920—were acknowledged by the *Citizen*, which in 1912 began to run a "Women's News" column. The column, however, carried far more news about events elsewhere, especially about suffrage activities, than about Cleveland's women workers.

With the exception of the garment industry, few unions admitted women, and there were only a handful of women's unions in Cleveland. The Central Labor Union had only one woman officer during this period. The International Typographical Union, Local 53, an AFL affiliate of newspaper printers, did admit a tiny handful of women from 1867 to 1912. Three women's names appeared on the union's register of its hundreds of members: the first, Leslie Maloney, was initiated as a journeyman in 1895 at age twenty-one. At various times the *Citizen* listed unions of waitresses and retail clerks, which would have been predominantly female, and abortive attempts to organize domestic servants and teachers were made before 1920.

Even the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) organized women reluctantly and in separate women's locals. The ILGWU had organized successful strikes, including a strike by sixty thousand ladies' garment workers in New York City in 1910, and hoped for another victory in Cleveland the next year. In June 1911, when Cleveland manufacturers refused to meet the union's demands, which included a fifty-hour workweek with overtime, the ILGWU called for a general strike in Cleveland's garment industry, the fourth largest in the country in the manufacture of women's clothing. On June 7 five thousand workers—a thousand of them women—walked out of the city's garment shops. During the

next nineteen weeks, they marched in parades and on the picket lines, facing off against strikebreakers and police. Some were arrested for disorderly conduct. The AFL provided some strike benefits (four dollars a week for a male worker with a family, even less for a woman), but the union ran out of funds and called off the strike in mid-October. None of its demands had been granted. Middle-class women's organizations such as the YWCA and the National Council of Jewish Women, which had been willing to sponsor boarding homes for working women, did not support the strike.

During the early weeks of the strike, women had hurried to join ILGWU locals. Their public activism, including speeches and parades, demonstrated courage and class consciousness. The strike produced a local heroine, Becky Fisher, whose thirty-nine arrests earned her an award from the AFL for devotion to the union cause. But many women did not support the strike; many crossed the picket lines, probably earning more as scabs than they might have as regular employees. These women quite logically saw no reason to support the strike of a union which had previously ignored them.

The relative powerlessness of women in the Cleveland labor movement was conclusively demonstrated at a 1919 convention to form a local labor party. The only female delegates were from Tailors No. 26 and 27 and Telephone Operators No. 134A, eight women in all. None was elected to any party committees.

Like men, women tended to work with others of their own ethnic background because they preferred the proximity of family members or neighbors or the convenience of a similar language, or because jobs were assigned according to social status and ethnicity. According to the 1908 CLO study, for example, the "better grade" of laundries employed Americans and Germans, but most laundry workers were Poles or Italians. The candy factories employed mostly Americans and some Italians and Jews, the cigar factories mostly non-English-speaking Slavs. The box factories hired mostly Bohemian, Polish, and German women and were the only industrial employers of African Americans. Jewish and Italian women predominated in garment making, although there were also many Polish, Hungarian, and Bohemian women.

Clear class and ethnic distinctions appeared in a CLO study of night work, considered the worst industrial employment. English was "seldom heard in the factories at night" when the workers ("sturdily built—close to the peasant type") were Poles, Lithuanians, Ruthenians, Hungarians, or Slovenians. Many were wives who worked at night so that they could care for children during the day. None were unionized, although night work did pay better than day work.

Clerical work in stores and offices was the fastest-growing job category for women: in 1870, fewer than 2 percent of work-

ing women in Cleveland were employed as clerks, and in 1910, 22.6 percent. The growth reflects not only the economy's need for an expanded white-collar sector, but also women's preference for clerical work. Department stores offered the possibility of advancement from cash girls, who simply carried money and purchased goods, to bundlegirls, or wrappers, to saleswomen and department supervisors. The work was not seasonal, but pay was not high—cash girls earned from \$1.50 to \$2.50 a week, and saleswomen from \$3 to \$18. The work could also be arduous. Stores often worked their clerks longer than the fifty-four hours per week mandated by state law, and some drygoods and department stores maintained a seventy- to seventy-five-hour workweek. Many shops also kept their clerks late in the evening, especially before Christmas.

Regardless of the long hours and low pay, most women would probably have chosen to sell gloves in a department store rather than to make them in the factory. Not surprisingly, almost all clerical workers were white. Because the work required literacy in English, the vast majority were native-born.

Women's work, like the city itself, had become increasingly racially segregated. Pushed out of the South by poverty and oppressive racism and attracted to northern cities by the promise of jobs, especially during World War I, blacks migrated to Cleveland in ever-greater numbers. In 1870 blacks constituted 1.4 percent of the city's total population; in 1920, 4.3 percent; and a decade later, 8 percent. Unlike most white women, many African American women continued to work after marriage because their incomes were essential to their families' survival. In 1920, only 3.7 percent of black women workers were clerks, and less than 20 percent worked in factories.

Domestic and personal service had become the lowest-paid and lowest-status female job, abandoned by both immigrant and native-born white women when jobs in factories and shops became available. In 1870, domestic service employed almost two-thirds of all women workers, and slightly more than 60 percent of all black women. In 1920, because of new jobs for white women, slightly less than 15 percent of all female workers were in domestic service, but 63 percent of all black women were thus employed. In 1918 Jane Edna Hunter compiled for the Consumers League a "list of occupations at which colored girls are employed": "general housework, assistant housework, cook, helping in kitchen . . . waitress, day work." The few exceptions included nurses, practical nurses, and clerks.

Most women, white or black, found it hard to earn a living wage. By calculating annual expenses (including two winter hats at \$4 each), the Consumers League estimated in 1908 that a working woman needed a weekly salary of \$7.22, but that the average female worker actually earned only \$5 a week. Seasonal layoffs meant that a worker could not count on even this small sum every week. (See Figure 29.)

Therefore, just as the YWCA and the WCTU had feared, the lives of working-class women were economically and sexually perilous. As in the pre-Civil War period, prostitution flourished. In 1910 the Cleveland House of Corrections housed 286 women (and 2,252 men): 103 women were jailed for intoxication, and most of the rest for sexual offenses such as “common prostitute,” “street soliciting,” or “keeping house of ill-fame.” The vast majority of these women described their employment as domestic service. This suggests either that they lied, not wanting to describe themselves as professional prostitutes, or—equally likely—that they actually were domestic servants and their wages were so low that they were compelled to engage in sex for money. In 1914 Mayor Newton D. Baker ordered police



FIGURE 29. Cassie Chadwick, Cleveland's famous female financial con artist, ca. 1900. Cleveland State University Archives

**CASSIE CHADWICK** (1857-10–Oct. 1907) became Cleveland's most notorious female entrepreneur. During her career Chadwick assumed various pseudonyms, but she first arrived in Cleveland in 1882 using her maiden name Elizabeth Bigley. Her marriage to Clevelander Dr. Wallace S. Springsteen lasted only 11 days—until her husband discovered that she had escaped conviction for forgery in Canada by pleading insanity. Her subsequent brief career as a fortune-teller and clairvoyant ended when she was sentenced to the Ohio penitentiary for nine and a half years. She was paroled after four years, returned to Cleveland, and in 1897 married Dr. Leroy Chadwick. Apparently without her husband's knowledge, she borrowed hundreds of thousands of dollars from local banks on the strength of \$5 million worth of securities allegedly signed by Andrew Carnegie, whose illegitimate daughter Chadwick claimed to be. She ran up another \$1 million in debt, spending money lavishly on herself and her friends. In 1904 Chadwick was sentenced to 14 years in prison and fined \$70,000 for conspiracy to defraud the government and an Oberlin bank. She died in prison.

to shut down the red-light district at East 6th Street and Superior Avenue. Houses of prostitution then relocated to other neighborhoods farther east, and streetwalkers frequented downtown, where hotel rooms were readily available. Although reformers urged the city to help the prostitutes find other jobs, the women themselves maintained that prostitution paid better than clerical or factory work.

Rising numbers of women also became dependent on public assistance. From the 1880s on, as the institutionalization of dependents came under attack from welfare reformers, the Cleveland Infirmary housed fewer and fewer people. The chronically ill and disabled got long-term shelter at Cleveland City Hospital, and the city provided outdoor relief—shoes, food, or clothing—to Cleveland residents who could not care for themselves. Although the numbers of those on relief fluctuated, depending on the state of the economy, women consistently outnumbered men as heads of families on relief. Most often these were women without husbands, described discreetly as “widows” or “grass widows,” who were caretakers of children. The most frequent beneficiaries of the relief system were actually these women’s children—in 1900, for example, 5,915 of the 8,442 Clevelanders on outdoor relief were children. Acknowledging the poverty of children and the caretaking role of mothers, Ohio in 1913 instituted mothers’ pensions, small subsidies to “suitable” mothers so that they could care for their children at home rather than place them in orphanages. Mothers’ pensions became the model for Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

In 1920 the Cleveland Hospital Council survey of Cleveland’s working women noted trends which had begun early in the century and would continue through the decade. At the end of World War I, most women had left war-related jobs in heavy industry and returned to “women’s work” in the textile and knitting mills, the garment trades, candy factories, laundries, and stores. Working conditions had not improved: the survey criticized textile mills for “poor factory housekeeping,” noting the safety and health hazards for the employees. Unemployment was seasonal, hours were long (forty-three to forty-four hours a week), and pay was low (about fourteen dollars a week).

The female workforce remained ethnically and racially segregated: garment workers were immigrants or the daughters of immigrants—Bohemians, Italians, and Hungarians. Machine shops, where the work was skilled or semiskilled, hired “American girls” as well as immigrant women, “but for heavy, dirty work the foreign women of peasant type are in greatest demand. Colored women are employed in two plants.”

Black women held more jobs in the laundries. The survey noted, however, that toilets and eating facilities were segregated, and that because these women were “generally

considered less efficient and much slower at the work," they were paid less than white women—a beginner earned ten dollars a week.

In contrast, the survey noted with approval the working conditions in Cleveland department stores: the shorter work-week, the slightly higher minimum wage (fifteen dollars a week), and classes in salesmanship provided for female employees. Understandably, women flocked into stores and offices, and the percentage of Cleveland's workforce in clerical work continued to rise—to 40.2 percent in 1920, a trend that would slow only in the last years of the decade. (See Figure 30.)

Cleveland women worked long hours for low pay in factories, mills, shops, offices, and other women's kitchens to support themselves, their families, and the city's economy. More fortunate women met other obstacles as they sought to enter the professions.



FIGURE 30. Stenographer Henrietta Salomon of the Mugler Engraving Co. at her desk in 1910. Western Reserve Historical Society, Courtesy of Georgene Kravitz





# Entering the Professions

Old  
and New,  
1870–1930

In 1867, after women had been barred from both the Medical Department of Western Reserve College and the Cleveland Homeopathic Medical College, Dr. Myra King (Mrs. Charles H.) Merrick founded the Cleveland Homeopathic Hospital for Women, and in 1878, with her daughter-in-law, Dr. Eliza (Mrs. Richard L.) Merrick, and Dr. Kate Parsons, Merrick opened the Women's and Children's Free Medical and Surgical Dispensary. In 1913, when Cleveland hospitals denied women the internships required by new professional standards, Dr. Martha Canfield initiated the transformation of the tiny dispensary into Woman's General Hospital. These careers illustrate the ingenious ways in which women created alternative routes into the professions through women-centered traditions, educations, and institutions. (See Figure 31.)

Most professions developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as Americans sought to differentiate their occupations by establishing specialized and exclusive criteria for training and membership. The most established, most prestigious, and almost wholly male professions of medicine, law, and the ministry did not welcome women. In contrast, women moved easily into teaching and nursing, both identified as "women's work." Responding to new community needs, women created two new professions, librarianship and social work. In 1890, 5.7 percent of Cleveland's working women were in the professions; in 1930, 11.9 percent.



FIGURE 31. Dr. Myra King Merrick, ca. 1860s. Merrick helped to establish the Cleveland Homeopathic College for Women in 1867, as well as the Women's and Children's Free Medical and Surgical Dispensary (forerunner of Woman's General Hospital) in 1878. Courtesy of the Howard Dittrick Museum

**DR. MYRA KING MERRICK** (1825–11 Nov. 1899) is credited with being the first woman physician in Ohio and one of the first in the United States. Born in England, she emigrated to Boston, and as a young girl worked in the nearby textile mills. In 1848 she married Charles H. Merrick, whose illness prompted her to study medicine. Although “irregularly” trained, Merrick numbered John D. Rockefeller and other prominent Cleveland men among her patients.

Women were encouraged to enter the professions by growing opportunities for higher education. Although scarcely 3 percent of the nation's eighteen- to twenty-one-year-olds attended college in 1890, more than a third of these were women. State universities admitted women, and several elite private women's colleges opened in the last decades of the century.

By 1880 Cleveland's growing economy and complex social structure supported several colleges: two Catholic undergraduate institutions for women, Ursuline and Notre Dame colleges; Spencerian Business College (later Dyke College), which prepared men for careers as bookkeepers and accountants; Case School of Applied Science, which trained men as engineers; and one coeducational school, Western Reserve University. (See Figure 32.)

Because it was widely believed that women were physically and mentally unfit for higher education or, conversely,



FIGURE 32. Nuns and a priest walk the grounds of the Ursuline Convent, ca. mid-1870s. The first classes for the college were held inside the convent itself. Western Reserve Historical Society

that higher education would make them unfit women, getting a college degree was not easy, as illustrated at Western Reserve University. In 1872, under president Carroll Cutler, a former abolitionist and a spirited advocate of women's education, Western Reserve University admitted women undergraduates to Adelbert College, and by the early 1880s, after the college's removal from Hudson to Cleveland, women constituted 30 percent of the student body. Their numbers, however, appeared to threaten the male-dominated institution, and in 1884 the faculty voted to deny women admission. Cutler successfully defended coeducation, pointing out that of the nineteen women who had graduated from the college, eight were elected to Phi Beta Kappa. His victory was short-lived, and in 1886 Cutler resigned as president, his relationship with faculty and trustees strained by his stance on coeducation. Cutler was succeeded by Hiram Collins Haydn, the pastor of the First Presbyterian (Old Stone) Church. Haydn raised funds for a gymnasium for men and barred women from the school. His explanation, endorsed by his board of trustees, was that the college should return to the all-male tradition of its founders, and Haydn blamed the college's feeble enrollment on its policy of admitting women. During

Haydn's installation, the four women who were members of the senior class left the room, and two left the college altogether, receiving their degrees elsewhere. Haydn was empowered to establish a coordinate facility, the College for Women, provided that it was financially self-supporting. The new college did become self-supporting, in part because Haydn persuaded male faculty members, most of whom had opposed coeducation, to teach women students without pay, and in part because of generous gifts from the Amasa Stone family, especially from Flora Stone Mather. The women's college was named for her in 1931. The new institution offered a liberal arts curriculum but also courses in home economics, popular at other women's colleges as well. Ten years after its founding, the enrollment of the College for Women rivaled that of Adelbert College. (See Figure 33.)

FIGURE 33. Mather House Women's Dormitory on the campus of Mather College, Western Reserve University, in 1935. The building now houses the History, Political Science, Art History, and Classics departments at Case Western Reserve University. Case Western Reserve University Archives



Although a college degree was not yet a prerequisite, teaching remained the most popular profession for women. They quickly became the majority of elementary and secondary schoolteachers but, as earlier, did not achieve top administrative posts or salaries. In 1867, when Andrew J. Rickoff became superintendent of the Cleveland school system, it employed 18 men and 139 women teachers for its 10,154 students. Rickoff appointed women principals of grammar schools, who were overseen by four male principals; the four men received \$1,800 a year, the women \$1,000. In 1875 Cleveland teachers earned an average of \$659 a year, considerably less than teachers in Chicago and Cincinnati. At the close of Rickoff's term in 1881–82, the number of students had multiplied to 52,401, and 93 percent of the 472 public schoolteachers were women. All had to be single since, according to school regulations, "the marriage of a female teacher

FIGURE 34. The Woodland Hills School Library in the early 1900s. Western Reserve Historical Society



will be considered equivalent to a resignation of her position." Men continued to hold the highest-paid principals' posts until the end of the century. (See Figure 34.)

In 1915–16 a Cleveland Foundation survey of public schools found that little had changed except the number of students, then more than 80,000. The city still paid its teachers less than did comparable cities (\$900 per year for elementary teachers, \$1500 for high-school teachers, and \$1,650 for elementary principals); the teachers were earning less than skilled workers such as plumbers and bricklayers, and less than other public employees such as policemen and firemen. More women than men held school supervisory posts, but the women were clustered at the bottom of the salary ranges, the best-paid earning only \$2,400 to the male superintendent's \$6,000.

Teaching became a viable profession for African American women as well. In 1906, the Cleveland public schools employed fourteen black teachers; in 1929, eighty-four. Seventy-eight taught elementary school, and the majority were probably women. Two who did not teach at the elementary level were the daughters of author Charles Chesnutt. In 1904 Helen Chesnutt, a graduate of Smith College, was assigned to Central High School, where she taught Latin. In 1919 Dorothy Chesnutt Slade was appointed to Willson Junior High School.

Women also taught in private secular and parochial schools. Among these were three college-preparatory schools for girls. The earliest, Miss Mittleberger's School, was named after its founder, Augusta Mittleberger, a graduate of and former teacher at the Cleveland Female Seminary. Located originally in Mittleberger's own home, the school expanded to include a boarding department and moved in 1881 to a large property donated by John D. Rockefeller at Case Street (East 40th) and Prospect Avenue. The school closed in 1908 when Mittleberger retired. Hathaway Brown School opened in 1876 as Brooks School for Ladies, an adjunct to a boys' school, Brooks Academy. The school was renamed after its third owner and proprietor, Anne Hathaway Brown, who sold the school in 1890. In 1905 Hathaway Brown moved from Euclid Avenue to a new facility on East 100th Street, a gift from Flora Stone Mather, and in 1927 to its current location in Shaker Heights. (See Figure 35.) Laurel School began in the home of Jennie Warren Prentiss in 1896; after enrolling boarding pupils, it was known as Wade Park Home School for Girls. In 1900 the school moved to Euclid Avenue, and in 1904 it was acquired by Sarah E. Lyman and became Laurel School. From 1908 to 1927, when it moved to Shaker Heights, the school was located at East 97th Street and Euclid Avenue.

By the end of the century, the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Sisters of Notre Dame had joined the earlier orders of nuns and taught the swelling population of Cleveland's Catholic elementary and secondary schools. Catholic immigrants continued to arrive from Germany, Ireland, Poland, and Italy. Those



FIGURE 35. The Hathaway Brown School class of 1898. The school's early mission was twofold: to prepare upper-class women for a career in society, and to equip them with well-trained minds. Western Reserve Historical Society

who could afford the tuition sent their children to parochial schools to escape the Protestant atmosphere of the public and private secular schools. In 1890, seventy-five hundred students were enrolled in parochial schools; in 1909, twenty thousand.

Women also dominated nursing as it began to establish itself as a profession. The Civil War had dramatized the need for trained nurses when three thousand women, many of them nuns, volunteered their services at the front. Those services were as much menial and domestic as medical, and nurses, unlike doctors, were not required to have professional training. At the end of the century, as hospitals became less social-welfare than medical facilities, they also became training sites for both doctors and nurses. In return for their education, nursing students were required to live at the hospitals and provide free care to patients.

Cleveland had a variety of nursing schools. The city's first was a homeopathic facility, the Cleveland Training School

for Nurses, opened in 1884. Some schools, like the hospitals with which they were affiliated, were sectarian—such as those at St. Vincent Charity Hospital and St. Ann’s Hospital. (See Figure 36.) When Cleveland City Hospital opened its training school in 1897, eight of its ten students were nurses already employed at the hospital. In 1898 Lakeside Hospital, having just affiliated with the Western Reserve University medical school, opened the city’s first collegiate nursing school. A high-school degree was considered desirable but not necessary for admission. The school had a three-year curriculum, with lectures provided by busy physicians and occasionally attended by even busier student nurses. When Lakeside Hospital moved to University Circle, the nursing school also relocated to a facility built with a \$500,000 gift from Frances Payne Bolton, after whom the school of nursing was then named. (See Figure 37.)

FIGURE 36. The infant ward at St. Ann’s Hospital in 1912. Cleveland Public Library





Graduates of nursing schools more often sought work in private homes or in public health agencies than in hospitals. In 1901 a group of public health nurses, together with middle-class volunteers who had been visiting the homes of needy families, initiated the Cleveland Visiting Nurses Association. Its purpose was to provide medical services to homebound, indigent patients, and its staff was originally based in settlement houses. (See Figure 38.)

Women were encouraged to enter the low-paid, low-status profession of nursing, but they fought an uphill battle to become doctors. Throughout most of the century, students of medicine learned their trade by apprenticing themselves to practicing doctors, preceptors; medical school was the privilege only of wealthy men. After the Civil War, however, the numbers of medical schools grew as doctors and the young American Medical Association tried to upgrade the reputation of the profession by replacing preceptorship with formal education.

Women were seldom admitted to these medical schools. In 1852 the Medical Department of Western Reserve College graduated Mrs. Nancy Talbot Clarke, who then moved to Boston and opened a dispensary for women and children. Two years later the school graduated Emily Blackwell, sister of Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman to be graduated from an American medical college. The Blackwell sisters founded a dispensary for women and children in New York. Despite grumblings from the male faculty, in 1856 four more women received medical degrees from Western Reserve, including Dr. Elisabeth Grisell (listed in the 1857 city directory) and Dr. Marie Elizabeth Zakrzewska. Zakrzewska, a German immigrant, had been urged to attend Western Reserve by Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell and received financial support from Cleveland women including Caroline Severance, later a prominent suffragist. After graduation, Zakrzewska joined the faculty at the New England Female Medical College in Boston and then founded the New England Hospital for Women and Children, the first hospital in New England to be staffed entirely by women.

In 1856, however, the American Medical Association recommended barring women from medical schools, advice then followed by most of the country's medical colleges through the 1860s. In 1879 the Medical Department of Western Reserve voted to readmit women, but few applied, and only three were graduated by 1884 when the school again closed its doors to women. The doors remained shut until 1918.

Women nevertheless continued to pursue medicine. Women constituted 10 percent of the country's medical students in 1900, and 6 percent of all doctors in 1910. Most probably received their training in institutions called "irregular" because they taught therapies unacceptable to the American Medical Association. Dr. Myra King Merrick practiced homeopathy but had graduated from Central Medical College, an



FIGURE 37. Nursing students at the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing in Bacteriology Class at Lakeside Hospital in 1924. Case Western Reserve University Archives



FIGURE 38. A visiting nurse from the University Nursing District shows a mother the process of milk modification in the 1920s. Case Western Reserve University Archives

eclectic school in Rochester, and had gotten her clinical experience in a hydropathic facility. Dr. Eliza Merrick, Dr. Kate Parsons, and Dr. Martha Canfield were also homeopaths.

Homeopathic teaching institutions were hospitable to women: some were committed to women's rights; others were simply glad to enroll any paying student, male or female. Homeopathy, a popular alternative to the "heroic" therapies of regularly trained physicians, was practiced in Cleveland by several prominent doctors as early as the 1830s. The Cleveland Homeopathic Medical College, founded in 1850, admitted three women at its first session and had graduated eleven women by the end of the decade, two receiving a Doctor of Obstetrics and Gynecology by completing a shortened course. Following the advice of the American Medical Association and the example of Western Reserve University, however, the homeopathic medical school also barred women from 1864 to 1867. (See Figure 39.)

In response, Dr. Myra King Merrick and C. A. (Mrs. John) Seaman, also trained as a homeopath, opened the Cleveland Homeopathic College for Women. The women's college graduated a small number of students before merging with the older institution, whose faculty was still on record as opposing coeducation but whose all-male student body was dangerously dwindling.

From 1852 to 1914, about 260 women received medical degrees from Cleveland homeopathic colleges. Only 64 women graduated from "regular" medical colleges. These included the Medical Department of the College of Wooster, located in Cleveland from 1874 to 1896, and the Medical Department of Ohio Wesleyan University, also in Cleveland prior to its merger with the Medical Department of Western Reserve University in 1910, as well as the Medical Department of Western Reserve University.

One of those regularly educated women was Dr. Lillian Gertrude Towslee, who succeeded Dr. Martha Canfield as director of Woman's Hospital. While pursuing her first career as a music teacher, she also enrolled in the Medical Department at Wooster, where she received her medical degree in 1888. She practiced general medicine but specialized in gynecology, which she taught in the medical schools of both Wooster and Ohio Wesleyan. Active in many women's organizations such as the Sorosis, Towslee encouraged other women to enter medicine: "Women are especially adapted to care for the sick. The same qualities that make women good nurses help to make them good physicians." (See Figure 40.)

Women also worked as midwives, who had to be licensed by the city but did not require professional training. Until the end of the 1920s, most women in Cleveland bore their children at home, but middle-class women had come to prefer male physicians to midwives, who had historically attended home births. Because of Cleveland's large immigrant population,

however, midwives continued to deliver significant numbers of children: in 1916, 7,041 babies (almost 40 percent of all births), most to foreign-born women. Seventy-one midwives were listed in the 1915 city directory, many on the city's near west side, serving its immigrant neighborhoods. In 1926, because of pressure

FIGURE 39. A detailed drawing of the Cleveland Homeopathic Hospital College in the 1870s. Western Reserve Historical Society

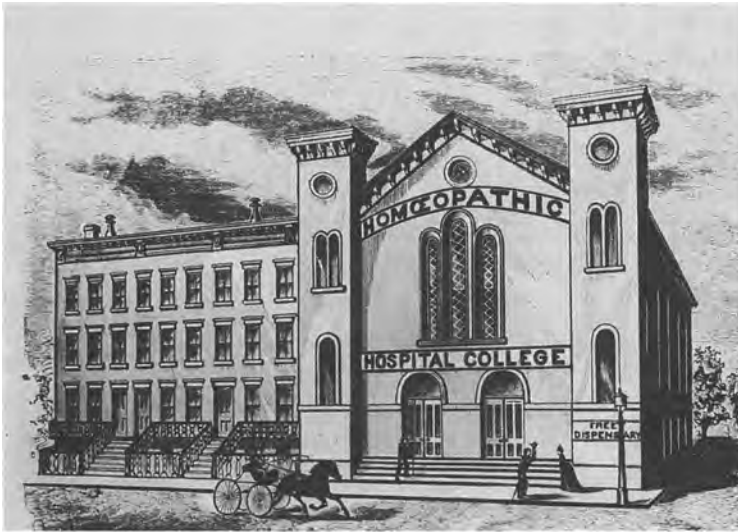


FIGURE 40. Woman's General Hospital, founded in 1878 as the Women's and Children's Free Medical Dispensary by Kate Parsons and Myra King Merrick, ca. 1900. Courtesy of the Howard Dittrick Museum

**WOMAN'S GENERAL HOSPITAL** was the only hospital in Cleveland founded entirely by women. Beginning as a small homeopathic dispensary for women and children, the facility became a full-fledged hospital under Dr. Martha A. Canfield and in 1918 moved to its permanent location at E. 101st St. and Chester Ave. In 1921–22, the hospital staff included nine women physicians (and eleven men), and two other women physicians who served in the clinic department. By 1929 Woman's Hospital had become the third-largest maternity hospital in Cleveland. In the post-World War II decades, the hospital provided a full range of medical services, but it closed in 1984 because of financial difficulties.



from male obstetricians and the growing popularity of hospital childbirth, midwives attended barely 14 percent of all births in Cleveland. In 1928, 160 midwives were still licensed to practice in Cleveland, but the city directory listed only 57, several, including Mrs. Mary Wypychowski, Mrs. Pearl Ciezkowski, and Mrs. Victoria Ruchay, on Fleet Avenue in the Czech neighborhood. (See Figure 41.)

The legal profession was even less accessible to women. In 1873 the U.S. Supreme Court argued that “the natural and proper timidity and delicacy” of women rendered them unfit for the law. Most lawyers, like doctors, had historically learned their trade through apprenticeship, and like medical schools, law schools were for wealthy male students. Most state bar associations did not admit women, and most legal firms would not employ them. The few women trained as lawyers, therefore, often did not practice.

In Cleveland only one woman lawyer, Mary (Mrs. Spargo) Fraser, 315 City Hall, was listed in the 1893 and 1901 city directories. (Although first names of lawyers are sometimes ambiguous, the directory enumerated a woman as “Miss” or “Mrs.”) A decade later, Mrs. Spargo having retired or died, there was still only one woman lawyer: Miss Elizabeth Williams, 1206 Williamson Building. The Western Reserve University School of Law did not admit women until 1918, although Cleveland Law School, affiliated with Baldwin Wallace College, did.

Despite their crucial numbers in conventional churches and their important roles in sectarian charity, women were even less welcome in the ministry than in medicine or law. Neither



FIGURE 41. A Cleveland-area midwife, ca. 1910, as featured in an article entitled “Midwifery and Infant Mortality” in the July 1911 edition of the *Visiting Nurse Quarterly of Cleveland*. Courtesy of the Howard Dittrick Museum

the Catholic Church, the Jewish denominations, nor the Protestant mainstream congregations permitted women ministers. Only a tiny handful of women had managed to be ordained by the end of the nineteenth century.

Two women, the Reverend Florence Buck and the Reverend Marion Murdock, served as coministers at the Unity (Unitarian) Church from 1893 to 1899. Murdock led the opening prayer at the 1897 ceremony when the Centennial Commission's Woman's Department sealed the casket of documents to be opened in 1996. She was the first woman to receive the Bachelor of Divinity degree from the Unitarian seminary at Meadville, Pennsylvania. During Buck and Murdock's ministry, Unity Church established a free kindergarten and classes in cooking and domestic science. Buck later became head of the Religious Education Department of the American Unitarian Society. After their departure, the city directory listed no women as ministers of churches for the next several decades.

Women did organize and lead various "irregular" religious organizations in which ordination was not required. In 1895 Mrs. M. S. Lake was the pastor of the People's Spiritual Alliance (Spiritualist), and other women served as administrators of various missions and Bible societies. Many were listed in city directories as Christian Science readers.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, women led in the creation of the new profession of librarianship. As public libraries and especially their services for children expanded to keep pace with the growing urban population, so did the need for an educated but low-paid staff. Women, long regarded as the genteel caretakers of culture and children, filled that need.

Cleveland's first public library opened in 1869 on Public Square. Under the direction of head librarian William Howard Brett, who served from 1884 to 1918, it opened several new branches. Brett's staff was almost completely female. (See Figure 42.)

In 1918 Linda Anne Eastman, vice-librarian under Brett, succeeded him and became the first woman to head a major urban library. (See Figure 43.) She had planned to become a teacher but instead joined the staff at the Cleveland Public Library (CPL) in 1892. In 1897 she and children's librarian Effie L. Power formed the Children's Library League, which encouraged children to become enthusiastic and responsible book-borrowers. In 1908 CPL became the first public library in the country to open a branch just for children, Perkins House, in a small home donated by the Cleveland Day Nursery and Free Kindergarten Association. (See Figure 44.) During Eastman's twenty-year tenure as head librarian, her staff grew to twelve hundred, and the library developed a travel section, a business information bureau, and special services for the blind and to hospitals. Eastman also oversaw the library's move in 1925 to its multi-million-dollar building on Superior Avenue, its current location.

FIGURE 42. William Howard Brett conducts one of the first classes at Western Reserve University's School of Library Science, ca. 1900. Case Western Reserve University Archives



FIGURE 43. Linda A. Eastman was the first woman in the world to direct a major urban library. Shown here with President Herbert Hoover in 1929, Eastman also served as the president of the American Association of Librarians. Cleveland Public Library

**LINDA ANNE EASTMAN** (17 July 1867–5 Apr. 1963) Among Eastman's great accomplishments was her maintenance and administration of Cleveland Public Library's services during the Great Depression, when the library's use dramatically increased and its funding just as dramatically diminished. Appointed director in 1918, she retired in 1938. In Eastman's honor, the garden between the main library building and the Business and Science building was given her name.



Two other women gained prominence during Eastman's administration. Effie L. Power became supervisor of the children's room and then supervisor of children's work at the library from 1920 to 1937. She introduced the Book Caravan, which took books to children in neighborhoods, parks, and playgrounds, an early version of the bookmobile. Marilla Waite Freeman, trained as both a librarian and a lawyer, served as director of the main library from 1922 to 1940. Freeman created posters and displays to encourage use of the library and designed and distributed bookmarks which provided bibliographies about plays or movies currently in performance. She brought several poets, including native Clevelander Langston Hughes, Robert Frost, and John Masefield, for readings at the library and the Women's City Club.

Responding to the need for professional library personnel, Western Reserve University established its Library School in 1904. Brett was its first dean, and other library staff, including Eastman, served on the faculty. (See Figure 45.)

The career of librarian Eleanor Edwards (Mrs. Dancy) Ledbetter illustrates both the growing professionalization of librarians and the specialized services provided by public libraries. A graduate of New York State Library School, Ledbetter was appointed in 1909 the librarian at the Broadway Branch of CPL, located in a neighborhood of Czechs and Poles. She initiated the acquisition of Polish and Czech collections at the branch and wrote several books on Cleveland immigrant communities, including *The Jugoslavs of Cleveland* (1918), *The Slovaks of Cleveland* (1918), and *The Czechs of Cleveland* (1919). During World War I she taught citizenship classes to immigrants, and she remained a leading authority on local immigrant communities after her retirement in 1938. (See Figure 46.)

The profession of social work emerged in the first decades of the twentieth century but was rooted in the tradition of women's sectarian charity, dating back to the Martha Washington and Dorcas Society and Rebecca Rouse's visits to the homes of Cleveland's poor in the 1840s. In 1867 Clevelanders had organized the Bethel Union, a missionary and relief organization, and in 1871 its Ladies Bethel and Mission Aid Society reported that in a two-year period its members had visited more than six hundred poor families and distributed more than seventy-eight hundred articles of clothing.

In the 1880s, the charity organization movement attempted to make the distribution of such outdoor relief more "scientific" and more efficient by systematic inquiries into the lives of the poor to determine who deserved charity and who did not. The inquiries were to be conducted by "friendly visitors," who often were women.

Cleveland's charity organization society was established in 1884 as Bethel Associated Charities. The society ran a soup kitchen, tried to provide jobs for the unemployed (men chopped





wood, women sewed), and raised its own funds and relief supplies. But its chief purpose was to investigate the worthiness of the needy. It checked its own applicants for relief against those receiving public relief from the city, so that no family would be aided twice. In 1885 the organization hired a male superintendent to oversee the work of the several committees of visitors. All were volunteers, and most of them were women, who recommended—but did not distribute—relief in kind to deserving families. In 1900 Bethel Associated Charities changed its name to Cleveland Associated Charities (CAC). It expanded and strengthened its connections with the public Infirmarium and various private agencies such as the Visiting Nurses Association, but its visitors remained female, for the most part unpaid and untrained. (See Figure 47.)

However, as the numbers and needs of Cleveland's poor grew—for example, during the depression of 1893—it became apparent that greater expertise was needed in both the raising and the distribution of relief funds. In 1905 CAC director James F. Jackson began a seven-month series of training classes for college graduates, mostly women, who wanted to develop professional expertise in charitable activities. Scholarships were provided by the Cleveland Day Nursery Association

FIGURE 44. Children listen quietly to storyteller Georgiana Mineau at the Perkins Branch Library of the Cleveland Public Library in 1908. Cleveland State University Archives

FIGURE 45. Alice S. Tyler, dean and director of the Western Reserve University Library School from 1913 to 1929, ca. 1920s. Case Western Reserve University Archives

**ALICE S. TYLER** (27 Apr. 1859–18 Apr. 1944) became the director of Library School of Western Reserve University in 1913 and from 1925 to 1929 served as its dean. Tyler received her professional training at the Armour Institute in Chicago, today the Library School of the University of Illinois, and also worked for the Cleveland Public Library and the Iowa State Library Commission. When she began her tenure at WRU, it offered only a certificate for a one-year course. By 1929 the student body had grown significantly, and the school offered a Bachelor of Science in Library Science for completion of a four-year program. Tyler initiated and taught many of the courses herself.



FIGURE 46. Author and librarian Eleanor Edwards Ledbetter, ca. 1938. Ledbetter was known for her pioneering work with immigrant groups and ethnic literature. Cleveland Public Library

**ELEANOR EDWARDS LEDBETTER** (1870–19 July 1954) received honors from both the Polish and the Czech governments for her publications on Cleveland's immigrant communities.

and Goodrich House (to a young woman who would then work at the settlement). Jackson also urged Western Reserve University president Charles F. Thwing to found a school of social work.

The School of Applied Social Sciences at Western Reserve University (SASS) opened in 1916. Its first significant programs were in public health nursing, family welfare, and social service, fields in which women had long been active as volunteers. SASS soon trained the workers for CAC, who did their field work there. Jackson became head of the family welfare division at SASS, and two other CAC staff joined the faculty. SASS also trained staff for the Visiting Nurses Association.

An early specialty at SASS was child welfare, which prepared workers, mostly women, for the many public and private child-care agencies and institutions such as the orphanages. In the early 1920s, SASS began to train group workers for settlements such as Hiram House and the Council Educational Alliance, and in 1926 it founded its own settlement, the University Neighborhood Centers (now University Social

FIGURE 47. Children of families on relief gather outside Bethel Associated Charities, ca. 1895. Western Reserve Historical Society



Settlement), as a training site for its students. Much of the funding for the latter came from Elizabeth Bingham Blossom, wife of wealthy Cleveland businessman Dudley S. Blossom, who was also a philanthropist and city welfare director 1919–1921 and 1924–32.

Using conventional ideas and new institutions, women slowly gained a foothold in the professions. They would do the same in the arts.



# Growing Up

Childhood may be the most photographed stage of life. These photographs illustrate the changed meanings of growing up for children in Cleveland.

The city's first children, like those in frontier settlements elsewhere, endured the same hardships as their parents. During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, however, when communities such as Cleveland had resources enough to survive without the labor of young people, Americans "discovered childhood" as a stage of life that differentiated young people from adults. Daguerreotypes of the 1860s reflect this discovery: the little girls of the Harris family, posed stiffly for the photographer, dressed formally, but in clothing which was distinct from their mother's—with shorter skirts and without bustles or hoops. Although male and female infants were dressed the same way, older children's clothing distinguished boys from girls and native-born from immigrant children such as those in the 1911 "steamer class."

Child labor continued into the first two decades of the twentieth century for working-class children, but increasingly, photographs showed casually dressed children on playgrounds or at settlement houses such as Cleveland's Hiram House or Friendly Inn. These images reflect the economic and social realities of a prolonged childhood and the accompanying cultural expectation that education and recreation, not work, were appropriate activities for children. Children were also expected to learn adult roles while they played, as in activities at Karamu House, the West Side Community House, and Shapero Dancing School.

Today children often enter educational institutions such as the Church of the Covenant Day Care Center at an early age because both parents work, and children stay in school longer than ever before because an increasingly technological economy requires sophisticated job skills.





*Opposite:* Young girls pose in their best clothes for an 1850s daguerreotype. Western Reserve Historical Society

An infant wears a unisex gown for an upcoming special occasion. Western Reserve Historical Society

A visit with grandfather is always a treat, ca. 1890. Western Reserve Historical Society







A young girl tentatively experiments with a new-fangled bicycle, ca. 1890. Western Reserve Historical Society

Little girls show off their best hats at the Hiram House. Western Reserve Historical Society





Newly arrived immigrant children enroll in a "steamer class" in 1911. Western Reserve Historical Society

Dressed for warmth and elegance, ca. 1910. Marian J. Morton Collection





Despite their cumbersome costumes, teenagers enjoy a summertime visit to Euclid Beach Park. Western Reserve Historical Society

Girls and boys swing perilously on the bars at a Cleveland Day Nursery playground, ca. 1910. Western Reserve Historical Society





Portrait of an artist as a young girl, ca. 1910.  
Western Reserve Historical Society

Many of the female workers at Joseph and Feiss Company in 1932 were adolescents. Western Reserve Historical Society



*Opposite top:* In the 1940s, Friendly Inn Settlement welcomed children of all ethnic backgrounds. Western Reserve Historical Society

*Opposite bottom:* A young actor and actress rehearse grown-up roles in a play at Karamu House, 1949. Western Reserve Historical Society

Girls learn domestic skills in cooking classes at West Side Community House in the 1930s. Western Reserve Historical Society







"Dress Up Like Your Mom" day in 1954 at West Side Community House. Western Reserve Historical Society

A young girl races her bike across a Cleveland playground. Western Reserve Historical Society



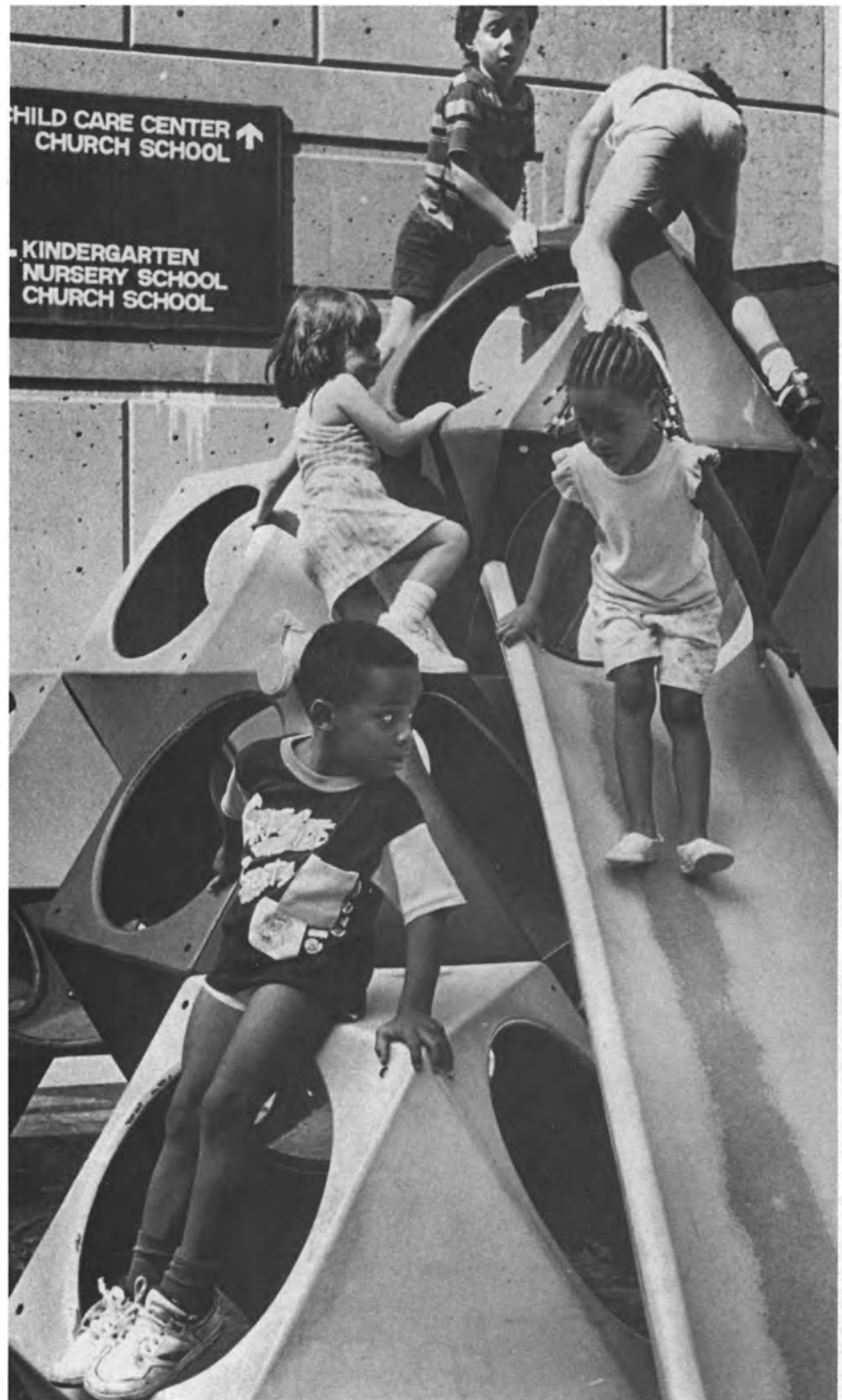


Children learn ballroom dancing and proper etiquette at the Shapero Dancing School in the 1970s. Western Reserve Historical Society



A family stroll at Lakefront State Park.  
The Plain Dealer





In the 1980s, growing numbers of children enrolled in daycare centers like this one at the Church of the Covenant. The Plain Dealer

# Sports and Recreation

Women have participated enthusiastically in sports and recreational activities for at least the last century. Team photos and action shots of Cleveland women reveal both their growing athletic opportunities and the continuing gender segregation of women's sports.

Hampered by the popular belief that strenuous physical activity might damage their reproductive capacities (and by clothing that probably did), women did not enter competitive athletics until the end of the nineteenth century. In the 1890s, bicycle riding provided an early form of genteel exercise, but in the 1910s, cumbersome athletic costumes for baseball and track events at colleges such as Lake Erie College reflected lingering fears that athletics were immodest activities.

By the 1920s, girls' schools such as Laurel School encouraged students to compete in organized sports, including field hockey and basketball. Adult women played amateur golf, rode horseback, and bowled.

Opportunities for women to participate in amateur athletics have continued to grow. Since the 1970s, federal law has required that colleges and universities provide equal facilities and resources, and women athletes at schools such as John Adams High School, John Carroll University, and Cleveland State University take competition seriously.

Men and women still tend to specialize in different sports, however, and women's teams seldom compete against men's. Although women are welcome in amateur athletics, few professional female athletes earn the huge salaries of male professionals.



Women promenaded on bicycles down E. Prospect Ave. (now Carnegie Ave.) in 1896 as part of a promotion sponsored by White Sewing Machine Co., manufacturer of the featured bicycles. Cleveland State University Archives

A young female gymnast from a Czech Sokol group performs on the uneven bars during a holiday exhibition in 1912. Western Reserve Historical Society

*Opposite top:* Young women sprint down the track at Lake Erie College, ca. 1910. Western Reserve Historical Society

*Opposite bottom:* An equestrian and her mount await their turn to compete, ca. 1915. Western Reserve Historical Society







A game of baseball provides some leisure activity for these Richman Bros. garment workers on their noon-hour break, ca. 1915. Western Reserve Historical Society

Mrs. William D. Becker tees off with her wood driver during the Cleveland Inter-Club Tour, 1924. Western Reserve Historical Society

*Opposite:* Mixing enjoyment with a little bit of rivalry, a counselor and her campers play basketball at Girl Scout camp in the summer of 1924. Cleveland Public Library





Two young girls play volleyball with a beach ball at a Cleveland playground, 1930. Cleveland State University Archives



Cleveland Councilman Lawrence O. Payne's basketball team, 1935. Western Reserve Historical Society

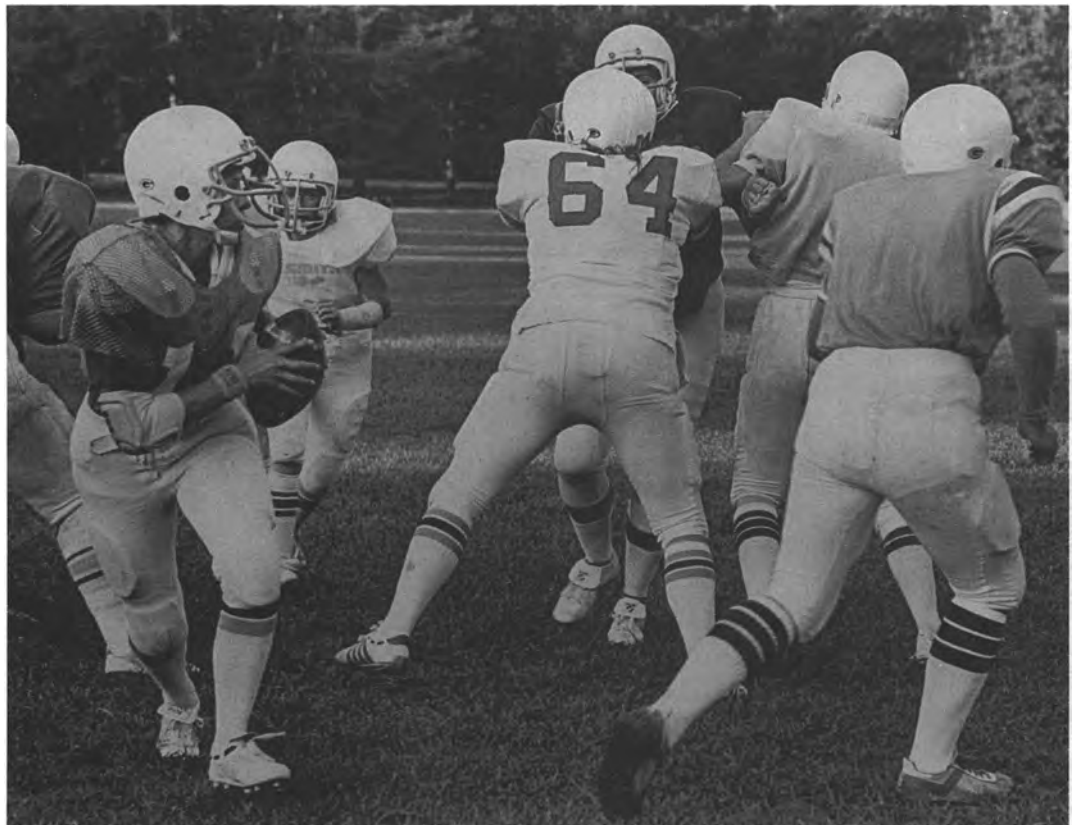




Players from the Southeast All-Star Field Hockey team drive against the Midwest team at the National Field Hockey Tournament, hosted by Laurel School in November 1935. Southeast won 12–0, and went on to win the tournament. Cleveland State University Archives

Two students from Baldwin Wallace College take aim at the archery range, ca. 1946. Cleveland State University Archives





*Opposite top:* A crowd gathers to watch some women's bowling league action, January 1958. Courtesy Cleveland Women's Bowling Association

*Opposite bottom:* Carol Segan, quarterback for the Cleveland Brewers of the Women's Professional Football League, drops back for a pass during a full-contact practice session, 1979. Cleveland State University Archives

Shaker Heights catcher Celia True tags out a runner at home plate in a regional high-school softball league game, 1979. Cleveland State University Archives

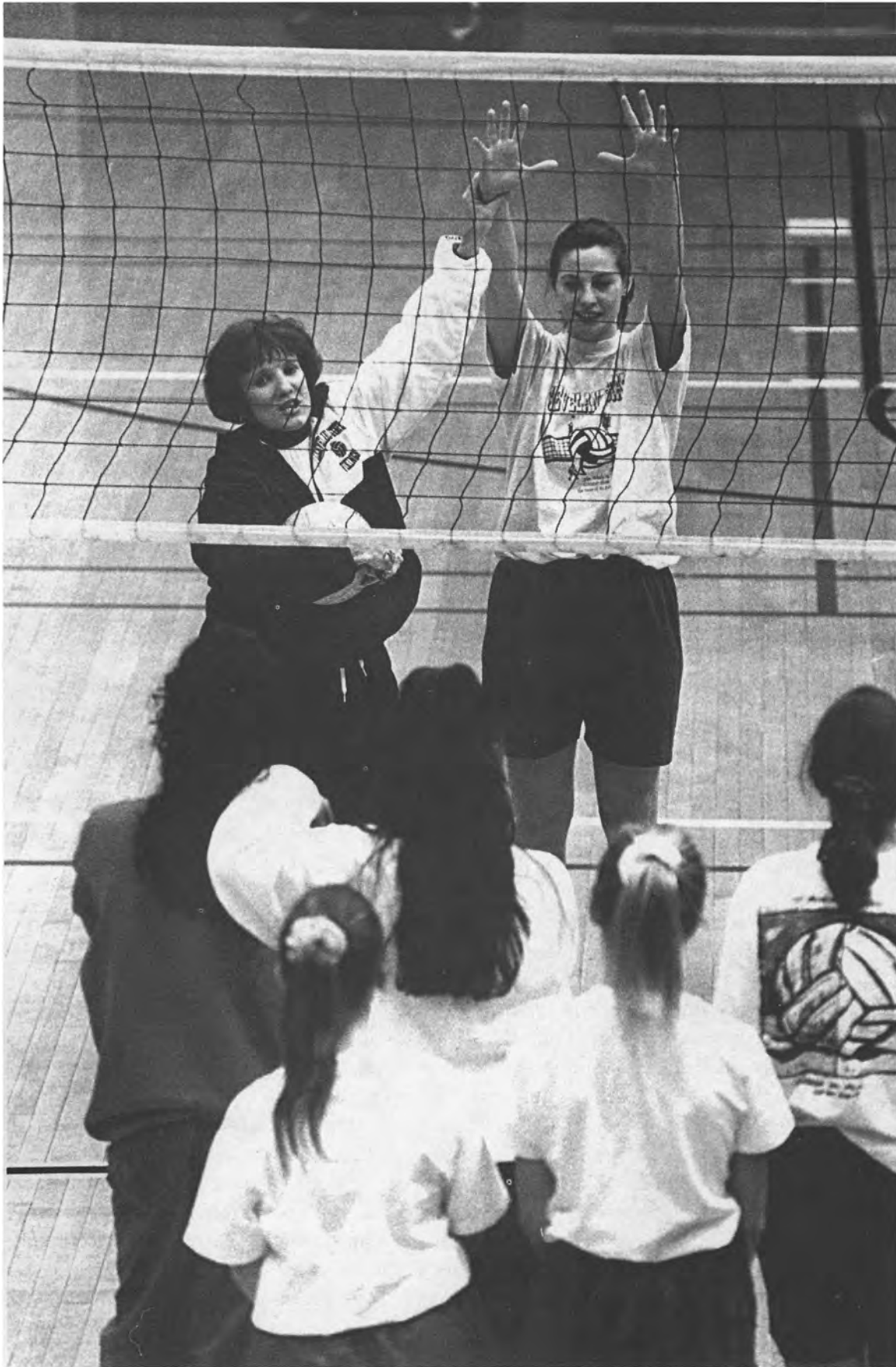


*Opposite:* Cleveland State University volleyball coach Mary Motley and CSU player Cass Dolhancyk demonstrate shot-blocking at the net as part of a women's volleyball clinic at CSU in February 1994. *The Plain Dealer*

Maureen Boucher of John Carroll University (#10) fights for a rebound against a Rio Grande College player, March 1979. Cleveland State University Archives

Case Western Reserve University fullback Dina August prepares to clear the ball upfield during a women's intercollegiate soccer match, 1993. Courtesy Case Western Reserve University Sports Information office





# Marriage and Family

Adult women appear most often in wedding photographs and family portraits such as these. Although marriage and the family have changed dramatically, they remain central to most women's lives.

Spouse and children were essential for survival in a wilderness setting such as Cleveland's. Throughout the nineteenth century women found pleasure and meaning in their roles as wives and caretakers of large families in their particular "sphere," home. Working-class, immigrant, and African American women also often supplemented the family income by paid work in or out of their homes. In formal wedding portraits, whether of Germans or of African Americans, all participants dressed in appropriate and elegant costume, symbolizing the significance of this ritual for both the couple and the larger community.

Photographs of family gatherings from the 1890s to the present (at which participants may or may not display appropriate clothes or behavior) record changes in the nuclear family. Families today are smaller because women have gained greater control over their fertility and have entered the workplace in growing numbers. Fathers are more likely to help with domestic chores, but women are also more likely than ever to head families. The many portraits of Cleveland mothers and children of all ethnic backgrounds and classes and from all time periods also reveal the enduring and special bond between mothers and children.



Mr. and Mrs. Anson Chamberlain pose for a family album picture in 1860. Western Reserve Historical Society



A German couple and their five children dressed in their formal best for a turn-of-the-century portrait.  
Western Reserve Historical Society



An informal family gathering, perhaps a birthday or an outing, ca. 1890. Western Reserve Historical Society

A patriotic family celebrates the U.S. victory in the Spanish-American War in 1898. Western Reserve Historical Society







The bride and groom and their attendants are splendidly attired for the big day. Western Reserve Historical Society



The family gathers to celebrate the wedding anniversary of Joseph and Mathilda Garson in 1905. Western Reserve Historical Society



Frances Hays Gries and her infant son, ca. 1900.  
Western Reserve Historical Society

A mother and her daughters on their front porch.  
Western Reserve Historical Society





A family portrait catches the striking family resemblance of a mother and her two children. Western Reserve Historical Society



The Cedar YMCA parlor furnishes the backdrop for a wedding in 1949. Western Reserve Historical Society



Professional photographer Allen E. Cole captures the joyous reunion of the Frances H. Smith family, ca. 1940. Western Reserve Historical Society





*Opposite top:* Joseph Polevoi photographs his Russian relatives at a Cleveland reunion in 1982. The Plain Dealer

*Opposite bottom:* Jim and Christine Cascoigne share feeding duties for their young children, 1987. The Plain Dealer

Patty Grath and her daughter May disagree about the 11-month old's entering a crawling race in 1984. The Plain Dealer





Vivien Wang's card is a reminder that Mothers' Day is special for the whole family. *The Plain Dealer*

# Work

Most women's work outside the home is still linked with their familial and domestic responsibilities. These photographs of Cleveland women illustrate this important link as well as the "unwomanly" work which women have also done.

Women have always been part of the paid labor force. When Cleveland became a commercial town, women opened shops or worked as clerks. When Cleveland industrialized, women entered factories, especially garment factories such as Richman Brothers, and when their unions struck, women struck with their fellow workers. In the postindustrial economy, women have found jobs in the white-collar service sector. Their contributions to the Cleveland economy are captured in these photographs of teachers, librarians, domestic servants, and beauty operatives.

But the camera has also recorded unconventional women, who have held such "men's" jobs as construction workers, engineers, nuclear pharmacists, and lawyers. Their numbers continue to grow as women demand equal job opportunity, as in this demonstration by Cleveland Women Working, and the demarcations between women's and men's work and lives continue to blur.



A librarian distributes books to neighborhood children at the Home Library on Hill Street, 1900. Case Western Reserve University Archives



Morris and Anne Horwitz pose proudly with a customer and banana stalk in their neighborhood grocery store at E. 53rd and Scovill, ca. 1910. Western Reserve Historical Society, courtesy of M. Benjamin



Machine operators manufacture blouses at the Richman Bros. factory, ca. 1914. Western Reserve Historical Society

African American women at the Phillis Wheatley Association wait to be called for jobs, ca. 1920. Western Reserve Historical Society





A women's military unit marches on Public Square in front of the Terminal Tower during a downtown victory parade, 1945. Western Reserve Historical Society



Students in a class at the Mary Belle Coleman School of Beauty Culture train each other in salon techniques and procedures, ca. 1940. Western Reserve Historical Society

A teacher instructs young students in arts and crafts, ca. 1950. Case Western Reserve University Archives





Leaders and members of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union picket Higbee's as part of a strike against Judy Bond Blouses in the late 1960s. Courtesy of the ILGWU and the Greater Cleveland Labor History Society



Dr. Cheryl Weinstein utilizes a dermagnet gun to administer a swine flu inoculation, 1976. Courtesy of the Archives of the Cleveland Clinic Foundation





Engineering students from Case Western Reserve University visit Parker-Hannafin laboratories as part of a program sponsored by the Society of Women Engineers, November 1978. Case Western Reserve University Archives

Yolanda Duncan prepares a time study at an Eaton Corp. factory in Cleveland, 1979. The Plain Dealer





A 1980 demonstration by Cleveland Women Working in the lobby of National City Bank's downtown headquarters protests low wages. Cleveland State University Archives



A construction worker on site at Lakewood Hospital, 1982. The Plain Dealer



A Cleveland Public Schools high-school science teacher explains an upcoming experiment to her students, ca. 1980. Robert E. Dorksen Photography/Western Reserve Historical Society

*Opposite top:* Kim Clelland, part of Goodyear's Office Services Department, instructs her daughter Jenna in computer typesetting for in-house publications on "Take Our Daughters to Work Day" in 1993. The Plain Dealer

*Opposite bottom:* Lab technicians Debbie Duraj and Pamela McKenna (*right*) help staff pharmacists Leslie Pudlak and Margaret Morgenstern (*left*) process orders at Syncor International's Cleveland nuclear pharmacy lab, 1994. Courtesy of Wendell Morningstar Photography



# Fashion

Women's fashions simultaneously define the ideal woman and respond to the realities of women's lives. The images of the corseted figure of the 1860s and the miniskirted woman of the 1960s reveal cultural expectations as well as social and economic realities.

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, fashion, promulgated by periodicals such as *Godey's Ladies Magazine* or the Sears Roebuck mail catalogue, dictated that women's clothing restrict their bodies just as customs and mores restricted their lives: sleeves and skirts were long, and corsets were tight. The new shirtwaists and bicycle suits of the 1890s and 1910s that are shown here were designed by Cleveland manufacturers for the growing number of women who held jobs or participated in athletics. By the 1920s, shorter skirts and bobbed hair symbolized the liberated lifestyle of the new flapper.

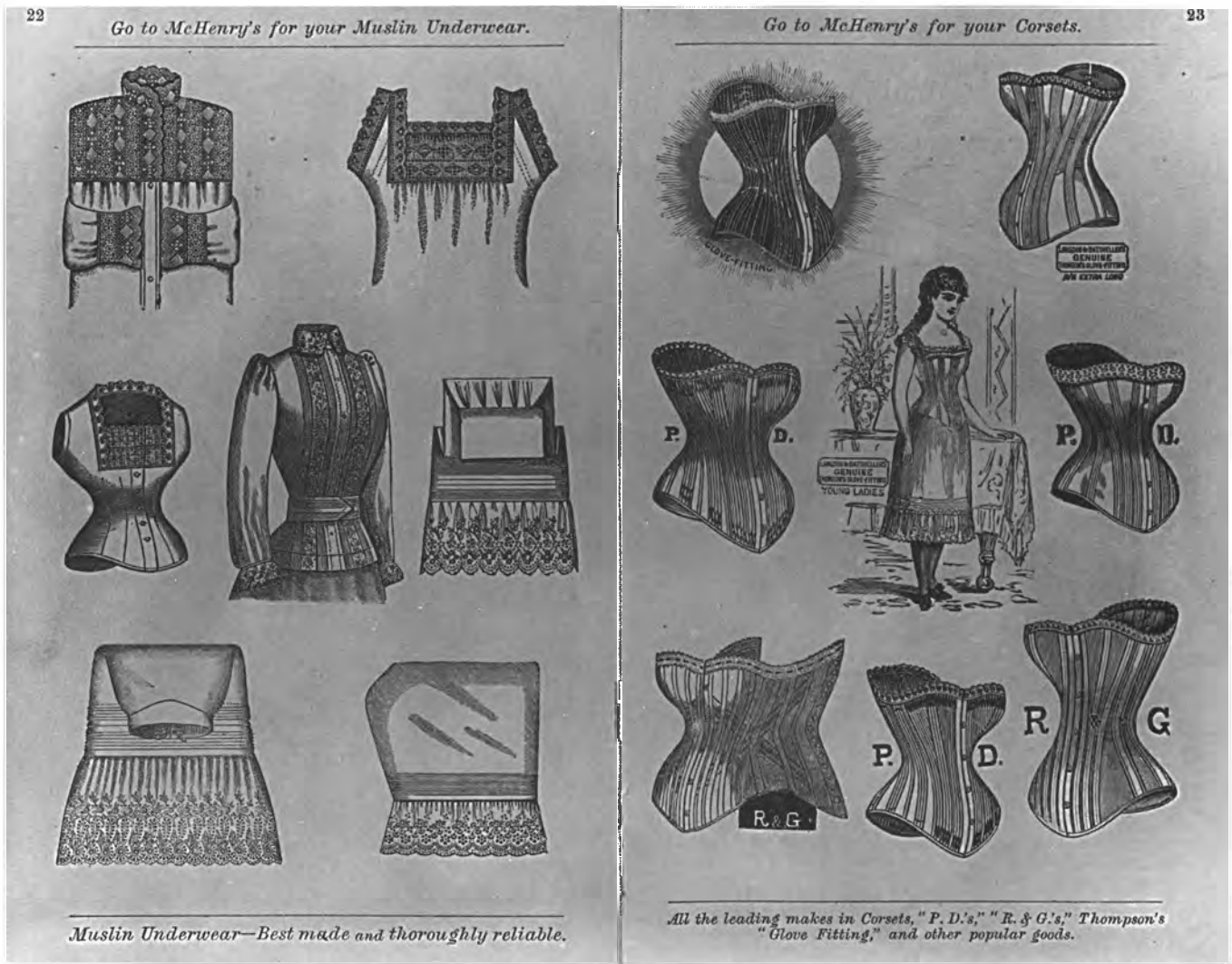
Magazines, newspapers, and television have continued to advise women what to buy, advertising the latest in tailored afternoon wear, simple house dresses, and elegant evening gowns. Nevertheless, Cleveland women have continued to wear what has been convenient and comfortable for play and work.



*Godey's Ladies Magazine*, April 1867, was one source of patterns so that Cleveland women could dress in style. Western Reserve Historical Society

Opposite: New styles ready for ordering from Sears Roebuck in 1897. Western Reserve Historical Society

Women's outerwear in 1891 was shaped by what they wore underneath. Western Reserve Historical Society



# TAILOR MADE WALKING AND BICYCLE SUITS



24993  
\$6.75



24990  
\$3.75



24980  
\$3.15



24982  
\$4.25

## SUITS FOR HIGH SUMMER WEAR.

- 24980 Made of Washable Linen Crash, Blazer style with newest sleeves and cuffs, very finest skirt. Price.....\$3.15
- 24981 Very Stylish, made of high grade plaid washable linen crash, big sailor collar fancy front. Our price, only.....\$4.00
- 24982 This Beautiful Summer Suit, is made of fancy checked washable linen crash, sailor collar and fronts of white linen, newest sleeves and cuffs. Very rich. Price.....\$4.25
- 24983 \$4.00 Would not be too much for this Elegant Suit, made of fancy washable linen crash, big sailor collar, front and cuffs of blue linen, making a very pretty combination. Price only.....\$5.00

## BICYCLE SUITS.

- 24989 Consists of five pieces, Jacket, Skirt, Bloomers, Leggins and Cap, made of Austrian covert cloth in brown or gray mixtures. Blazer jacket very nobby. Price.....\$3.75
- 24990 This Nobby Suit (Illustrated) is made of five pieces in double breasted Reefer style, full skirt in either tan or gray mixed Austrian covert cloth. Would be cheap at \$7.50. Only.....\$4.00
- 24991 Very Similar to 24993, made of very stylish novelty cloth, in five pieces consisting of cap, jacket, skirt, leggins and bloomers. Only.....\$4.25
- 24992 Blazer Style made of Imported Tiger Cloth, consisting of five pieces. Material durable and will outwear any material. Others sell it for \$8.00, we sell it for.....\$4.75
- 24993 This Handsome Suit (Illustrated) is made of brown or blue Repellant cloth, bound in leather all around and consists of five pieces, Jacket, half lined with silk. Can't be beat.....\$6.75



24983 5.00



24981  
\$4.25



TRADE  
**Wooltex Styles**  
FASHION FAULTLESS  
MARK

· CLOAKS · SUITS · SKIRTS ·  
**For Well Dressed Women**

**Spring-1906**



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# Buy Early—Buy Often—Buy Now



**T**HIS is going to be the greatest year the knit goods trade has ever known and the high grade sweaters will be scarce. If you want your share of the Keetch line, which is always complete—always up-to-date—always distinguished by little niceties of fit and finish—you must buy now. You will want

**KEETCH NORFOLKS**—A real Norfolk, with all the snap, style and finish possible in a cloth garment in a knit garment.

**KEETCH MOSCOW COATS**—Something entirely new—a novelty which will add class to any knit goods stock.

These are only one or two of the conspicuous features of the complete Keetch line for men, women and children.



This trade-mark sewed in every Keetch garment as insurance to you and your customers.

An advertisement encourages women to be well dressed on the tennis court. Western Reserve Historical Society

*Opposite:* Stylish suits designed by one of Cleveland's many garment manufacturers. Western Reserve Historical Society



THE STANDARD OF STYLE

## Again the La Vogue Garment Line Has the Call

Not with the spirit of boasting, but the sincere desire to make and prove a verified statement—we say—

**“LA VOGUE garments are as near self-selling as possible to make.”**

In designing, we strive to seek those unusual style touches—little points of feminine appeal—that the average popular-price garment fails to adopt.

Our line now out, shows these refined style expressions to a distinguishing degree.

Why not ask to see these accepted style numbers—they are meeting with favor wherever shown.

WRITE—

**THE JOHN ANISFIELD CO.**

Makers

Coats *La Vogue* Suits

CLEVELAND, OHIO

*Mix with us February 18 and 19—Fashion Exhibit and Business Chautauqua—you are invited to be our guest on this Cleveland occasion.*

The Cleveland working woman of 1913 might have worn this free-flowing suit. Western Reserve Historical Society



Flappers' short skirts, short sleeves, and short hair represented the new freedoms of women in the 1920s. Cleveland State University Archives



Tailored outfits designed by the Higbee Company suited the no-nonsense mood of the 1930s.  
Western Reserve Historical Society

OH! WHAT A BEAUTIFUL MORNING!  
 OH! WHAT A BEAUTIFUL DAY!  
 OH! WHAT DELIGHTFUL NAN CARSONS  
 EVERYTHING'S COMING MY WAY.

*We know that you'll break into song  
 when you see these lovely Nan Carsons. \$7.95  
 And such a small trifle to pay  
 for an exhilarating feeling.*

1855-Rayon screen print shirt, waist dress. Zigzag collar. Trim front with Pearl Buttons. Gold, Blue, Red Bands. . . 12 to 20

1857-T. & L. Rayon Gabardine 2 piece suit. White Rayon detachable daisy, 2 patch pockets. Aqua, Tan, Silver. Rose . . . 12 to 20

1858-2-piece non-tailored suit. Button-pearl shirt and reversible daisy. Button-down jacket with 2 patch pockets. Brown jacket with Brown and Yellow shirt. Green jacket with Red and Green shirt. . . 9 to 18

1859-Darling Junior 2-piece dress. make suit tailored of a rayon summer. Severely eyelet edged. Soft, unpressed fullness to skirt. Brown, Green Blue. . . 4 to 12

1861-American's Smoothest, Rayon Slanting waist dress with saddle-stitching. Broad pocket. Yoked back. Simulated Alligator belt. Blue. . . 12 to 20

1862-Cotton gabardine 2-piece non-tailored suit. Hand-embroidered buttons. White, detachable, washable daisy. 2 patch pockets. Aqua . . . 12 to 20

1864-Rayon Screen print suit dress. Contrasting straw belt. Balanced fullness to skirt. . . 12 to 20

NC 109

384  
2.00  
350  
2.24  
2.00

Local manufacturer L.N. Gross used the lyrics from the popular musical *Oklahoma* to sell these everyday dresses in 1944. Western Reserve Historical Society

**THE MAGIC OF SILK AND WOOL CHENILLE**

*by Bradley*

Your smart and most congenial traveling companion... silk and wool novelty knit based of Chenille that rarely needs a woman's care... Smooth draping and figure flattering two-piece knit suit in rich shades of blue, green, black and navy... Fashion forward dolman sleeves... Ribbed circular neckline. Size 10-12.

100.00

STORE NAME

No. 6813

**NO MAN SAYS "NO MAAM"**

*by Bradley*

100.00

When you wear the two-piece cardigan knit suit that flatters your best lines... Ideal for every travel and casual need because its 100% pre-washed Zephyr Chenille... There's a special enchantment in the ribbed of Mandarin collar and tapered front... Dolman sleeves... You'll find your favorite color... Size 10-12.

STORE NAME

No. 6819

**WONDERFUL... WONDERFUL KNIT SUITS**

So right for all casual wear and so easy to care for... Add a new sparkle to your wardrobe... You'll be delighted with the rich color choice of pastels and darks... Both in fine 100% pre-washed Zephyr Chenille... With the little style touches that Bradley does so well.

00.00

*by Bradley*

A. Two piece shorty slipover with split Mandarin collar... Cable pattern on blouse... Side zipper and dolman sleeves. Size 8-12.

B. Two piece shorty cardigan, Peter Pan collar... Contrast you, rayon sleeves. Size 10-12.

Store Name

**COLOR BRIGHT AND DESIRABLE**

*by Bradley*

As worn in Glamour

00.00

Two piece knit suits that will thrill you at the first glance... So flattering and so easy to wear... Wrinkle-proof and needs no special care... Just the answer for "What to wear anywhere"... Bradley styled of 100% pre-washed Zephyr Chenille... With dolman sleeves... All the season's favored colors.

A. Two piece shorty slipover... Open V neck with rick rack on collar carried out in yoke... Side zipper. Size 10-12.

B. Two piece shorty cardigan... Embroidered trim. Size 8-12.

Opposite top: Hemlines went back up as miniskirts invaded Cleveland's streets in the late 1960s. Cleveland State University Archives

Opposite bottom: This 1968 fashion show by local designers featured hats as well as shorter skirts. Cleveland State University Archives

By the mid-1950s, longer skirts and a more "feminine" look were "in." Western Reserve Historical Society







Expensive elegance was the watchword of fashion in the 1980s. *The Plain Dealer*

# Clubs and Associations

Cleveland women of all ages and all ethnic and class backgrounds have founded and joined clubs, which have served their members and the community.

Formal portraits of the Girls' Literary Club of Central High School, the Association of Polish Women, the National Association of Colored Women, and the Business and Professional Women's Club of Cleveland reflect the wide range of interests which have brought women together. In these clubs women have shared intellectual aspirations, expertise and information, and their cultural heritage.

Photographs of club activities also record their civic usefulness. Women's clubs such as the Hungarian Ladies Charity Club have provided aid to the needy. The Women's City Club, the Junior League, and other organizations have supported many civic efforts, and groups such as Women Speak Out for Peace and Justice have continued to call attention to national and local economic and political issues.





Some of the traditional performances by the Association of Polish Women's Halka Singing Society required male roles to be filled by women in the troupe. Western Reserve Historical Society

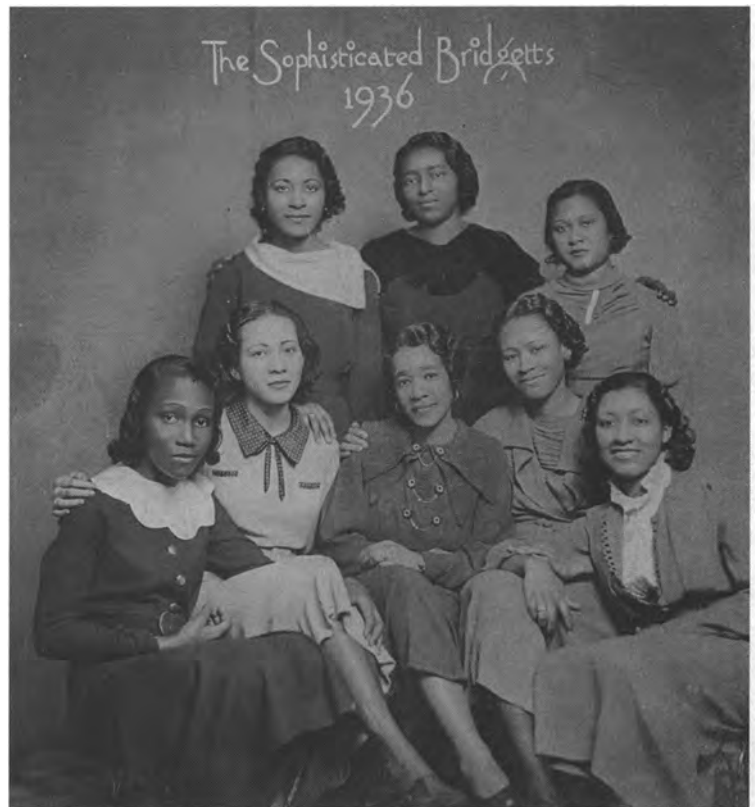
*Opposite top:* Cultural clubs, such as the Girls Literary Club of Central High School, class of 1895, made up an important part of a young woman's education in the late nineteenth century. Cleveland State University Archives

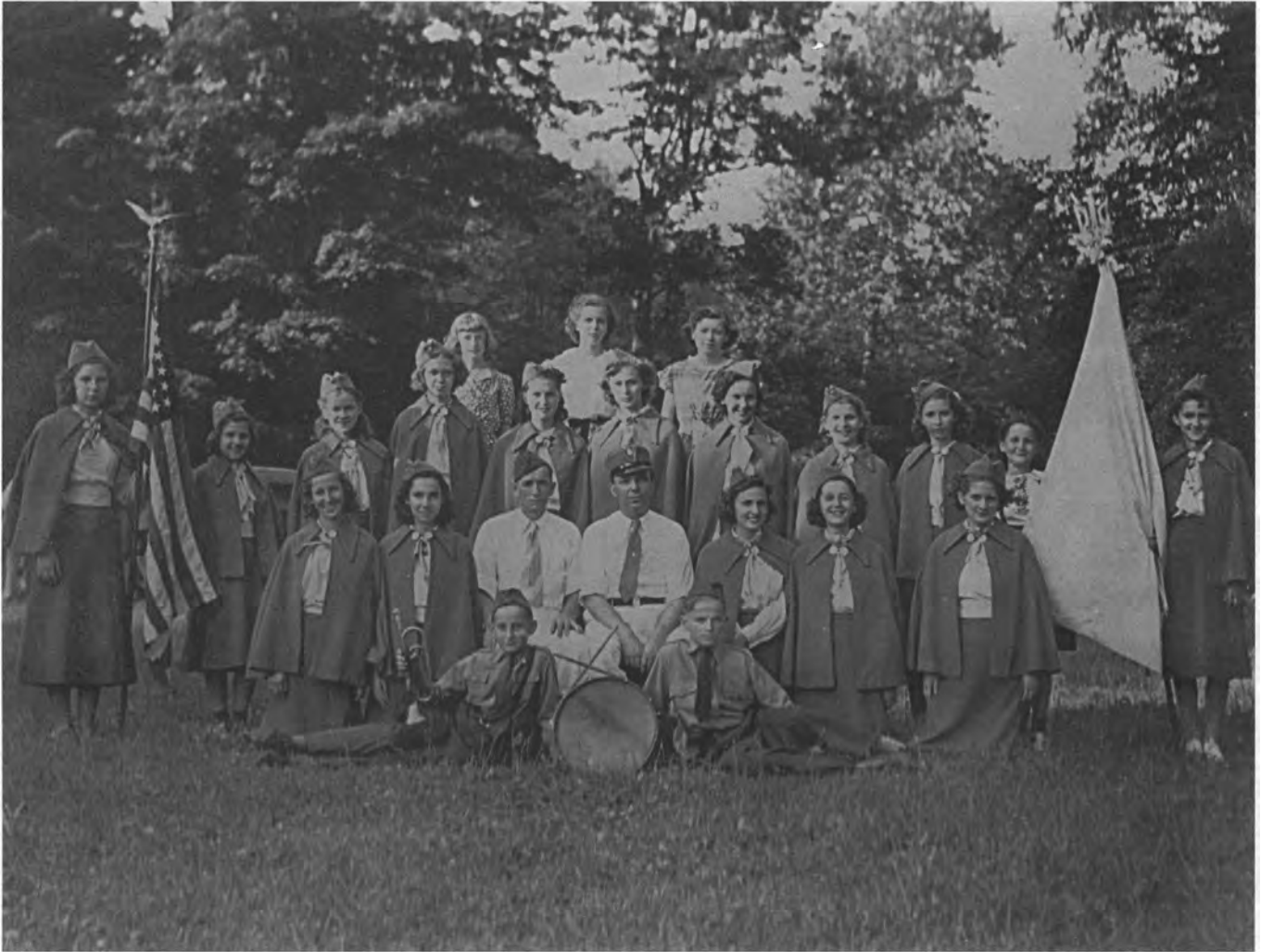
*Opposite bottom:* A working lunch for members of the Cleveland League of Women Voters, ca. 1925. Western Reserve Historical Society



The Hungarian Ladies Charity Club gathers relief materials for the needy during the Great Depression. Western Reserve Historical Society

The Sophisticated Bridgetts pose for African American photographer Allen Cole in 1936. Western Reserve Historical Society





The Ukrainian Girls Youth Club in 1936. For young women from first- or second-generation immigrant families, participation in ethnic clubs and organizations served as an important link to the traditions of their ethnic homelands. Courtesy of the Ukrainian Museum Archives



A rehearsal for the Junior League of Cleveland annual Junior League Follies in 1937. Cleveland Public Library

Members of the Women's Photographic Society of Cleveland vie for the best angle to photograph a fellow shutterbug, ca. 1940. Western Reserve Historical Society



The Women's City Club of Cleveland gathers for an October 1941 meeting. Cleveland State University Archives





The Business and Professional Woman's Club of Cleveland hosts a forum on Women and the Law featuring female lawyers from around Ohio, ca. 1945. Western Reserve Historical Society

The Colored Women's Federation Committee poses for a group photo following an afternoon meeting, ca. 1940s. Western Reserve Historical Society







African American beauticians establish social and vocational contacts at the monthly meeting of the Alpha Phi Omega Beautician's Sorority, May 1947. Western Reserve Historical Society

Officers of "Vlasta," the First Independent Ladies Lodge, celebrate the club's 100th anniversary at Bohemian Hall in 1970. Western Reserve Historical Society

*Opposite top:* Founding members Pearl Simon (left) and Ione Biggs hold a banner commemorating the 25th anniversary of Women Speak Out for Peace and Justice, December 1993. The Plain Dealer

*Opposite bottom:* A local trade show provides an opportunity for the Women Business Owners Association of Cleveland to expand their membership, 1993. Courtesy of the Women Business Owners Association of Cleveland





# Growing Old

Growing old, like growing up, has been redefined over the last two centuries. The camera has caught this redefinition—from turn-of-the century portraits of Cleveland women in rocking chairs or with grandchildren to today's action shots of aging athletes and political activists.

For most of American history, few men or women lived long past their labor-productive years, but life expectancy, especially for women, has lengthened dramatically just in this century. For financially secure Americans, longer life has meant years after retirement in which to travel, pursue hobbies, join organizations such as Golden Age Clubs, or discover and develop new skills and talents. For those on fixed or limited incomes, however, the rising cost of living has created hardships. Older Americans have formed vigorous political action groups such as the Cleveland Senior Citizens Coalition to address these concerns. Both government and the private sector have responded by providing special programs and services such as transportation for the elderly.

Since families are smaller and more geographically dispersed, Americans are more likely than ever before to grow old in retirement and old-age facilities such as Menorah Park or the Gates Mills Manor Nursing Home. Since women generally live longer than men, women are likely to grow old alone.



Emily Allen Severance enjoys the peaceful serenity of old age at the turn of the century.  
Western Reserve Historical Society



A vacation at Hot Springs, Arkansas, provides a change of scenery for the Sackett family, ca. 1890.  
Western Reserve Historical Society



Three grandmothers dote on Helen E. Milliken, ca. 1890. Western Reserve Historical Society



Growing old in a new country is a difficult, wrenching experience for some Jewish immigrants, ca. 1905. Western Reserve Historical Society





The Golden Age Club performs at the Karamu House in the 1950s. Western Reserve Historical Society

*Opposite top:* A proud grandmother and her grandchildren smile for the camera, ca. 1910. Western Reserve Historical Society

*Opposite bottom:* An outdoor summer concert, one of the special events sponsored by Menorah Park for its clientele, ca. 1949. Western Reserve Historical Society







*Opposite:* An elderly couple relax in their garden in the 1950s. Western Reserve Historical Society

Mrs. Ida Hoare Weber and Mrs. Margaret Snell enjoy ice cream in 1952. Cleveland State University Archives

The Golden Age Center Orchestra in 1958 includes Andrew Hutter, violinist and director; Mrs. Elsie Hendershot, mandolin; Mrs. Mabel Kagler, accordionist; Mrs. Louise Moore, drummer; and Mrs. Elizabeth Temior, pianist. Cleveland State University Archives





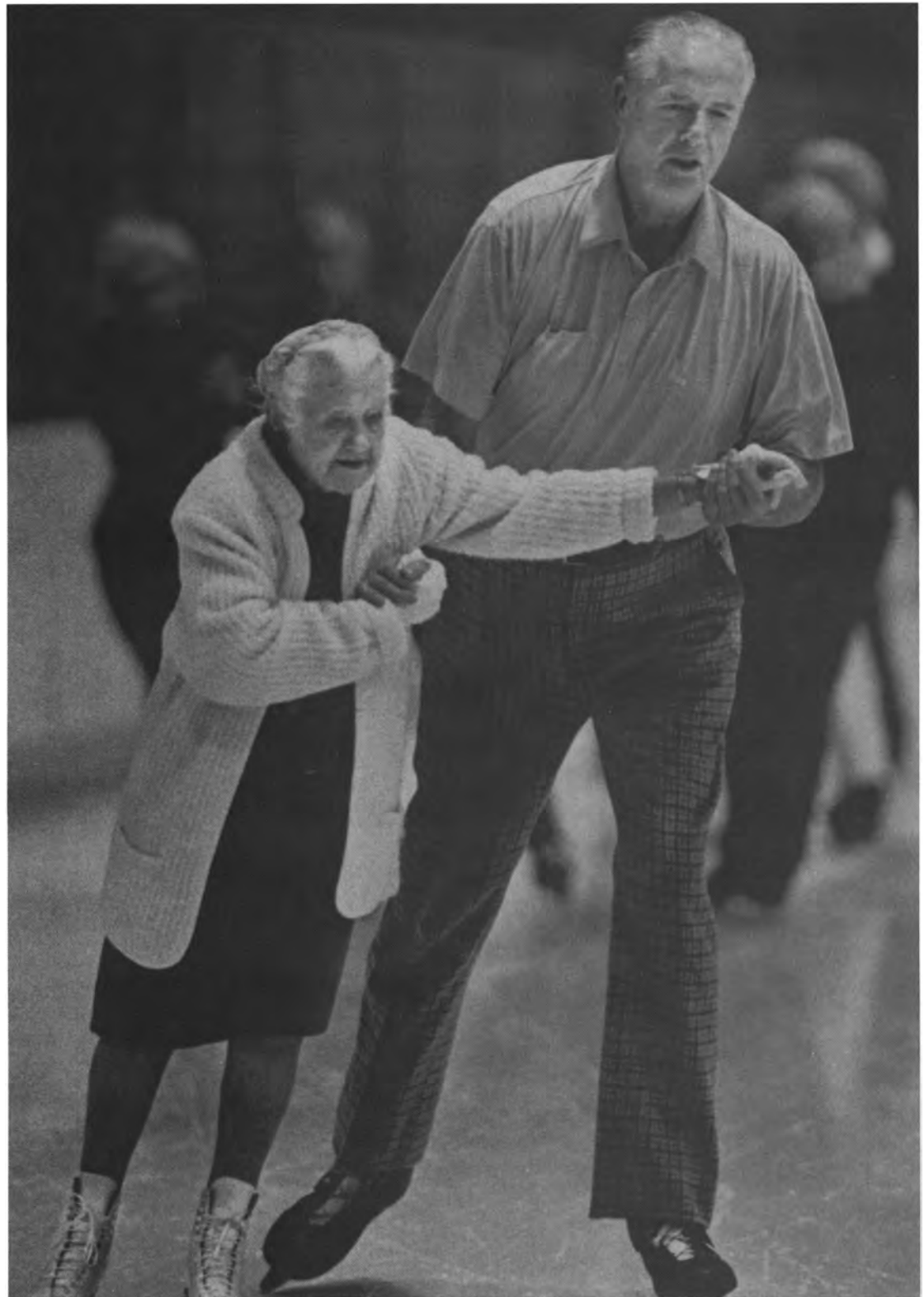
Cleveland Mayor (and host) Ralph Perk dances with Mrs. Eleanor Ockulz at the "Senior Prom" at the Hanna Mall in July 1975. Cleveland State University Archives

In 1978 the Senior Citizens Coalition marches on the East Ohio Gas Company to protest rising utility rates. Cleveland State University Archives





Observing religious rituals such as lighting Chanukah candles remained important to Rose Wiseman at the Gates Mills Manor Nursing Home in 1979. The Plain Dealer



Ninety-year-old Mary Turner was still skating several times a week in 1986 with her partner John McNamara. *The Plain Dealer*



In the 1990s, communities provide more services for older citizens, including transportation such as this special bus. The Plain Dealer



Margarita Jolles, Rowena Cohan, and their dogs enjoy this moment together on a Cleveland Heights park bench in 1987. *The Plain Dealer*



# Cultivating the Arts

“Cleveland’s Sweetheart,” Effie Ellsler, became a Broadway star. The redheaded daughter of actress Euphemia Emma Ellsler and theatrical impresario John A. Ellsler, known for her expressive acting, made her debut at age five as Little Eva in a stage version of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. In 1875 she starred in her father’s production of *Saratoga* at the Euclid Avenue Opera House, and five years later she opened in what was to be a long-running New York production of Steele MacKaye’s *Hazel Kirke*. The “natural and proper timidity and delicacy” which allegedly prevented women from entering the law did not prevent them from pursuing the arts, even when that pursuit meant appearing on stage. (See Figure 48.)

Nineteenth-century women were considered more expressive and more artistic than men. The presumed possession of these virtues encouraged middle-class women to consider themselves the appropriate custodians of high culture. Just as teaching and librarianship became “women’s work,” women became enthusiastic patrons and consumers of art. They also became the practitioners of the arts, most often as amateurs but sometimes, like Ellsler, as professionals.

Women thus played key roles in the building of Cleveland’s major cultural institutions, including the Cleveland Institute of Art and the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, as well as a host of smaller teaching and performing institutions. Following the eastward migration of the city’s upper class, many of these institutions located on or near University Circle. Their growth

Practitioners  
and  
Patrons,  
1880–1930



FIGURE 48. Effie Ellsler, "Cleveland's Sweetheart" of the stage, adorned in Egyptian garb, ca. 1890s. Western Reserve Historical Society

**EFFIE ELLSLER** (4 Apr. 1854–8 Oct. 1942) made some films in the early 1900s and gave her last stage performance in Cleveland in 1919 in *Old Lady 31*. She was married to actor Frank Weston, who joined her in the cast of *Hazel Kirke* and many other plays.



reflected the emergence of the city as a prosperous industrial center and the emergence of very wealthy individuals interested in maintaining and financially supporting the arts.

The perpetuation of culture, broadly although ethnocentrically defined, was the earliest mission of many women's clubs. Led by Catherine Hitchcock Tilden (Mrs. Elroy M.) Avery, Cleveland women formed the Western Reserve Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1891, open only to descendants of those who served in the American Revolution. Inspired by the enthusiastic nationalism of the period, the organization sought to preserve Anglo-American culture by encouraging the study of genealogy and the Americanization of immigrants.

Members of the Cleveland Sorosis, also founded in 1891, sought "the higher things of life, culture, responsibility, and service." To this end, the club established departments of literature, art, drama, and philanthropy, as well as subjects of specific interest to women such as suffrage, physical culture, and dress reform. The Sorosis did not sustain its early interest in the vote

(its very first speaker was Francis Dana Gage on the suffrage), and despite a lecture in 1904 from settlement worker Jane Addams on "The Social Waste of Child Labor," the club remained chiefly interested in culture for its first three decades.

Representatives from several cultural clubs, including the Sorosis, the Society of Art and History, the Literary Guild, and the Book and Thimble, formed the Federation of Women's Clubs of Greater Cleveland in 1902. The Cleveland group joined the national General Federation of Women's Clubs, founded a decade earlier. At the local federation's first meeting, 100 women gathered at the Pythian Temple to hear Mrs. Willis Vickers of the Sorosis lecture on "Man's Ideal of Womanhood." Members soon began the pursuit of civic beautification, passing a resolution that asked the city to establish an art museum and issuing public protests against indecent advertising billboards "pertaining to the private ills of men."

An interest in literature—as both vocation and avocation—inspired the founding in 1882 of the Women's Press Club. Even in the pre-Civil War period women had become successful authors, immortalized by Nathaniel Hawthorne's scathing remark about the "damned mob of scribbling women" whose sentimental novels outsold his own. Writing as a profession had few exclusive criteria for membership—it required no formal training, for example—and since writing could be done in a woman's home, it could be combined with domestic responsibilities with relative ease. Consequently, many middle-class women wrote, often for pleasure and sometimes for money. The publication and sale of books were relatively simple because of the growing numbers of printers and bookstores.

The purpose of the Women's Press Club was to bring women together to exchange ideas about writing and to encourage their study of literature. Club members presented their own work for suggestions and advice and heard lectures on topics of professional interest, including finding an editor or writing for a particular marketplace such as monthly magazines or daily newspapers. The club joined the Cleveland Federation of Women's Clubs in 1916 and in 1922 adopted the name Cleveland Writers' Club.

The club's ten founders included two professional journalists, Harriet Ellen Grannis (Mrs. Oliver) Arey and Gertrude Van Rensselaer (Mrs. Samuel) Wickham. Arey was the author of two books, *Elements of Natural Philosophy* and *Home and School Training*. Wickham, the editor of *Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve*, was the first woman to hold an editorial position at a Cleveland newspaper. She became a columnist for the *Cleveland Herald* in 1878, where her fashion columns became the basis for the paper's women's department. Wickham moved to the *Cleveland Leader* when it merged with the *Herald*. Writing for an audience of middle-class women interested in charitable activities, she wrote about needy women and children, featuring

letters from them in her columns. She left the *Leader* in 1884 but continued to write occasionally for the paper. In 1914 she published *Pioneer Families of the Western Reserve*. (See Figure 49.)

The club also admitted women such as Dr. Martha Canfield and educator Linda Thayer Guilford, who were not professional writers but were probably attracted by the club's lectures on literary subjects. Other members likely made some money writing but earned their primary livings in some other profession such as teaching. Some were full-time housewives.

These talented amateurs included Mary Bigelow (Mrs. William A.) Ingham, whose writings promoted her interests in temperance and the advancement of women. Using the pen name Anne Hathaway, she contributed to the *Cleveland Leader* a three-year series on notable Cleveland women, which became the basis for *Women of Cleveland and Their Work*, published in 1893. (See Figure 50.)

A list of 229 Cleveland authors compiled by William Howard Brett of the Cleveland Public Library, published in

FIGURE 49. Journalist and historian Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, ca. 1920. Wickham became the first woman to hold an editorial position on a Cleveland newspaper when she joined the *Cleveland Leader* in 1881. Western Reserve Historical Society

**GERTRUDE VAN RENSSELAER WICKHAM**  
(20 May 1844–18 Mar. 1930) Widowed at 25, Wickham first tried teaching to support herself and her daughter. She became a journalist by accident, on the strength of a letter to the *Sunday Post*, which generated so much public interest that the editor asked her to contribute a weekly column. In 1886 she was one of the founders of the Women's Press Club, later the Cleveland Writers' Club. Wickham also became a historian when she agreed to edit *Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve*, which was followed by her own book, *Pioneer Families of the Western Reserve*.





FIGURE 50. Mary B. Ingham, one of the cofounders of the Cleveland School of Art and president of the Woman's Department of the Centennial of 1896. Western Reserve Historical Society

**MARY BIGELOW INGHAM** (10 Mar. 1832–17 Nov. 1923) was both author and activist. Having initiated the Woman's Department of the Centennial Celebration, she also became its president. As with many women of her generation, her first profession was teaching. She taught in primary schools and at Ohio Wesleyan College for Women before becoming a public school principal. In 1886 she gave up academic life for a career as a temperance reformer with the Cleveland Nonpartisan Woman's Christian Temperance Union, becoming the manager of one of its temperance inns. Ingham was also a cofounder of the Cleveland School of Art and served on its board of directors.

1910, included 46 women. Most of them, like most of the men, were occasional rather than professional writers. Listed among the publications, for example, were the medical texts written by homeopath Dr. W. F. Biggar, the devotional writings of two Protestant ministers, and several books on higher education, including *The College Woman* by Western Reserve University president Charles F. Thwing. Many of the women had only a single publication, associated with some nonliterary interest, for instance Mrs. A. E. Hatch's *Choice Receipts from the Cleveland Health Protective Association* or Mrs. Howard Ingham's *Twenty Years' Work in the Woman's Christian Association*. Others had written one or two sentimental romances, still very popular in this period, such as Mrs. A. W. Hunt's *Leaden Casket*.

The most popular genre for these women writers was juvenile literature. Sarah Coolidge Woolsey, under the pen name Sarah Coolidge, wrote children's histories as well as a fiction series entitled "What Katy Did." Lydia Hoyt Farmer specialized in history; among her works were *Boys' Book of Famous Rulers*, *Girls' Book of Famous Queens*, and *What America Owes to Women*. The most prolific juvenile author was Sarah K. Bolton. She came to Cleveland in 1866 with her husband, businessman Charles E. Bolton, who shared her interest in temperance. The titles of her many published histories, biographies, and

poems reflect not only her evangelical and didactic intent but, like the books of Ingham and Farmer, her pride in women's achievements: *How Success Is Won*, *Poor Boys Who Became Famous*, *Poor Girls Who Became Famous*, *Famous Leaders among Men*, *Famous Leaders among Women*, and *Some Successful Women*. (See Figure 51.)

A well-known author of adult literature, Martha Wolfenstein, wrote short stories about the Jewish immigrant experience, which were published in secular and Jewish literary journals. The Jewish Publication Society of America issued two collections of her short stories, *Idylls of the Gass* (1901) and *The Renegade and Other Stories* (1905). The National Council of Jewish Women named their home for working women, Martha House, in her honor. (See Figure 52.)

Brett listed as a Cleveland author Constance Fenimore Woolson, but her connections with the city were tenuous. Woolson's father moved his family from Boston to Cleveland in 1840, and she came to know the Great Lakes area then and on later vacations. Her first book of short stories, *Castle Nowhere: Lake County Sketches* (1875), drew on those experiences. Woolson, however, was educated in New York City and lived much of her life in Europe. She was the friend and protégé of Henry James and William Dean Howells and achieved an international literary reputation as a local colorist and regionalist writer.

Art, like writing, was considered an appropriately refined (and nonremunerative) occupation or pastime for women. Many middle-class women painted in their homes as a hobby, and several became professional artists or teachers of art. The most financially successful of these in the late nineteenth century was probably Caroline L. Ormes Ransom, who opened her Cleveland studio in 1860 after study in New York and Germany. Ransom made her reputation doing large oil portraits of political leaders and other notable men. Her subjects included Ohio congressman and abolitionist Joshua R. Giddings and future president (then general) James A. Garfield in his Civil War uniform.

Finding themselves excluded from male organizations, women artists, like women doctors (and probably women writers), created their own professional institutions, which promoted art and artists for the wider Cleveland community. In 1876 a group of men including Archibald M. Willard, best known for his painting *The Spirit of '76*, painters John Semon and Louis Loeb, and woodcarver John Herkomer formed the Art Club. The group met in Willard's studio on the top floor of City Hall, where they gave instruction in drawing and painting.

Apparently no female students were admitted, for in 1882, Sarah (Mrs. Samuel H.) Kimball spearheaded the founding of the Western Reserve School of Design for Women. Reflecting the current popularity of the arts and crafts movement, the school's stated objects were to teach "the principles of Art and Design as



FIGURE 51. Essayist and author Sarah Knowles Bolton, ca. 1890. Bolton's works included many biographies of the leading women of the nineteenth century. Western Reserve Historical Society

**SARAH K. BOLTON** (15 Sept. 1841–21 Feb. 1916) wrote several juvenile biographies, which revealed her own and her readers' judgments about what they admired in women. Her *Lives of Girls Who Became Famous* (1897) included essays on novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe, humanitarian and reformer Helen Hunt Jackson, abolitionist and women's-rights advocate Lucretia Mott, author Louisa May Alcott, educator Mary Lyon, and nurse Florence Nightingale.

FIGURE 52. Martha Wolfenstein, the first Jewish woman author to write stories depicting the Jewish immigrant experience for the secular press, in her studio, ca. 1900. Western Reserve Historical Society



**MARTHA WOLFENSTEIN** (1869–3 Mar. 1906), author and daughter of Jewish Orphan Asylum superintendent Samuel Wolfenstein, provided this insight into the immigrant Jewish experience and the religious purpose of the asylum: "The disintegrating influence of our country is surely operating upon our race; as it is upon the other races which inhabit it. The second, or at most the third generation of American-born Jews, have already lost their religion, one of the strongest strands in the bond which holds us together. Therefore must he who wishes for the defeat of this disintegrating power—as it operates upon our people—witness with hope [the asylum's] Seder service. Therefore must he witness it with high hope, since those who partipate in it, though mostly, are not all of them children. A goodly number of them are young men and women, former pupils of our institution and they never lose an opportunity of celebrating with us. This is a hopeful sign."

practically applied to artistic and industrial pursuits” and to exhibit works of art. Many, although not all, of the students were employed as graphic artists and designers by local businesses and stores. Male students soon enrolled, and the school’s faculty included four members of the Art Club. The school first leased quarters in the City Hall annex, adjacent to the Art Club, but financial difficulties led to its incorporation into Western Reserve University in 1888. The vocational thrust of the school did not coexist easily with the academic goal of the university, and the merger ended in 1891. (See Figure 53.)

In 1891 the school got a new name, the Cleveland School of Art, and a new head, Georgie Leighton Norton, previously the supervisor of drawing in the Medford, Massachusetts, public schools. In 1892 the school moved into spacious quarters on Willson Avenue (East 55th Street), the former home of Horace Kelley. Its distinguished faculty included painter Henry Keller, sculptor Henry Matzen, and painter Frederick Carl Gottwald,

FIGURE 53. A gathering of students at the Cleveland School of Art, later to become the Cleveland Institute of Art, ca. 1900. Western Reserve Historical Society



who taught at the school until 1926. In 1904 J. Homer Wade, a member of the school's board of trustees, donated a parcel of land at Juniper Road and Magnolia Drive, near the site that Wade's grandfather Jephtha H. Wade had given for a future art museum. In 1905 the first classes were held in the new building, whose large exhibition hall became the site of exhibitions of national and local artists. In 1948 the school was renamed the Cleveland Institute of Art.

Women also initiated significant art events. In 1878 a group of wealthy women organized an exhibition of the art of local collectors. The display included hundreds of ceramics, paintings, manuscripts, sculpture, coins, and a wide array of miscellaneous art objects such as a sword of Napoleon and a cane which had allegedly arrived on the *Mayflower*. Local artists also exhibited. The purpose of the exhibit, however, was not to encourage art but to raise money for local hospitals, which had been hard hit by the current depression. More than forty thousand people, some from as far away as Erie and Dayton, paid the twenty-five-cent admission fee, and the show raised almost thirteen thousand dollars.

The terrible depression of 1893 inspired two more fundraising art exhibits. In 1894 and 1895, Cleveland's wealthy art collectors put their best on display, including works by Leonardo da Vinci, Tintoretto, and Rubens as well as local artists Keller, Willard, and Gottwald.

The owners of the art were men, but the organizers and administrators of the exhibitions were probably their wives and daughters. Few women during this period made major endowments to art institutions, for few earned or controlled their own moneys. Although they supported institutions such as the Cleveland School of Art, the funds were usually their husbands'.

Men therefore led in the long-awaited opening of the Cleveland Art Museum. Funds for a museum had been left by John P. Huntington, Horace Kelley, and Hinman B. Hurlbut, and a site by Jephtha H. Wade in the 1890s. The legal difficulties of consolidating the three trusts and the desire to begin the institution with an adequate endowment slowed the museum's progress. In 1913, however, the Cleveland Museum of Art was incorporated, and in 1916 it opened its doors in University Circle. No women served on its early board of trustees. The major donors to the museum were men, but a few wealthy women such as Elisabeth Severance (Mrs. Francis) Prentiss also donated their collections.

Women played a pivotal role in Cleveland's musical life as performers and particularly as institution-builders. Most of Cleveland's music was performed by amateurs in church choirs or groups such as the Cleveland Vocal Society, composed of seventy male and female singers and winner of the first prize in the world choral competition at the 1893 Columbia Exposition.



Some women were able to make a living performing or teaching music. Music was taught in the city's public schools, often by female teachers. Women also gave lessons in voice or instrumental music at private institutions such as the Cleveland School of Music, which opened in 1875. In 1901 the Cleveland Federation of Musicians, founded in 1877, began to admit women. The membership register for 1904 to 1910 lists thirty-five female instrumentalists, including Celia Hruby, a pianist and flutist and the daughter of Frank Hruby, the founder of three generations of Cleveland musicians.

Two Cleveland vocalists gained national recognition. Estelle (Mrs. Seabury) Ford, trained at the Cleveland Conservatory of Music, performed widely as a soloist in the 1880s and 1890s. From 1907 to 1910 she was musical director of the Rubinstein Club, a women's choral group formed in 1899. Rachel Walker (Mrs. Robert) Turner, an African American soprano who began her career as a teacher of music, performed in both the United States and Europe. She was born in 1868, graduated from Central High School, and taught in the Cleveland public schools until the mid-1890s, when she went to New York for formal voice training. In 1895–96 Turner toured the West and East Coasts as a soloist with white musical companies and then went to London for further study. She made successful appearances in Europe but returned to Cleveland after the outbreak of World War I. (See Figure 54.)

Beginning in 1881 with the Cleveland Philharmonic Society, Clevelanders made several unsuccessful attempts to sustain a symphony orchestra. When in 1918 today's Cleveland Symphony Orchestra made its debut, it was in large part the creation of the city's first woman music impresario, Adella Prentiss (Mrs. Felix) Hughes. Hughes recorded in her autobiography, *Music Is My Life*, that her grandfather Benjamin Rouse, husband of Rebecca, had enthusiastically sung in the choir of the First Baptist Church and in the Bethel Singing Society. After graduation from Vassar College, his musically talented granddaughter began her career by playing piano accompaniment at musical benefits and for visiting artists.

Partly to ensure that she would have work, Hughes began in 1898 a more important career as a booking agent and brought to Cleveland a wide variety of performers, including Richard Strauss, Ignace Jan Paderewski, Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heinck, Nellie Melba, Gustav Mahler, the Diaghileff Ballet Russe, and the Boston Grand Opera. These performers played at Grays Armory and other local auditoriums.

The financial and logistical difficulties of their arrangements persuaded Hughes and a group of interested businessmen to form the Musical Arts Association in 1915, the purpose of which was to support the city's musical life and institutions. In 1918 the association and Hughes founded the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Nikolai Sokoloff,



FIGURE 54. Vocalist Rachel Walker Turner, shown here in costume for a London Pavilion performance in 1897. Western Reserve Historical Society

whom she had persuaded to come to Cleveland. In 1920 the orchestra, with seventy-five members, made its first tour to East Coast cities. Its first home was Grays Armory, and from 1919 to 1931, when Severance Hall was opened, the orchestra played at the Masonic Hall on Euclid Avenue at 36th Street. Sokoloff remained orchestra director until 1932, and Hughes its general manager until 1933. (See Figure 55.)

Also crucial in the orchestra's establishment was the Fortnightly Club, of which Hughes was an active member. Founded in 1894 by women musicians and music lovers, the club sought to "advance the interests of music in Cleveland" by sponsoring recitals by members and concerts by visiting performers. The Fortnightly's membership quickly rose to six hundred. In the 1896–97 season, the club sponsored twelve afternoon concerts by members and several evening performances by well-known local artists, including violinists Johann Beck and Sol Marcossan. (Marcossan had been persuaded to move to Cleveland by the Fortnightly Club and became the first concertmaster of the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra.) The Chicago Orchestra also gave four concerts under the Fortnightly's auspices, which netted the club \$27.28 after the orchestra and other expenses had been paid. Beginning in 1901, the Fortnightly cosponsored with Hughes the Symphony Orchestra Concerts by

FIGURE 55. Musical Arts Association and Cleveland Orchestra founder Adella Prentiss Hughes examines the orchestra's first recording with conductor Nikolai Sokoloff in 1924. Courtesy of the Archives of the Musical Arts Association

**ADELLA PRENTISS HUGHES** (29 Nov. 1869–23 Aug. 1950) had little in her background to predict the success she would achieve as an entrepreneur and music impresario. The daughter of Loren and Ellen Rouse Prentiss graduated from Miss Fisher's School for Girls and Vassar College in 1890 with a degree in music. She briefly contemplated studying for a doctorate in history at a European university but turned instead to her first love, music. Until her retirement in 1945, Hughes held administrative posts with two of the institutions she helped to found, the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra and the Musical Arts Association



visiting and local instrumental groups, and by 1912 had presented the New York, Boston, and Cincinnati symphonies and the New York Philharmonic. In 1917 Fortnightly became the first organization to provide financial support for Hughes's proposed Cleveland orchestra, with a gift of \$1,000.

The Fortnightly Club and Hughes had already been instrumental in founding the Cleveland Music School Settlement in 1911. The club had provided \$1,000, and Hughes, influential support and contacts. The settlement, first located at the original site of Goodrich House, had both an artistic and a social-service mission. Under its director, Almeda Adams, the institution gave inexpensive musical instruction to neighborhood children of many ethnic backgrounds and organized classes in dancing and vocal music, as well as an orchestra and singing groups.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, Cleveland women participated in the experimental Little Theater movement. The movement was a reaction to the vaudevillian spectacles

staged in huge theaters such as John Ellsler's and the melodramas in which Effie Ellsler had starred, and it sought to emphasize the more realistic and controversial subject matter of modern playwrights such as Eugene O'Neill. In 1916 a group of amateur performers, women and men, formed the Play House Company to foster avant-garde theater in Cleveland. Its first officers included Charles and Minerva Brooks, at whose home the group held its initial meeting. Ten years later, having outgrown its first permanent location, the Cedar Avenue Church on East 73d and Euclid Avenue, the company built a new facility containing two theaters, the Brooks and the Drury, on land donated by Francis E. Drury. In their first seasons the ambitious amateurs presented puppet shows, shadowgraphs, dance performances, and one-act plays and sponsored exhibits by local artists and readings by local playwrights. During the 1920s the performances became more conventional and more professional, and eventually the Cleveland Play House became the home for the country's oldest continuously running repertory company. (See Figure 56.)



FIGURE 56. Cleveland native Margaret Hamilton in the 1929 Play House production of *Fashion*. Hamilton's most famous role—that of the Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz*—made her the scourge of small children for generations. Cleveland Play House

The impetus for the Playhouse Settlement was not artistic experimentation but social reform. The inspiration and the financial support for the settlement came from the Men's Club of the Second Presbyterian Church. Club members envisioned an agency which would benefit the blacks in the neighborhood near their church, who were not welcome at the existing settlements. Social workers Russell and Rowena Jelliffe came to Cleveland to head the settlement. After consulting with leaders in the African American community, the Jelliffes chose a site in the notorious "Roaring Third" between East 38th and East 39th streets near Central Avenue. In 1915 the Jelliffes opened the Playhouse Settlement, so named because of its early emphasis on games and organized play, and the settlement soon had the usual clubs, classes, and other activities for children and young adults. Its volunteers were both black and white.

The settlement also quickly began to develop an emphasis on theater. Rowena Jelliffe expressed her own interest in drama in the stories that she told neighborhood children. The children improvised plays from the stories. In 1917 the settlement staged *Cinderella* with a racially integrated cast. Struck by the children's desire to perform and the ability of drama to bring together people of different races, Rowena Jelliffe encouraged the formation of the Dumas Dramatic Club in 1920. In 1922 the group became the Gilpin Players, in recognition of the enthusiastic support of black actor Charles Gilpin. Jelliffe became the group's director, taking a year off from the settlement to study drama in New York City. (See Figure 57.) Until the mid-1920s the Players performed plays by white authors, but by the end of the decade they had staged the works of blacks, including Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes. (See Figure 58.)

As delegates of the Cleveland branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Jelliffes attended a Pan-African Congress in Paris in 1921 and became interested in African art, which then became integral to the settlement's programs. In 1927 the Gilpin Players named their newly remodeled theater Karamu, Swahili for "a place of joyful meeting." In 1941 Playhouse Settlement was named Karamu House.

As women established themselves in the arts, they also fought for a place on the political stage. Their next starring role was as suffragists.

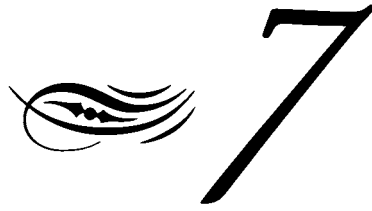


FIGURE 57. Rowena Jelliffe (*left*) and Edna Wasem of Karamu House read through a Langston Hughes wartime ditty entitled “Go and Get the Enemy Blues” in 1942. Cleveland Public Library

**ROWENA WOODHAM JELLIFFE** (23 Mar. 1892–6 Apr. 1992) graduated in 1910 from Oberlin College, where she met her future husband, Russell, whom she married in 1915. Both received master’s degrees in sociology from the University of Chicago. Rowena and Russell Jelliffe directed Playhouse Settlement, later Karamu House, until their retirement in 1963, and the settlement became an internationally known interracial theater and center for African American culture.

FIGURE 58. Actress Minnie Gentry and the Gilpin Players perform a scene from playwright Shirley Graham’s *I Gotta Home* at Eldred Hall Theater, February 1940. Cleveland State University Archives





# Winning the Ballot

## Reformers and Suffragists, 1890–1930

On October 3, 1914, the Cleveland Woman's Suffrage Party staged a parade of ten thousand men, women, and children from sixty-four Ohio cities to rally support for a suffrage amendment pending in the state legislature. Proudly displaying the suffrage colors of gold and white, marshals on horseback led nurses, teachers, social workers, Yugoslavian and Czech women, factory workers, members of the Men's Suffrage League, and a handful of African American women through the city streets. In the ranks marched future political activists Marie R. Wing, Mary B. Grossman, Lethia C. Fleming, and Florence E. Allen. Although the state amendment failed in 1914, the parade dramatized women's new political activism, and when the Nineteenth (woman suffrage) Amendment did pass in 1920, politics replaced religion, charity, and clubwork as women's route into public life. (See Figure 59.)

The enfranchisement of American women took place during years of progressive reform, and women's political organizations and women politicians kept reformism alive through the 1920s. Called progressive because of its optimistic faith that change brings progress, the reform movement of the first two decades of this century pursued some goals long sought by women, such as temperance and an end to prostitution, and others that women readily endorsed, such as the protection of working women and children. In general, progressives believed that these reforms could be achieved through the political system, especially the election of sympathetic public officials and



FIGURE 59. A float in the June 1914 suffrage parade sponsored by the Woman's Suffrage Party of Cleveland. Western Reserve Historical Society

the passage of appropriate legislation. Progressive men also believed that enfranchised women would become a powerful force for reform: so did suffragists.

Cleveland's yeasty political climate invited women's participation. Tom L. Johnson, Cleveland's flamboyant mayor from 1901 to 1909 and a (tardy) supporter of woman suffrage, reformed the city's welfare and tax systems, revitalized its parks and playgrounds, redesigned its downtown by initiating the Group Plan, and attempted—unsuccessfully—to remake its transit system by instituting a three-cent fare. His lively administration made Cleveland "the best governed city in the country," according to journalist Lincoln Steffens. From 1912 to 1916 Cleveland's mayor was Newton D. Baker, a more enthusiastic suffragist who watched the 1914 parade from the reviewing stand.

The most politically active women's reform organization was the Consumers' League of Ohio (CLO), founded in 1900 at Goodrich House. Affiliated with the National Consumers League, the organization was dedicated to improving the working conditions of women and children. The officers and executive committee of the Cleveland league were all women, but a few men—including philanthropist Samuel Mather, reformist



Rabbi Moses Gries, and activist Episcopal bishop William A. Leonard—served as honorary vice-presidents.

CLO investigations of women's working conditions and wages were intended to determine whether a factory or department store should be patronized or boycotted by CLO members. Employers appeared on the league "white list" when they met acceptable standards, which in 1902 meant a six-dollar-a-week minimum wage for experienced department store saleswomen, a ten-hour day, and safe and sanitary workplaces and lunchrooms. Because women and children often worked in the same places, such as the paperbox and candy factories, the league also endorsed safe and healthy working conditions and hour limitations for working children. The CLO published its findings, hoping that employers would want to avoid unfavorable publicity.

Consumer boycotts and publicity, however, proved ineffective, and especially during the presidencies of Myrta L. Jones (1908–15 and 1918–20), the CLO turned to political strategies, lobbying for the passage of state laws regulating the hours, working conditions, and wages of women and children. In 1911 the league hired the famous labor lawyer Louis Brandeis to defend the constitutionality of Ohio's fifty-four-hour work week. Three years before, in *Muller v. Oregon*, Brandeis had successfully defended a ten-hour day for working women before the United States Supreme Court (on which he would later serve). In 1916 the CLO committee on legislation endorsed an eight-hour day for women but lamented that the state legislature was "a notably reactionary one." The league's 1919 annual report summarized its political agenda: to promote protective legislation for women in industry, to abolish child labor and night work for women in factories, and to establish a minimum wage for women.

When the suffrage movement took shape in Cleveland in the 1910s, many of its earliest supporters—including Belle Sherwin, Myrta L. Jones, and Marie Jenney (Mrs. Frederic) Howe—came from the CLO. They had learned that politicians are far more responsive to voters than to the voteless.

In 1869 the city had hosted the founding convention of the American Woman Suffrage Association, the moderate wing of the suffrage movement, and the organization met in Cleveland the next year as well. In 1890 the American Woman Suffrage Association merged with the more radical National Woman Suffrage Association, led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). At this stage, NAWSA strategists sought woman suffrage by amending state constitutions. Five states, most in the West, enfranchised women this way by 1910.

Although a few Cleveland women's clubs had discussed—but not endorsed—suffrage, not until 1910 and the formation of a local branch of the National College Equal Suffrage League did Cleveland women organize for the vote. Shortly afterward, inspired by the possibility of amending the Ohio constitution to

enfranchise women and by the presence of Elizabeth Hauser, suffrage organizer and former secretary to Tom L. Johnson, the Cleveland Woman's Suffrage Party was formed.

When Ohio women succeeded in getting a suffrage amendment on the ballot in 1912, Cleveland suffragists spoke bravely from open touring cars and soapboxes. They also sought support from the city's ethnic voters with posters in many languages, and aided by trade unionist Rose Schneiderman, they spoke to workers in factories and shops. Nevertheless, the suffrage amendment was defeated in the November elections, as it was two years later. In 1917, when the Ohio legislature signed a bill giving women the right to vote in presidential elections, opponents quickly rallied and engineered a referendum of dubious legality, which overturned the bill. (See Figure 60.)

The opposition to suffrage was fervent and well financed, often by distillers and brewers, who feared that enfranchised women would vote them out of business. (They were voted out of business anyway by the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919, even before women got the vote.) The Ohio Association Opposed to Woman's Suffrage had many wealthy members, published its own "anti" literature, and sponsored public debates with suffragists, in which the "antis" argued—as they probably believed—that woman suffrage would ruin home, family, and traditional American life. (See Figure 61.)

To the contrary, claimed the suffragists. Voting was simply an extension into the political arena of woman's historic responsibilities: far from destroying the home and family, suffrage would preserve them and expand their virtuous influence into the polling place. Suffrage billboards carried messages such as "Say, Mother, Don't You Care Enough About My School To Vote?" (See Figure 62.)

The cause of woman suffrage got an unanticipated boost from the United States' entrance into World War I in April 1917: women's support for the war legitimized their claims to political equality. Cleveland mayor Harry L. Davis appointed a Mayor's Advisory War Committee to coordinate local efforts to raise funds, conserve food, and Americanize the city's large immigrant population. Members included Georgie Leighton Norton, head of the Cleveland School of Art, and suffrage leader Belle Sherwin.

Women's organizations quickly threw themselves behind the war effort. A short-lived magazine, *Cleveland Women: Official Publication of the Womanhood of Cleveland*, cheer-led for the war and women's war-related activities. Suffragists who had raised funds for political rallies and distributed handbills urging votes for women now sold war bonds and distributed pamphlets urging women to can food. The Sorosis abandoned its pursuit of culture to sell bonds and knit clothes for servicemen. The Federation of Women's Clubs organized victory gardens and

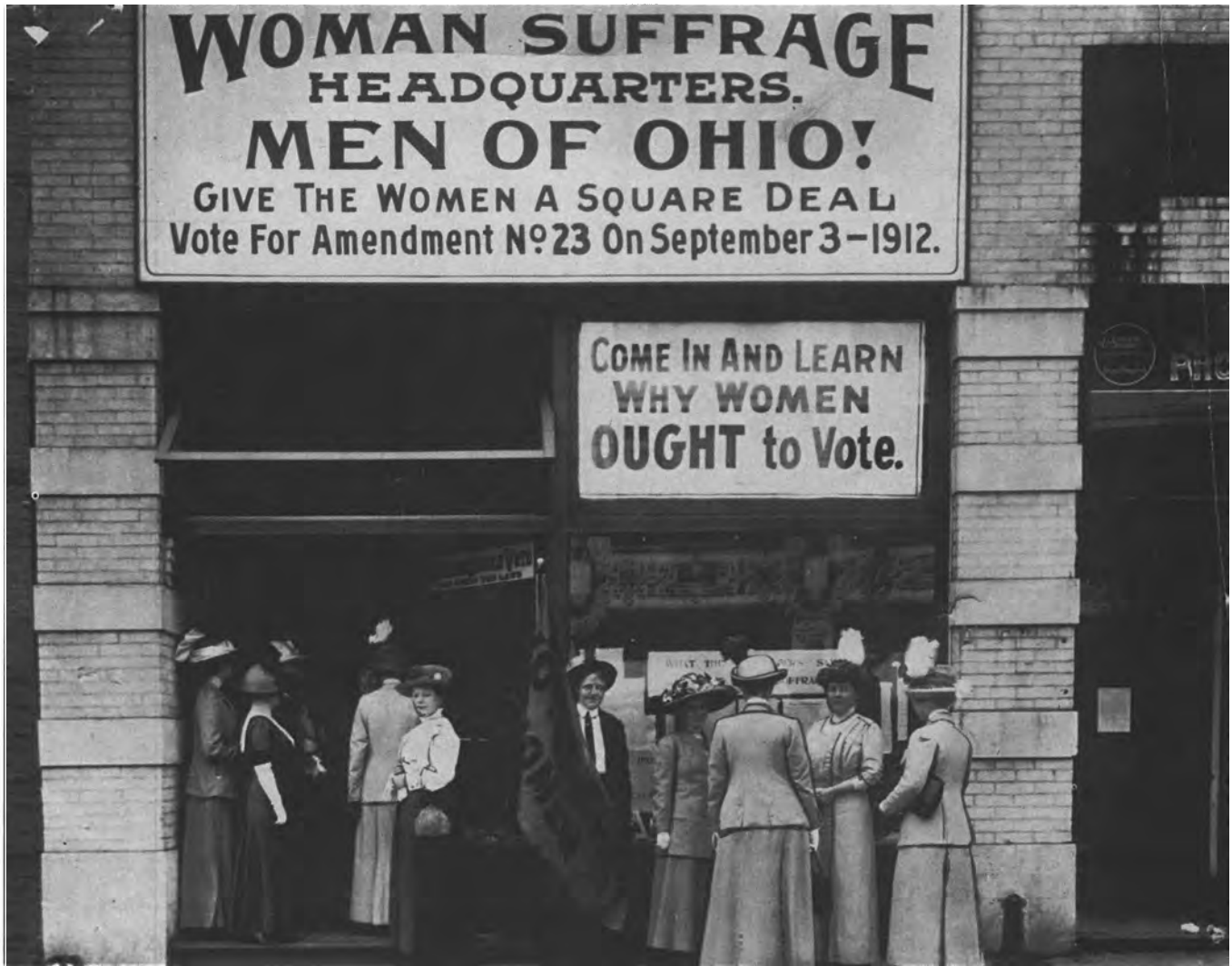


FIGURE 60. The headquarters for the Cleveland suffrage movement at the Bulkley Building in 1912. The franchise would not be extended to women until the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Western Reserve Historical Society

FIGURE 61. Suffrage leader Lucia (Mrs. Malcolm) McBride exercises her long-awaited right to vote in the early 1920s. Western Reserve Historical Society





FIGURE 62. A banner at a suffrage parade cites President Wilson to urge passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, ca. 1919. Courtesy of Howard Dittrick Museum

supported liberty loans. The YWCA housed a unit of the Women's Land Army, who plowed fields and planted crops to feed American and Allied troops. The CLO expanded its monitoring of women workers by serving as the Committee on Women and Children in Industry for Ohio. Hundreds of women volunteered at the Red Cross headquarters. (See Figure 63.)

Almost 41,000 Clevelanders served in the armed services, and among the first to the front were the nurses of the Lakeside Unit, formally designated U.S. Army Base Hospital No. 4. The



FIGURE 63. Nurses from St. Vincent Charity Hospital “air out” during the 1919 flu epidemic. Cleveland Press Collection, Cleveland State University

unit was organized by Dr. George W. Crile of Lakeside Hospital, who had led a surgical team of volunteers to serve in France in 1915. The unit’s 26 medical officers and 64 nurses arrived in Rouen, France, at the end of May 1917, helping to staff a British hospital there. In August 1918, 61 members of the Lakeside Unit staffed a hospital in the Bois de la Placys, near the Meusse-Argonne offensive. By the war’s end in 1919, the unit included 124 nurses, headed first by Grace Allison, who was succeeded by Elizabeth Folckemer. (See Figure 64.)

The war expanded professional opportunities for women. Married women entered the public school classrooms when the historic requirement that female teachers be single was waived. Faced with a rapidly dwindling supply of male students (down from 115 in April 1917 to 46 in October 1918), the Law School of Western Reserve University began to admit women in 1918. So did the university’s medical school.

Thousands of women entered industry. The Women’s Division of the State-City Labor Exchange found that fifty-four iron and steel plants which before the war had employed 2,575 women now employed 4,165. Women worked in hardware and

munitions plants and as telegraph messengers, elevator operators, and freight checkers. Many companies, hastening to fill war orders, violated child labor laws and the fifty-hour-a-week law for women in industry, according to the CLO. The league bulletin noted with dismay the dangerous conditions in which many women worked: "colored women, dressed in overalls and high heeled shoes, employed as engine cleaners and engine pullers [in the railroad yards]. In one scrap iron yard, Slavic and Italian women sort iron, stooping, lifting, and throwing heavy pieces of iron." More dismaying, "In all these cases, women are paid less than men." (See Figure 65.)

Wartime workers also prompted a controversial strike. Sixty-four women had been hired as streetcar conductors by the Cleveland Street Railway Company. Local 268 of the Amalgamated Association of Street, Electric Railway, and Motor Coach Employees of America, fearing competition for its male members, announced a walkout in December 1918 if the women were not fired. The women conductors had formed their own

FIGURE 64. Soldiers heading "over there" depart the Cleveland station as the crowd watches in 1917. Western Reserve Historical Society



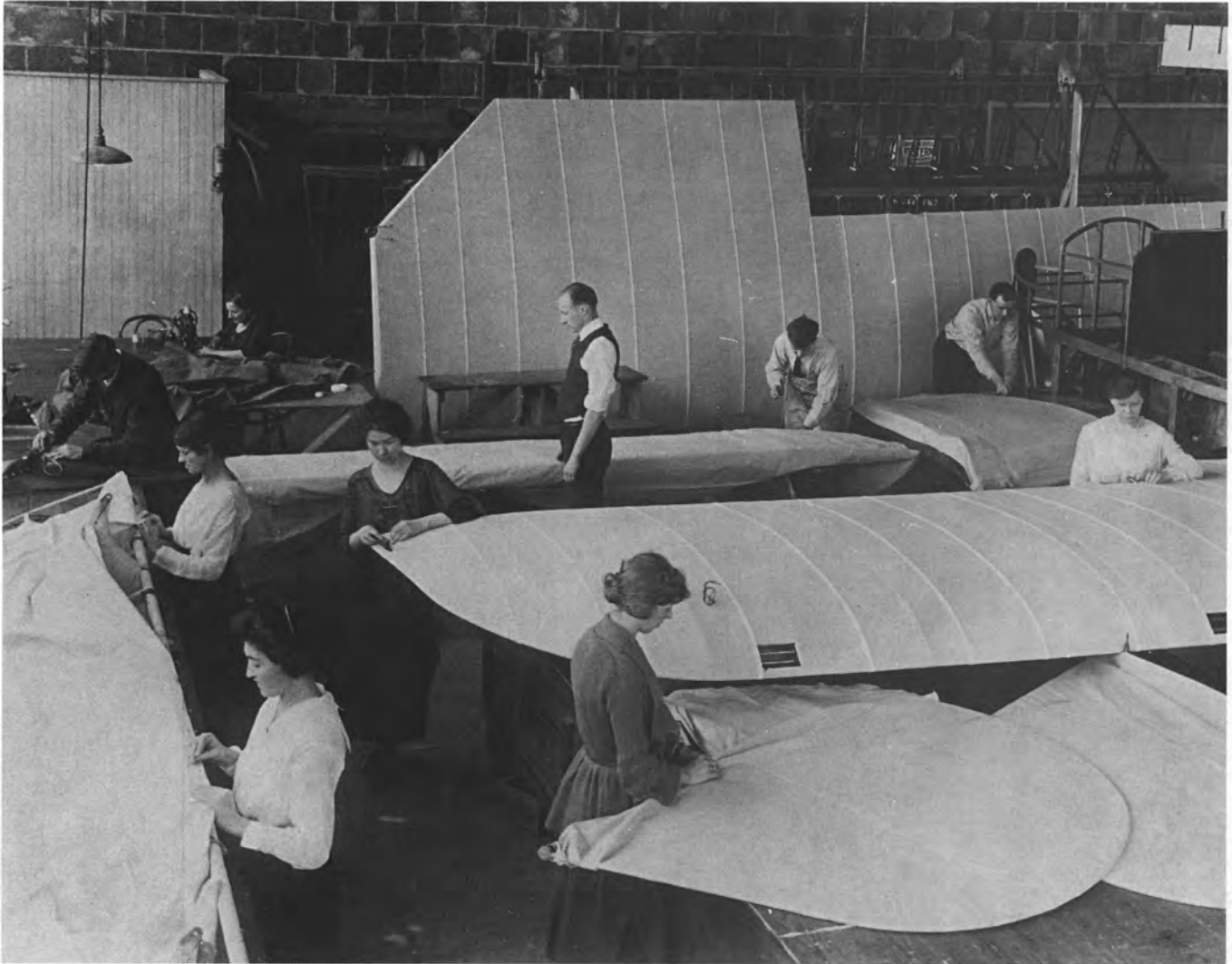


FIGURE 65. Women weave and sew fabric for airplane wings during the first World War. Western Reserve Historical Society

union, the Association of Women Street Railway Employees, led by Laura Prince. The legality of their employment was eventually upheld by the War Labor Board, but the railway company ignored the board's ruling on the grounds that the war was over, and the women lost their jobs. Unlike the striking textile workers in 1911, however, the female streetcar conductors received support from the suffrage organization and the legal services of lawyer Florence Allen because suffragists wanted working-class support for their own cause.

And the cause of suffrage did triumph. In June 1919 Ohio legislators passed a state presidential suffrage bill and ratified the Nineteenth Amendment. In August 1920 all adult American women became voters.

Although the political conservatism and pro-business Republican administrations of the 1920s effectively dampened

much of the prewar progressive enthusiasm, in Cleveland and elsewhere newly enfranchised women continued to work for reform.

Political education and leadership came from the League of Women Voters (LWV), founded in 1919 on the eve of the passage of the suffrage amendment by Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Cleveland suffragists formed the local LWV in April 1920 when the Cuyahoga County Woman's Suffrage Party voted to disband and turned over the names of its 80,000 members to the new organization.

Led by seasoned politicians such as Belle Sherwin and Lucia (Mrs. Malcolm L.) McBride, the LWV set out to encourage women to get to the polls and into politics. Sherwin announced that the league's first task was to register at least half of the estimated 100,000 women eligible to vote in Cuyahoga County. By the end of October, 41,416 women had been registered. LWV publications also offered advice and moral support to women serving as officials in the November election: "Do not be intimidated. Remember you are a duly accredited official." In keeping with the guidelines of the national organization, the Cleveland league remained nonpartisan, endorsing issues, not candidates, and became the first to poll candidates on issues and publish their responses, now standard LWV strategy. Sherwin's political experience and abilities were rewarded by the national League of Women Voters, which she served as first vice-president from 1921 to 1924, and president from 1924 to 1934. (See Figure 66.)

The Cleveland LWV continued to support a progressive reform agenda throughout the 1920s, enthusiastically campaigning for a city manager plan and proportional representation in city council, which the league believed fostered good (nonpartisan) government. The local league also worked for the passage of the federal Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act, which became law in 1921; a child labor amendment to the federal constitution; a state minimum wage for women; and a more stringent school attendance law. When the National Woman's Party introduced an equal rights amendment into Congress in 1923, the LWV, and most other women's organizations including the YWCA and the WCTU, opposed it (and continued to oppose it until the 1970s) because the amendment endangered protective legislation for women.

Sherwin and other suffragists had founded the Women's City Club in 1916 because women were excluded from the City Club of Cleveland. The Women's City Club, like the LWV, sought to promote women's interest in civic and public issues. It had not officially endorsed suffrage but did enthusiastically support the war effort by selling Liberty Bonds and opening a lunchroom for working mothers and their children. After the suffrage victory, the club threw itself into political activities because "city government is city housekeeping, and women know about that." Like the LWV, the club endorsed not candidates but issues such as the passage of city levies for parks and schools, tougher



FIGURE 66. Miss Belle Sherwin, president of the National League of Women Voters, prepares her address for the eighth annual meeting of the league in Chicago, 1928. Cleveland Public Library

**BELLE SHERWIN** (20 Mar. 1869–9 July 1955) was the daughter of wealthy industrialist Henry Sherwin, the founder of the Sherwin-Williams Co. After her graduation from Wellesley College in 1890, Sherwin studied history at Oxford University for a year and then taught history in a Boston private school. She returned to Cleveland in 1900 and became the first president of the Consumers League of Ohio. She was an activist who served in several social welfare organizations, including the Visiting Nurses Association and the Federation for Charity and Philanthropy, as well as with the suffrage movement and the League of Women Voters.



enforcement of smoke-abatement laws, the city manager plan, and proportional representation. In the progressive tradition, the club maintained a particular interest in women and children, establishing child nutrition clinics and successfully pressuring for a Women's Bureau in the Cleveland Police Department.

The Women's City Club, the LWV, the CLO, and the YWCA were among the organizers of the Women's Council for the Prevention of War, which on May 18, 1924, staged a march of five thousand women calling for world peace. More than two hundred women's organizations sent delegations. The LWV had earlier endorsed world disarmament and the World Court, reflecting the general American disillusionment with war and the long-standing interest in peace activities of Carrie Chapman Catt and other suffrage leaders. LWV historian Virginia Clark Abbott boasted that almost every league member braved public allegations of being under Bolshevik influence to march in that parade. (See Figure 67.)

Cleveland women also braved public disapproval when they took on another progressive cause, the legalization of birth control, and founded the city's first family-planning organization. The distribution of birth-control technology and information had been prohibited since 1873 by the Comstock Law, but by the 1910s changing sexual behavior and the desire for smaller families had inspired narrow but vocal opposition to these prohibitions. Margaret Sanger, national leader of the birth-control movement, was often arrested and once jailed for writing and speaking on behalf of legalizing birth control. Two Cleveland women, Mrs. Charles Brush and Mrs. Brooks Shepard, decided to give out birth-control information themselves at the prenatal clinic at which they volunteered. Brush quit when she was forbidden to distribute the information; Shepard was told to leave soon afterwards.

In 1923 the two women were joined by several others at the Women's City Club, where they organized the Maternal Health Clinic. Their attempts to persuade the city's hospitals to provide contraceptive information at outpatient clinics were frustrated

FIGURE 67. Members of the Women's Council for Prevention of War march in the Cleveland Peace Parade, 18 May 1924. Cleveland State University Archives



**FIGURE 68.** A campaign flyer for Marie Remington Wing, who, along with Helen Green, was one of the first women elected to Cleveland City Council in 1923. Western Reserve Historical Society

**MARIE REMINGTON WING** (5 Nov. 1885–27 Dec. 1982) left Bryn Mawr College after three years because of the financial difficulties of her father, Federal Judge Francis J. Wing, and went to work for the Cleveland YWCA, visiting factories and organizing clubs of factory women. While on city council, Wing worked to establish a Women's Bureau in the Cleveland Police Department. After losing the council seat in 1927, Wing went into private law practice, but she returned to public life in 1933 when she was appointed to the Cuyahoga County Relief Commission. From 1937 to 1953, she served as attorney to the regional Social Security Board.

**FIGURE 69.** Judge Mary B. Grossman at her bench in the 1940s. Western Reserve Historical Society

**MARY B. GROSSMAN** (10 June 1879–27 Jan. 1977) was one of nine children of Louis and Fannie Engle Grossman. After attending Cleveland public schools, Grossman became a stenographer in her cousin's law office, where she determined to become a lawyer herself. In 1912 she graduated from Cleveland Law School and was admitted to the Ohio bar.

by local ordinances and public hostility, since Clevelanders—quite correctly—associated birth control with political radicalism. (In 1916 Ben Reitman, lover and manager of anarchist Emma Goldman, had paid a \$1,000 fine and served six months in the Cleveland workhouse for a speech on birth control.) In 1928, therefore, the women organized the Maternal Health Association and opened an independent clinic. The first staff put their own careers at risk: former public health nurse Rosina Volk, who served at the clinic until 1947, and Dr. Ruth Robishaw Rauschkolb, a recent graduate of Western Reserve University School of Medicine. Dr. Rauschkolb was succeeded by Drs. Sarah Marcus and Leona V. Glover. The clinic initially offered services only to married women with serious health problems, but subsequently extended them to women needing contraceptives for economic or social reasons. The clinic had an advisory board of prominent male doctors and received substantial financial support from Charles F. Brush, who was interested in eugenics and population control. The clinic further expanded services, opening a west-side branch during the 1930s when the Depression made family limitation more acceptable and when the federal government began to relax its prohibitions against birth control.

The suffrage movement and the League of Women Voters effectively politicized thousands of Cleveland women and launched successful political careers for some. On August 20, 1920, the day that the suffrage amendment passed, two women announced their candidacies for Cleveland City Council: Mrs. Anna Herbruck and Mrs. Isabelle Alexander. Both lost, but in 1923 Marie Remington Wing and Helen Green did win seats on the council. (See Figure 68.)

Wing had gained valuable political experience and allies in women's organizations. She had joined the growing suffrage movement and the Women's City Club. In 1922 she left her job as general secretary to the YWCA to attend night classes at Cleveland Law School, affiliated with Baldwin Wallace College, and to become executive secretary of the CLO. Throughout the 1920s, Wing acted as its lobbyist for child welfare and protective legislation. In 1925 Wing was reelected to city council, and with the women's organizations she supported the Women's Bureau of the Police Department. She lost her seat in 1927.

Mary B. Grossman was also a suffragist, a founder of the Women's City Club, and a member of the League of Women Voters. In 1921 Grossman lost her bid for a municipal judgeship, but in 1923 she ran again and won a seat on the bench, which she occupied until her retirement at age eighty in 1959. In 1918 she became one of the first two women admitted to the American Bar Association. During her long tenure on the bench, she earned a reputation for being a tough judge, taking a particular interest in the "morals court," which she organized in 1926 to hear cases involving domestic violence, vice, and prostitution. (See Figure 69.)



Vote For  
Marie R. Wing  
Council for 3<sup>rd</sup> Dist.  
*You can depend on  
her to represent  
You in Council*



Although she never ran for political office, Lethia C. (Mrs. Thomas) Fleming became a power in the Cleveland Republican Party and the African American community. She joined the Cleveland suffrage movement, marching in the 1914 parade, campaigned in 1920, 1924, 1928, and 1936 on behalf of Republican presidential candidates, served on the Cuyahoga County Republican Executive Committee, and organized the National Association of Republican Women. (See Figure 70.)

Two women were elected to the Ohio legislature in 1922. Nettie Mackenzie Clapp became the first woman to sit in the Ohio House of Representatives from Cuyahoga County. Active in the suffrage movement, she served three successive terms as a Republican and as chairman of the house committee on benevolent and penal institutions. Republican Maude Comstock Waitt was elected four times to the Ohio Senate. Waitt also did her political apprenticeship in the suffrage movement and in the Lakewood City Council, to which she was elected in 1921 and 1922. She retired from the Ohio Senate in 1930.

FIGURE 70. Lethia C. Fleming, social activist and founder of the Cleveland Urban League, ca. 1940.

**LETHIA COUSINS FLEMING** (7 Nov. 1876–25 Sept. 1963) had joined the suffrage movement in West Virginia before her move to Cleveland and subsequent marriage in 1912. A former school-teacher, Fleming became a social worker with the County Child Welfare Board, where she worked for 20 years. Fleming got out of partisan politics because of her membership in the Bahai movement but remained extremely active in the black community. She was a founder of the Cleveland Urban League, served as president of the Home for Aged Colored People, served on the board of the Phillis Wheatley Association, and belonged to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Association for Colored Women, the National Council of Negro Women, the Elks, and the Glenara Temple.



The most prominent of this first generation of women politicians was Florence E. Allen. Appointed judge of the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in 1934, and in 1958 made chief judge of the Sixth Circuit, she was the first woman chief judge of any court. Allen began her political career as a stump speaker and debater for suffrage, and in 1917 she successfully defended before the Ohio Supreme Court the right of the city of East Cleveland to grant its women municipal suffrage. A loyal Democrat, Allen was appointed assistant county prosecutor in 1919. In 1920, as soon as women were enfranchised, she was elected to common pleas court, the first woman in the United States to be elected to a judgeship. (An early endorsement of Allen's candidacy by the LWV, in which she was an active member, was unauthorized and never to be repeated.) In 1922 and again in 1928 she was elected to the Ohio Supreme Court. In 1937–38 she presided over the Sixth Circuit Court's decision that the Tennessee Valley Authority was constitutional. (See Figure 71.)



FIGURE 71. Judge Florence Allen in her law library. In 1958, Judge Allen became chief judge of the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals, the first woman chief judge of any federal court. Western Reserve Historical Society

**FLORENCE E. ALLEN** (23 Mar. 1884–12 Sept. 1966) majored in music at the College for Women of Western Reserve University and received a master's degree in political science from Western Reserve in 1908. Because the university's law school did not yet admit women, Allen attended law school at the University of Chicago from 1909 to 1910, but after becoming involved in settlement work in New York City, she received her law degree from New York University in 1913. During the 1920s she became active in the movement to outlaw war and frequently wrote and lectured on international law. She retired from the bench in 1959.

Winning—and using—the ballot gave Cleveland women a new public visibility which they never relinquished. In the next decades, however, political activism would take a back seat to economic necessity as the city and the nation faced the challenges of the Great Depression and World War II.



# Meeting the Challenges

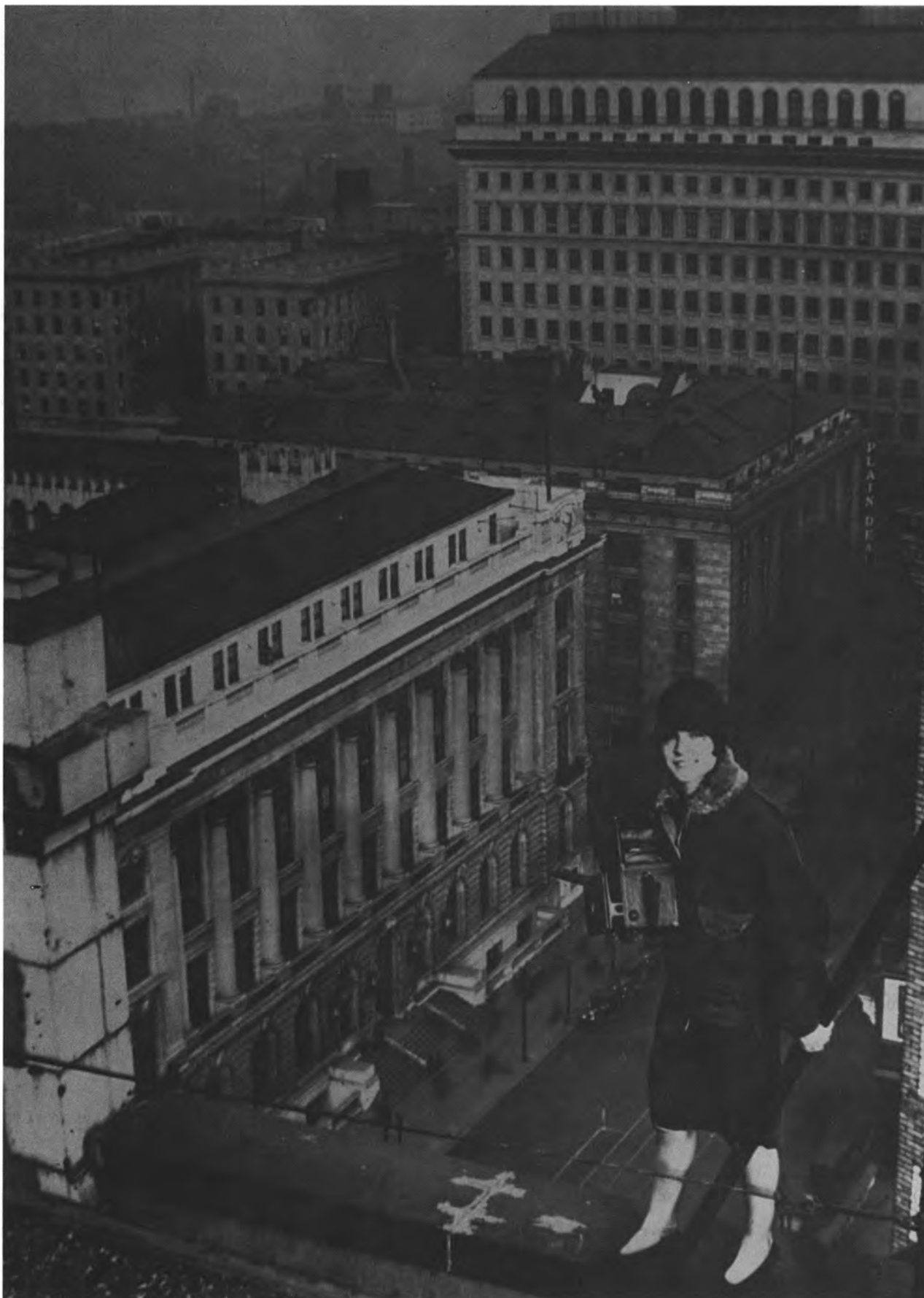
In 1935 almost 1,900 women in Cleveland were homeless, living under bridges or sleeping in police stations, kept from starvation by private charities. Eight years later 82,000 women earned high wages as crane operators, electric welders, spike packers, and cold-press operators in Cleveland's booming wartime factories. In less than a decade, the fortunes of Cleveland women, and their city, turned around as the nation moved from the desperation of the Great Depression to the prosperity of World War II.

The hard times of the 1930s and the flush 1940s had a forceful and visible impact on women's roles: pushed into lower-paying jobs or out of the workforce and into the home during the Depression, women were urged out of the home and back into the workplace and "men's jobs" by wartime needs. Both emergencies presented women with unprecedented personal challenges as well as new opportunities for public service and professional advancement. (See Figure 72.)

Cleveland's economy, heavily dependent on manufacturing, especially iron and steel and automotive parts, began to sag in the late 1920s. Within months of the dedication of the Terminal Tower in 1930, tens of thousands of Clevelanders were unemployed, and the Tower's developers, Mantis J. and Oris P. Van Sweringen, were bankrupt. By 1931 the Great Depression had begun in earnest, and more than 30 percent of the workforce of 500,541 was unemployed.

## The Depression and World War II, 1930–1950





Most adult women in Cleveland survived the Depression as wives, whose chief economic responsibility was to make the smaller family budget go farther. Local newspapers carried articles on low-cost meals and other money-saving ideas. Cleveland Associated Charities (CAC) reissued its booklet *A Suggestive Budget for Families on Small Incomes*, advising mothers of the importance of “planning the meals [and] careful buying of food” and estimating that it should cost \$2.50 a week to feed an adult and \$1.45 to feed a four- to six-year-old child. (One dinner suggestion was spaghetti with kidney beans and meatballs, raw carrot strips, bread, beverage, and vanilla cream pudding.) CAC also wrote a pamphlet, *Eating in Different Languages*, for the African American and ethnic communities.

Families postponed childbearing, and the numbers of births in Cleveland dropped for the first time since the city had begun keeping records. The special anguish of motherhood during the Depression was later recalled by a *Plain Dealer* reporter: “The young woman, late in her pregnancy, . . . came to a West Side Associated Charities office seeking a layette for her first-born. Her face was thin and pale, and she was uncomfortable. She’d never been there before. The social worker was soothing, trying to ease the idea that asking for help carried a terrible stigma. . . . When did she expect her baby? . . . Her labor had begun early that morning. The social workers moved fast. Within an hour the woman was in a hospital bed, the layette for the coming new-born on a table beside her. . . . This is one face I can’t forget—tired, drawn, vulnerable.” The reporter found desperation even in the suburbs. “Always these young mothers seemed tired and afraid. Always they had one utility disconnected, usually the gas. The Cleveland Heights mother warmed her baby bottles in her gas oven, using torn-up papers for fuel.”

Unemployment created strains within marriages, and sometimes these worsened when wives could get jobs and husbands could not. Social workers were often as uncomfortable with working wives as were husbands. The CAC newsletter in April 1930 told of a woman whose out-of-work husband could no longer pay their debts for a car, furniture, and groceries. The woman herself was so anxious for work that she offered to clean the CAC office. The story ended almost happily: “She got a regular job within the week at a clothing factory and the children are going each day to the day nursery while their mother is the temporary breadwinner.”

The Depression reversed or slowed down the progress that working women had been making. In 1930 women had made slight gains in the professions, which employed 11.9 percent of the female labor force (up from 9.6 percent in 1920); but in 1940, only 9.6 percent of women were employed as professionals. The proportion of women in clerical work remained slightly more than a third from 1930 to 1940, down from 40.2 percent in 1920. The most telling increase was in the lowest-paid,

FIGURE 72. Photographer Margaret Bourke-White in 1929, with the Cleveland Public Library, the Plain Dealer Building and the Federal Reserve Bank in the background. Bourke-White’s photos of industrial structures in Cleveland helped to establish her prominent career in photography. Cleveland Public Library

lowest-status female job, domestic service. In 1920, 14.8 percent of all female workers were domestic servants; in 1930, 20.3 percent; and in 1940, 26 percent.

Differences in job opportunities for white and African American women remained. In 1930 only 2.7 percent of black women held professional jobs, and only 2.6 percent had clerical jobs. The vast majority—almost 70 percent of employed women—were in domestic service.

Hard times forced more women to do piecework at home for the garment industry. In 1937 a Consumers League survey discovered women making knitted sweaters and dresses who earned only four or five cents an hour. The league also received growing numbers of complaints about exploitative employers, such as this one filed by Mrs. Frances Ruzewicz: "She started to work Thursday, August 31 and worked eight hours on Thursday, eight hours on Friday, and one-half day on Saturday. . . . She received \$1.98 after Social Security was deducted. She worked the following Tuesday and one-half day on Wednesday, and was laid off at noon on Wednesday. She has not yet received her pay for this day and one-half. Her work was embroidering and sewing on buttons. She was required to pay for her needle."

More women were driven into prostitution. The vice squad led dramatic raids and closed down brothels in the Roaring Third police district during 1932–33. Prostitutes then moved to downtown hotels, and after another series of raids, City Safety Director Eliot Ness claimed in 1940 that there were only 100 known prostitutes in the city. (In 1941, however, a Welfare Federation study found that 897 women suspected of prostitution had been picked up by police. Most were repeat offenders: 592 women had been arrested in 1941 alone.)

Like men, women lost their jobs. Unemployment figures were seldom broken down by sex and were based on numbers of persons who told relief officials that they were out of work, which many women may have been reluctant to do. However, according to a special census, the number of unemployed women rose from 5,224 in 1930 to 17,832 in 1931.

In general, however, women's jobs were safer than men's, less susceptible to layoffs than men's jobs in industry, and not attractive to men, even unemployed men, because they were considered "women's work" and did not pay well. (See Figure 73.) In 1930 the federal census found 35,960 unemployed men, and in 1931, 81,620. Based on the number of gainful workers in 1930, women's unemployment rate in 1931 was 18 percent, men's almost 28 percent. In addition, the census recorded 22,045 men and 3,327 women who were temporarily laid off.

Fewer women than men became transient and homeless, possibly because women were less willing to leave their children and other family members. In March 1933, 955 women and girls were given shelter, or more often just food, by CAC, the Jewish Social Service Bureau, the YWCA, Cleveland City



FIGURE 73. Fashionable elevator hostesses greeted and directed shoppers at Higbee's during the 1930s. Cleveland State University Archives

Hospital, and the Women's Bureau of the Police Department; 5 women were found in railway stations. By way of comparison, 4,345 men and boys were given shelter or food by various private agencies. Only two years later, however, the Cuyahoga County Relief Agency counted double the number of homeless women.

As these figures suggest, social welfare agencies provided for men and women differently. Agencies' policies assumed that men were the primary breadwinners and women the primary homemakers and child-rearers. This meant that men were more likely to get work relief (and lodging), and women, especially if they were the sole supporters of children, were more likely to get direct relief.

CAC found work for men in several projects, including large community gardens, but placed women only in its Sewing Room, where they mended donated clothing for those even less fortunate. In 1930 the city initiated short-lived public works projects designated for unemployed men whose families were in dire need: 17,700 applied for the chance to work three days

FIGURE 74. Cleveland women protest layoffs by the WPA in 1939. Employment on WPA rolls for women was tenuous at best, as regulations made it difficult to employ more than one family member—usually the out-of-work husband. Cleveland Press Collection, Cleveland State University

FIGURE 75. Women on a WPA project tend to a garden, ca. 1940. Cleveland State University Archives

a week at sixty cents an hour. The city provided no employment for women.

Federal work-relief programs also shortchanged women. The Civil Works Administration provided jobs for women in sewing rooms, offices, and schools, but when funds were cut in 1934, the first to lose their jobs were persons (women) who had a spouse on work relief or single persons who were not the sole support of the families with whom they lived. In 1938, 54,849 residents of Cuyahoga County received work relief, building new roads, bridges, and schools or refurbishing parks and playgrounds. Like the city public works jobs, almost all were designed for men. (See Figures 74 and 75.)

A few women were employed by the Works Progress Administration artists' projects. Cleveland was the site of two federal theater companies. One gave successful performances of two realistic dramas written for the theater project, *The Living Newspaper* and *Triple A Ploughed Under*. A black company, the Community Laboratory Theater, performed at the racially integrated Playhouse Settlement. The federal musicians' projects included a choral group, which produced *The Mikado*, a symphonic orchestra, a string quartet, and an African American dance band. The biggest employer was the Writers Project, which hired men and women as editors, authors, historians, and researchers. In Cleveland these writers produced two guides to Cleveland newspapers, *The Annals of Cleveland, 1818–1935*, and the *Cleveland Foreign Language Newspaper Digest*, as well as a survey of the city's ethnic communities, *The Peoples of Cleveland*.

Having established a solid professional foothold in the visual arts, Cleveland women found jobs in the projects, begun in December 1933 and continued under the Works Progress Administration, which produced accessible art for public buildings and spaces. Gladys Carambella produced murals portraying children's fairy tales for the children's wards of City and Sunny Acres hospitals and for several elementary schools. Other muralists included Louise Morris, Clara McClean, and Doris Hall. Several women, including Emilie Scrivens, Elizabeth Seaver, and Grace Luse, created ceramic figures for children's libraries. The most prolific of the ceramists was Edris Eckhardt, a 1931 graduate of the Cleveland School of Art. Eckhardt's five-piece set of figures from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* won first prize in the 1936 May Show and was given to the Cleveland Public Library; her Mother Goose series is on permanent display in the library's Lewis Carroll Reading Room. (See Figure 76.)

At the outset of the Depression there was already a direct relief program designated specifically for women, the state mothers' pensions for widows or deserted women with dependent children, so that they could be cared for in their own homes rather than institutionalized. Aid to Dependent Children, established by the Social Security Act of 1935, added federal moneys to this state stipend.



FIGURE 76. Sculptor Edris Eckhardt, shown here in 1943, led the ceramics division of the Federal Arts Project in Cleveland from 1936 to 1939. Cleveland Press Collection, Cleveland State University



Perhaps the most precise gauge of the devastating impact of the Depression on women was the growing number receiving this direct relief. In January 1928, 435 women received mothers' pensions, and in January 1933, 1,010; in 1937, 1,116 women received Aid to Dependent Children. By 1938, 42 percent of Cleveland families receiving direct relief from the city were headed by women.

Drawing upon their long experience as dispensers of charity and their briefer experience as professional social workers, women played a crucial part in private and public efforts to relieve poverty. In 1922 the city of Cleveland had relinquished its responsibilities for direct relief to private agencies. The oldest and best-established was Cleveland Associated Charities (CAC), which from 1928 to 1933 was also the largest distributor of direct relief to the city's needy.

During the 1920s, CAC had continued to expand and professionalize its staff, and by 1927 that staff had already noted with alarm the growing numbers of unemployed. As the Depression worsened, CAC's caseloads skyrocketed. In 1928 the

agency provided direct relief to 1,379 families and single women; in 1933, to 28,929 families and single women. The CAC definition of family included those headed by single women, which historically had constituted a significant percentage of CAC's clientele: in 1929, CAC served 3,171 married couples with children and 1,205 families headed by widowed, deserted, divorced, or separated women. By 1933 the regular staff, supplemented by 448 volunteers, mostly women, sometimes unemployed themselves, struggled to distribute the agency's meager supplies of food, clothing, or rent money. When the Roosevelt administration assumed responsibility for direct relief, it mandated that public funds could be distributed only by a public agency, so the Cuyahoga County Relief Agency (CCRA) was established. The agency's personnel—for the most part, trained women social workers—were drawn almost entirely from CAC. In 1935 CCRA turned direct relief back over to the city. Although CAC became Cleveland Associated Charities, Institute of Family Service, it provided as much relief as family services until the onset of World War II.

The woman who took charge of CAC during these difficult days (CAC workers were occasionally attacked physically by clients and verbally by the Communist Council of the Unemployed) was Helen W. Hanchette. Hanchette came to the agency after attending Lake Erie College and in 1910 began her professional training under James R. Jackson. Hanchette was CAC's associate general secretary from 1917 until 1934, when she became its first woman executive secretary, a position she held until 1953.

Elizabeth Magee, executive director of the Consumers' League of Ohio from 1925 to 1965, shaped both local and national relief policies. Like Marie Wing, Magee worked for the YWCA, and she succeeded Wing as executive secretary of the CLO when Wing was elected to Cleveland City Council. In 1928, as the city's unemployment problem worsened, Magee and the league drew up a plan for unemployment insurance which became known as the Ohio Plan. In 1931 Magee was appointed director of the Ohio Commission on Unemployment Insurance, and in 1934 to the National Committee on Economic Security, which helped to draft the Social Security Act, based in part on the Ohio Plan. (See Figure 77.)

Women also held important public relief posts. In 1932–33 Cleveland's director of public welfare was Bernice Secest Pyke, the first woman to be appointed to a mayor's cabinet. Pyke, a former suffragist, was a Democratic activist and served as collector of customs for the port of Cleveland from 1934 to 1953. Bell Greve served as director of the Cuyahoga County Relief Board from 1937 to 1944. She became the second woman to serve in a Cleveland mayor's cabinet as director of the Department of Health and Welfare from 1953 to 1957.

Historian and civic booster William Ganson Rose maintained that during the 1940s, Cleveland achieved "greatness."



FIGURE 77. Labor and consumer advocate Elizabeth Magee enjoys some vacation time, ca. 1930. Western Reserve Historical Society

**ELIZABETH STEWART MAGEE** (29 June 1889–14 May 1972) graduated from Oberlin College in 1911 and received a master's degree from Columbia in 1925. After her work on unemployment insurance during the Depression, she was appointed to the Woman's Bureau of the Department of Labor in 1941, overseeing the working conditions of women and children. From 1943 to 1958, she served as general secretary of the National Consumers' League and lobbyist for the league's agenda of labor legislation for women, children, and migrant workers and for the expansion of old-age insurance. She was also appointed to President Harry S. Truman's Commission on the Health Needs of the Nation, which lobbied unsuccessfully for national health insurance.



At the very least, the city, like the nation, recovered from the Depression. Clevelanders went back to work in industries revitalized by wartime orders: from 1940 to 1944, the labor force grew by 34 percent. Clevelanders also contributed to the war effort by investing \$2.5 billion in war bonds, conducting scrap drives, planting victory gardens, and raising moneys for relief funds. More than 160,000 Clevelanders served in the armed forces; almost 4,000 of them died.

As they had in earlier wars, Cleveland women fought on both the military and the home fronts. Less than a month after

Pearl Harbor, the Cleveland section of the National Council of Jewish Women declared that the “war for the United States found Council ready and eager to give its ultimate to defend our country against invaders and to preserve our democratic way of life.” Council members were urged to volunteer at soldiers’ lounges, hospitals, and the Red Cross, to conserve gasoline and electricity, to save paper, rags, and old metal, and to buy defense bonds. The Federation of Women’s Clubs of Greater Cleveland quickly established a War Service Department, and in May 1943, forty-six clubs—ranging from the Berea Sorosis to the Yugoslav Club—reported on their members’ war activities: 4,690 had worked at the Red Cross; 8,000 had bought or sold war bonds; 824 had worked in civilian defense; 974 had volunteered at the USO, and others at draft or ration boards. Two members of federation clubs had joined the Army Wacs, and two the Marines. (See Figure 78.)

Cleveland’s fourth annual Festival of Freedom, on July 5, 1943 (July 4 had threatened rain), honored the city’s “women at war,” especially those in the armed services. The parade of five thousand, which marched from Euclid and East 21st Street to the Stadium, celebrated the nation’s military might, featuring men in uniform, jeeps, trucks, guns, and “Flying Fortresses” overhead. Behind the men marched the women of the several auxiliary corps: Wacs, army nurses, Waves, Marines, and Spars. Then came women from the Red Cross, the civil air patrol, and civil defense, and factory workers from the Ohio Crankshaft Company, wearing blue uniforms and welders’ helmets. Drill teams of Waves and Spars performed to the “Washington Post March.” Rudolph Ringwall conducted the Festival of Freedom Orchestra in “The Military Medley,” and, perhaps acknowledging the women’s participation, the crowd of 135,000 sang “Let Me Call You Sweetheart” and “I Want a Girl.” (See Figure 79.)

Seventy-two Cleveland women served as nurses in the Fourth General Hospital, Lakeside Unit, successor to the Lakeside Unit of World War I. The unit had begun to mobilize in 1940, and only seventeen days after Pearl Harbor it was asked to set up the first American hospital overseas. The unit operated a hospital of 2,900 beds in Melbourne, Australia, for two years. In 1944 the unit was moved to New Guinea, and in summer 1945, anticipating the invasion of Japan, to Manila. After the Japanese surrender, the unit was disbanded, having treated 46,200 patients.

The wartime economy offered women unparalleled job opportunities. Most worked in stores or offices, but encouraged by private industry and the federal government (“If you’ve made buttonholes on a machine, you can spot-weld a plane bound for Berlin,” advised the Department of Labor), tens of thousands of Cleveland women entered factories, working at jobs left by servicemen and created by military needs. Most of



Cleveland's leading manufacturers, including American Steel and Wire, Cleveland Graphite Bronze, Cleveland Twist Drill, Cleveland Welding Company, General Electric, Reliance Electric, Warner and Swasey, Thompson Products, and Parker Appliance, hired women. By August 1943, the 82,000 women employed by the largest manufacturers of war materials constituted 28.7 percent of the manufacturers' total employment: 15.6 percent of the employees in plants making iron and steel products, 49.5 percent in plants making electrical equipment. (See Figure 80.)

In 1944, possibly to offset the bad press created by a recent violent labor dispute, Republic Steel, one of Cleveland's biggest employers, published *Republic Goes to War*, a detailed account of its successful production of parts for planes, tanks, war vessels, and weapons and its employment of women. Republic's management was initially reluctant to hire women but, once persuaded, wooed them with movies and radio announcements and advertisements on streetcars, in downtown store windows, and distributed from house to house. In October 1942 Republic employed 585 women; in July 1943, 7,080. New assembly-line techniques and training programs allowed women to work at traditionally male jobs. Women earned good wages but, because their work was defined differently, probably less than male employees. *Republic Goes to War* noted, for example, that 90 percent of the workers who made airplane flaps were women, but that they did the "light" work and men supervised or did the "heavy or complex" work.

New jobs created new strains as women tried to juggle work and family responsibilities. The most pressing problem was child care. CAC and the Cleveland Day Nursery Association helped to establish and staff thirteen daycare centers by early 1943.

The ever-vigilant Consumers' League noted new gains and new hazards. At a 1942 league-sponsored conference, "Women War Workers Speak for Themselves," Mary Socash told of her work making bombs at the Ravenna Arsenal: "The arsenal is working three shifts a day seven days a week. All work is carried out under complete secrecy. . . . The work is dangerous, but all precautions are taken to prevent accidents. . . . The basic wage rate is 65 cents an hour. Men and women get equal pay."

African American women made gains too but, as always, lagged behind white workers. Another conference speaker, Esther Evans, had become "one of the first Negro girls to become a member of her union," the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. She reported that "relations between the Negro and white girls in the [garment factory] have been very fine." The league newsletter noted, however, that black women often found it difficult to get good jobs and asked, "Is it not an unwise social policy to deny the Negro the right to

FIGURE 78. Nurses leaf through applications for Army and Navy Nurse Corps personnel, ca. 1942. Western Reserve Historical Society

FIGURE 79. The Cleveland Woman's Orchestra rehearses with Hyman Schandler in 1959. Cleveland State University Archives

**THE CLEVELAND WOMAN'S ORCHESTRA** was founded in 1935 by Hyman Schandler, a violinist with the Cleveland Orchestra, and his wife, Rebecca White Schandler, also a musician. Under Hyman Schandler's direction, the orchestra has performed several concerts annually, featuring distinguished soloists and the Cleveland premieres of many compositions.



FIGURE 80. Working women, such as these two at the Cadillac Tank Plant in 1944, filled a large void in the workforce left by men who had gone off to serve in the armed forces during World War II. Cleveland State University Archives

work for victory in the home front while he is dying for it on all the battlefronts of the world?" According to the Cleveland Urban League, the number of black women in manufacturing jobs rose from about four hundred in 1940 to six thousand in 1945. At the war's end, however, 60 percent of African Americans in the Cleveland labor force were still holding unskilled jobs.

Cleveland found much to celebrate at its Sesquicentennial in 1946. The war had been won, Clevelanders had gone back to work, and the city's industrial base had been rescued. On July 16, Sesquicentennial Women's Day celebrated women's own accomplishments.

Most visible of those accomplishments was the election of a second generation of public officials. Lillian Mary Westropp was appointed assistant county prosecutor in 1929 and municipal

judge in 1931, a position to which she was reelected until she retired in 1957. While on the bench, Westropp initiated the court psychiatric clinic, which is still in use. Like other women in politics, she was a member of the League of Women Voters and the Women's City Club, and in 1923 she was chosen a member of the executive committee of the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party. Westropp and her sister Clara E. Westropp had opened a savings and loan bank in 1922, the first to be owned and managed by women. In 1935 the bank received a federal charter, and in 1937 it was named Women's Federal Savings Bank.

The Women's Sesquicentennial gave special honor to Cleveland's best-known national woman politician and the first woman from Ohio to be elected to Congress, Frances Payne Bolton. Bolton inherited her husband Chester's seat in the United States House of Representatives after his death in 1939 but retained the seat on her own until 1968. In Congress she gained wide expertise in foreign affairs. She had begun her political career as an opponent of Franklin D. Roosevelt's foreign as well as domestic policies, voting in 1940 against Lend-Lease to the European nations at war, and in 1941 against an extension of the peacetime draft. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Bolton, like most other Republicans, supported the war effort and the United States' postwar global commitments. As a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, she traveled to Europe, the Soviet Union, the Near East, and Africa. In 1953 she became the first congresswoman appointed to the United Nations General Assembly. Although she opposed much of the domestic agenda of the Democratic administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, she voted for the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. Her dozens of awards and honorary degrees included the Certificate of Honor of the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses (1951) and an honorary LHD from Tuskegee Institute (1957). (See Figure 81.)

During the 1930s and 1940s, African American women also emerged for the first time in prominent professional and political positions. In 1929 Mary B. (Mrs. Alexander H.) Martin became the first black woman elected to the Cleveland school board; she was reelected to a second four-year term in 1933. In 1939, with the endorsement of the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* and the Citizens League, Martin ran again for the school board on a slate that included two men. She won easily but died of a cerebral hemorrhage before she could take office. A new elementary school building was named in her honor. (See Figure 82.)

Like Martin's election, the appointments of black women to administrative posts within the Cleveland school system reflected the growing political power of black Clevelanders as well as the changing racial composition of the schools. In 1938 Myrtle J. Bell became the first black woman high-school administrator when she was appointed assistant principal of Central



FIGURE 81. Congresswoman Frances P. Bolton at the “Atomic Annie” nuclear test at Frenchman’s Flat, Nevada, 27 May 1953. Western Reserve Historical Society

**FRANCIS PAYNE BOLTON** (29 Mar. 1885–9 Mar. 1977), the daughter of prosperous industrialist Charles W. Bingham and his wife, Mary Perry Payne Bingham, was educated at Hathaway Brown School and Miss Spence’s School for Girls in New York. Her lifelong interest in the nursing profession began when she volunteered with the Visiting Nurses Association. While her husband did a stint in a federal agency during World War I, she persuaded former Cleveland mayor, then secretary of war, Newton D. Baker to establish an Army School of Nursing, and in 1923 she endowed the school of nursing at Western Reserve University, now the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing. In Congress, Bolton continued to support the nursing profession, in 1943 introducing a bill providing for the training of nurses for the armed services.

High School, a post which she retained until 1966, when Central merged with East Tech High School. (See Figure 83.)

Hazel Mountain (Mrs. Joseph R.) Walker combined successful careers in education and theater. She taught at Mayflower Elementary School from 1909 to 1936, when she was appointed principal of Rutherford B. Hayes Elementary School. From 1954 until her retirement in 1958, Walker was principal at George Washington Carver School. Often credited with choosing the name for Karamu House, Walker began performing at the interracial theater in the mid-1920s, starring in a wide range of plays for the next twenty-five years. Her credits include roles in Henrik Ibsen’s *Ghosts*, Federico García Lorca’s *Blood Wedding*, and as solo performer in the 1951 centennial celebration of the famous speech “Aint I a Woman?” by women’s rights activist Sojourner Truth. A member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the



FIGURE 82. Mary B. Martin, the first African American woman elected to the Cleveland School Board, ca. 1910. Western Reserve Historical Society

**MARY B. MARTIN** (1877–19 Nov. 1939) was born in North Carolina to former slaves and in 1886 was brought to Cleveland, where she attended public schools. With a certificate from Cleveland Normal School, she taught briefly in southern schools but returned to Cleveland in 1905 and married Alexander H. Martin. In the 1920s she became a teacher in the Cleveland public schools.

Urban League, Walker was an articulate advocate of racial equality. Asked about the school desegregation case then pending before the Supreme Court, Walker told a reporter: “Abolishing separate schools without abolishing slums and ghettos will not usher in the millennium. We have no Jim Crow schools in Cleveland, but still this school [Rutherford B. Hayes] and others in the Central Area are nearly 90 percent colored because the residents of the area are more colored than white.” (See Figure 84.)

When World War II ended, the estimated 100,000 women employed in war factories faced unemployment. A *Cleveland Press* reporter commented a month after the surrender of Japan: “Women made an immense contribution to the war. . . . It’s doubtful if there was a gun, a bullet, tank, ship, or airplane turned out that wasn’t made at least in part by women workers. Many women are glad to quit their jobs and go back home. But



FIGURE 83. Myrtle J. Bell in the 1940s. Bell was the first African American assistant high-school principal in the Cleveland Public Schools. Western Reserve Historical Society

**MYRTLE J. BELL** (1895–2 Sept. 1978) was educated in the Cleveland public schools and graduated from the College for Women of Western Reserve University. After teaching at Tuskegee Institute for two years, she returned to Cleveland. After several years of substitute teaching, she got a post at Kennard Junior High, where she taught mathematics and black history in 1930. Two years later she went to Central High School, her alma mater, as a math teacher. She received a master’s degree from Western Reserve University in 1938. In recognition of her important administrative role at Central High School, Bell served on the city’s Community Relations Board from 1945 to 1949.



FIGURE 84. Civic activist and Karamu performer Hazel Mountain Walker in January 1959. Cleveland State University Archives

**HAZEL MOUNTAIN WALKER** (16 Feb. 1889–16 May 1980) was born in Warren, Ohio, in 1889, received a teaching certificate from Cleveland Normal School, and earned master's degrees in both elementary and secondary education at Western Reserve University. In 1919 she received a law degree from Cleveland Law School and used her legal expertise working with the juvenile court. Walker served on the Cuyahoga County Republican Party executive committee during the 1930s and belonged to the Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Women's City Club, the Business and Professional Women's Club, and Alpha Kappa Alpha.



many others worked before the war and will have to go right on working for economic reasons. But now there will be no high war-time incomes." Having survived the Depression and fought the war, Cleveland women now faced new challenges.



# Opening Doors

In April 1950 the Cleveland Playhouse presented its first interracial production, *The Long Moment* by Clevelander Jo Sinclair (the pen name of Ruth Seid). The cast included L. Pearl Mitchell as the mother of a young black man who succeeded as a doctor by passing as white but who failed his family and himself by denying his race. Sinclair inscribed Mitchell's copy of the script "For L. Pearl Mom—with all my love and admiration for a real trouper." The production had dual significance. First, it acknowledged the city's growing sensitivity to its racial problems. Second, the successful collaboration of the Jewish playwright born of Russian immigrants and the African American civil rights activist symbolized the growing visibility and broadened opportunities for all women, regardless of race, class, or religious background, in the years 1950 to 1980.

Historians Carol Poh Miller and Robert Wheeler have described these as bleak decades for Cleveland. The period 1950–1965 was marked by "exodus and decline," the migration of much of the city's white middle-class population and some of its retail business into the suburbs, the decline of its industrial base, and the decay of its neighborhoods and central business district. The race riot in the Hough neighborhood in July 1966, the escalating loss of jobs, and the city's default in 1978 provided ample reason for Cleveland's "loss of confidence" from 1966 to 1979.

The story of many Cleveland women does not follow this downward trajectory but, more closely linked to suburban

Professions,  
Politics,  
and  
Protest,  
1950–1980

prosperity and national movements of social protest, takes other directions. As had white native-born women in earlier decades, individual women of African American and ethnic background used the “women’s” professions and the political system as routes to public success. And as in earlier generations, women joined together for their collective advancement. Black women continued to give their vital support to the movement for racial justice. Women of all backgrounds created a diverse and all-encompassing movement for their own equality. As always, however, some women were left behind in poverty.

In the politically and socially conservative 1950s, women returned from the workplace to their nineteenth-century “sphere,” home and family—or at least they were supposed to. The suburban migration and the baby boom symbolized this much-publicized return. Postwar prosperity, the GI Bill, and new federal highways encouraged many middle-class families, especially white families, to leave Cleveland for the burgeoning suburbs, whose growth now far outpaced the city’s. Cleveland had its own postwar baby boom: births rose from 16,857 in 1940, to 26,019 in 1950, to an all-time high of 32,591 in 1957.

At the same time, even as popular mythology sent women back to kitchen and children, the realities of women’s lives sent them elsewhere. The female workforce—no longer young and single but middle-aged and with children—continued to grow. In October 1950, 190,000 women worked in Greater Cleveland’s industries, only 5,000 short of their peak wartime industrial employment in July 1945. In 1952 slightly more than 30 percent of Greater Cleveland’s labor force was female: 200,000 of the 649,000 employed.

The competing directions of women’s lives were reflected in the diverse agendas of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW). Retaining its historical traditions of charity and social service, the council trained volunteers for many projects, including the resettlement of Jewish immigrants displaced by the war, the Jewish Big Sisters, the Golden Age Clubs, and the Montefiore Home for the elderly. In 1953, long-time board member Ruth (Mrs. Jac L.) Einstein persuaded the NCJW to sponsor a new project, a low-rent, nonsectarian housing facility for older adults. Ten years later, after lobbying from the council and a loan from the federal government, this facility opened as the 130-unit Council Gardens. (See Figure 85.)

The NCJW also encouraged members’ political and intellectual interests. The organization opposed lynching and a poll tax in 1950 before civil rights became a popular cause, and in 1954 it initiated a campaign endorsing freedom of speech in the face of the prevalent anti-Communist hysteria. High-powered speakers such as anthropologist Margaret Mead and liberal senator Hubert H. Humphrey appeared at the council’s monthly meetings.



FIGURE 85. Philanthropist Ruth Einstein in 1961. Cleveland State University Archives

**RUTH EINSTEIN** (1883–20 June 1977), a graduate of the College for Women of Western Reserve University, pioneered in several charitable ventures. In 1920 she helped to found the Jewish Big Sisters, and during the Depression Einstein originated the Council Thrift Shop, which became a major fundraiser for the National Council of Jewish Women. Einstein received several awards for her community service, including a special citation from the United Appeal.

At the same time, the council responded to the migration of its membership to the suburbs. Council Gardens was built in Cleveland Heights. Next door was the Jewish Community Center, a recreation and social-service agency, born of the merger of four older agencies, including the Council Educational Alliance. The NCJW moved its own offices to Shaker Heights.

It is no wonder that in 1958 the NCJW arranged a series of lectures reflecting its members' perplexity about their own roles, "Is It True What They Say about Women?" Two of the topics were "Woman: Paradox or Paragon?" and "Will Success Spoil American Women?" (See Figure 86.)

That "success" might have referred to Cleveland women's still-expanding opportunities to go to college. Three Cleveland undergraduate institutions continued to educate only women—Mather College of Western Reserve University, Notre Dame College, and Ursuline College. Intended to bring affordable education to a nontraditional audience, male and female, Cuyahoga Community College opened in 1963, offering two-year degree programs in a wide variety of preprofessional and technical fields. In 1965 Fenn College, established in the 1880s



FIGURE 86. A spring fashion show at Halle's Department Store in January 1967. Cleveland State University Archives

by the YMCA, became Cleveland State University, greatly enlarging its coeducational student population.

As in earlier decades, higher education encouraged women to enter the professions. Growing numbers entered law and medicine. In 1950 the medical school at Western Reserve enrolled 31 women, and the law school 3; in 1980 there were 199 women in the medical school and 234 in the law school. Both schools remained predominantly male, however. The university's schools of nursing, librarianship, and social work remained predominantly female.

Social workers, especially African American social workers, became more visible in public agencies as government shouldered greater responsibilities for social welfare. Cleveland's Fairfax Recreation Center, dedicated in 1959, was named after Florence Bundy (Mrs. Lawrence E.) Fairfax, who came up through the ranks of the city's Recreation Department. She began her career as a city physical education director in 1928 and by 1966 had been chosen assistant commissioner of recreation. In 1971 Anna V. Brown was appointed executive director of the Mayor's

Commission on Aging, a position which she retained when the commission became the city's Office of Aging in 1981. During her administration the office developed new services for the elderly, including Community Responsive Transit and winter heating assistance.

Katherine P. (Mrs. Harvey M.) Williamson, named Social Worker of the Year in 1964 by the Cleveland chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, worked in both public and private agencies: from 1934 to 1945 as casework supervisor for the Cuyahoga County Child Welfare Division, and from 1945 to 1958 for the Cleveland Welfare Federation as field worker for the Central Area. She then became child welfare consultant for the Division of Social Administration of the Ohio Department of Public Welfare. (See Figure 87.)

Jewish women made significant contributions to Cleveland's cultural life, to which they brought a keen sensitivity to contemporary social and political issues. Edith Anisfield (Mrs. Eugene E.) Wolf was both a philanthropist and the author of several volumes of light verse. *Wordmobile* (1956) was dedicated to the members of the Cleveland Writers Club, originally the Cleveland Woman's Press Club. She endowed two prizes for outstanding books on race relations. Among the winners have been Cleveland native Langston Hughes's *Simple Takes a Wife* and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *Stride toward Freedom*. At her death in 1963, Wolf left an endowment for the \$5,000 Anisfield-Wolf Award for Community Service.

Wolf's concern for racial justice was shared by novelist and playwright Jo Sinclair (Ruth Seid), whose work frequently dealt with racial or religious prejudice. During the Depression, Sinclair was employed on a WPA project, and in 1942 she began a career as a freelance writer. In 1946 she won the \$10,000 Harper Prize for her first novel, *Wasteland*, which, like her play *The Long Moment*, is the story of a young man who struggles to accept his own ethnic identity. Sinclair's *The Changeling* (1955) describes a Cleveland Jewish neighborhood which is resisting the encroachment of blacks. (See Figure 88.)

Dorothy (Mrs. Milton H.) Fuldheim, veteran TV news analyst, became celebrated for her willingness to tackle tough issues and voice unpopular opinions. Born in poverty to German Jewish immigrants, Fuldheim prepared for a career in teaching but instead became a journalist, first for Scripps-Howard newspapers and then for the Scripps-Howard TV channel in Cleveland when television was in its infancy. She interviewed scores of celebrities, from the Duke of Windsor to radical Jerry Rubin; her last interview was with President Ronald Reagan in 1984. (See Figure 89.)

Women from ethnic and African American backgrounds also achieved political success, becoming Cleveland's third generation of female elected officials. Their victories reflected the city's changing racial composition as well as the growing acceptance of women in the political arena.

FIGURE 87. Katherine P. Williamson reviews plans for Youth Day at the Friendly Inn Settlement House, 10 May 1958. Western Reserve Historical Society

**KATHERINE P. WILLIAMSON** (1910–26 Nov. 1964) received her B.A. from Oberlin College in 1929 and her M.S. from the School of Applied Social Science of Western Reserve University in 1932. Her master's thesis was on the intake policies of the Cleveland Humane Society, the city's largest child-placement agency, where Williamson was employed until 1934. As field worker for the Central Area for the Cleveland Welfare Federation, she helped to compile the Central Area Social Study, released in 1944. Williamson was a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha, the Phillis Wheatley Association, and the Consumers League of Ohio.



FIGURE 88. Author Jo Sinclair (Ruth Seid) in October 1956. Cleveland State University Archives

**JO SINCLAIR (RUTH SEID)** (1 July 1913–5 Apr. 1995) recalled her childhood in Cleveland: "I grew up in the melting-pot neighborhoods of a large industrial city, played and went to school with other second generation kids. Our parents had come from Russia, Italy, Hungary—and from Atlanta, Georgia. We were white and colored, and whereas the dreams were shouted in the dirty stone streets in many languages and slurred dialects, and we kids knew all of them, our own dreams were told in our own language—English, Midwest, near-slums variety." In 1993 Sinclair published a memoir, *The Seasons: Death and Transfiguration*.



In 1957 six women were elected to Cleveland's thirty-three-seat city council—more than ever before (or since). Three were council veterans: Margaret (Mrs. James) McCaffery, Mary K. Sotak (Mrs. Joseph A. Franek), and Jean Murrell (Mrs. Clifford E.) Capers. In 1947 McCaffery, a Democrat, was elected to her late husband's seat. She served her east side ward until 1964, when the seat was lost to redistricting; from 1965 to 1973 she represented the near west side. When she retired from council in 1973, McCaffery told a reporter that she and Sotak had "paved the way for more women in council by showing men that they were serious about improving the community. Men had to get used to the idea of women in other roles than housewives and mothers." Sounding much like the suffragists, McCaffery explained: "Women are concerned with good housekeeping in the city because we like to keep our own house in order." (See Figure 90.)

Sotak also won her seat for the first time in 1947. (Neither Sotak nor McCaffery was endorsed by the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party.) Sotak, who had served briefly as a state representative, became chairman of council's Parks and Recreation Committee and, like the League of Women Voters, supported a county charter and an improved Policewomen's Bureau. Like McCaffery, Sotak was active in the ethnic community, especially in Slovak organizations. In 1959 she resigned from council after her marriage to Joseph A. Franek.

In 1949 Capers became the first African American woman to take a seat on the city council. Capers was frequently in the headlines during her decade in council. She remained politically visible after her defeat in 1959, mounting an unsuccessful attempt to get into the mayor's race in 1971. In 1977 she was appointed to a municipal judgeship. (See Figure 91.)

Mercedes (Mrs. George W.) Cotner was appointed to council in 1954 and then won five elections. A long-time Democratic activist, Cotner was elected to the powerful position of clerk of council in 1964, a position that she held until 1989. In 1973 she staged a vigorous last-minute run for mayor, her campaign bolstered by the appearance of New York congresswoman Shirley Chisholm. Cotner was the second woman to run for the mayor's post. The first was Republican Albina Cermak in 1961. (See Figure 92.)

Ann B. (Mrs. John F.) Colfer was appointed in 1954 and served three elected terms until her retirement in 1961. A veteran Democratic precinct committeewoman and ward leader, Colfer chaired the Health and Welfare and Air and Water Pollution committees of council. Suzy Gallagher, a Democrat serving the Hough area, described herself as "Irish as Paddy's pig." Gallagher had frequent scrapes with the police department during her colorful terms in council from 1955 until her defeat in 1960.

Clevelander Zelma W. (Mrs. Clayborne) George gained international political stature after her appointment in 1960 to



FIGURE 89. Television news analyst and journalist Dorothy Fuldheim interviews Van Cliburn in 1959. Cleveland Public Library



FIGURE 90. Cleveland City Councilwoman Margaret McCaffery with family, ca. 1950. First elected to fill her late husband's seat in 1947, McCaffery served on city council until she retired in 1973. Cleveland State University Archives



the United States delegation to the United Nations General Assembly. In the Eisenhower administration's "People to People" program, George had traveled to a dozen countries under the aegis of the State Department. She served as director of the Cleveland Job Corps Center for Women from 1966 to 1974. A shelter for homeless women and children is named in her honor. (See Figure 93.)

George's appointment to her visible position was part of the United States' effort to win the support of nonwhite Third World nations in the Cold War against Communism. (The United States

did not score points in that battle when George, while serving as UN delegate, was not permitted to sit in a segregated Florida airport.) The vicious racism of Adolf Hitler's regime had made many Americans conscious of the ugly realities of racial prejudice at home. African Americans who had fought abroad to preserve democracy and freedom refused to accept Jim Crow laws and second-class jobs any longer. Out of their raised expectations emerged a revitalized civil rights movement.

In the postwar decades, Cleveland's civil rights groups, always sustained and often led by women, fought battles for equal employment, an end to residential segregation, and especially the desegregation of schools. As the result of a second great migration from the South, Cleveland's African American population grew from 85,000 in 1940 to 251,000 in 1960. Because of continuing white migration to the suburbs and a halt to European immigration to Cleveland, one-third of the city's population was black.

Despite progress, a study by the Cleveland Urban League found that the gap between white and black incomes had widened between 1949 and 1959. Black jobs were concentrated in manufacturing even as the city's industrial base declined. Blacks had higher unemployment rates than whites and were more likely to be receiving public assistance. Cleveland neighborhoods had become more crowded and racially segregated as urban-renewal programs destroyed slums without creating new low-income housing.

Cleveland's long-established civil rights organizations faced these daunting new challenges. The local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had been formally established in 1914, five years after the national organization. Although the Cleveland NAACP, like the national, was interracial, its leaders and key financial supporters were black. Like the national, the Cleveland group sought racial equality by applying political pressure and testing the legality of discriminatory local statutes and customs. Although the national held its annual convention in Cleveland in 1919 (it returned to the city in 1929), the local chapter remained small and ineffective until the early 1920s, when it developed a stable leadership of black professionals, especially lawyers; by 1922 the chapter had a membership of sixteen hundred. During the 1920s the Cleveland NAACP was able to win court decisions against restaurants, theaters, stores, and the Shaker Heights Board of Education for openly discriminatory policies; it aided black families to move into white neighborhoods and urged stronger enforcement of Ohio's existing civil rights law. (In 1934 the Cleveland NAACP opposed Florence E. Allen's appointment to a federal judgeship because of her participation in an Ohio Supreme Court ruling which denied a black woman student admission to the home-management cottage at Ohio State University. The chapter gave Allen back her ten-dollar membership dues.)



FIGURE 91. Cleveland Councilwoman Jean Murrel Capers, ca. 1940s. Capers was the first African American woman to fill a council seat. In 1977 she was appointed to a municipal judgeship. Cleveland Press Collection, Cleveland State University



FIGURE 92. Albina Cermak at the 1940 Republican Convention in Philadelphia. Western Reserve Historical Society

**ALBINA CERMAK** (4 Apr. 1904–22 Dec. 1978) in 1961 became the first woman to run for mayor of Cleveland but lost to Anthony J. Celebrezze. The daughter of a suffragist, Cermak served as Republican precinct committeewoman from 1925 to 1953 and on the county board of elections from 1946 to 1953, held several executive posts on county and state Republican committees, and was a delegate to the Republican national conventions in 1940, 1944, and 1952. In 1964 she became the first woman to be appointed a bailiff of common pleas court. She also held other appointed offices in the state auditor's office, on the Ohio Status of Women Commission and the White House Committee on Aging.

Women raised funds and recruited members for the Cleveland NAACP, which formed a Women's Auxiliary in 1916 and a Junior Auxiliary in 1946. In 1946 Cleveland's became the sixth-largest chapter in the country, with 10,879 members. The annual membership campaigns, crucial to the chapter's sustained growth, were traditionally headed by women, such as Dovie D. (Mrs. Sherman L.) Sweet. Sweet joined the Cleveland NAACP in 1943 and as membership chairman was credited with soliciting 501 members in 1945 and from 150 to 300 members in subsequent years. In 1963 she organized the transportation—sixteen buses, fifty cars, and one airplane—for the Cleveland delegation to the August March on Washington, D.C.

Women also played important leadership roles in the NAACP, serving on its executive committee soon after the chapter's founding. In 1918 Eleanor Alexander, a public school-teacher, was chosen as NAACP vice-president. She became its first woman president in 1930–31.

In 1934 L. Pearl Mitchell became the second. One of her first actions as president was to organize a mass antilynching rally in January 1934 in support of the national organization's long-standing efforts to get a federal antilynching law. Reelected president of the local in 1935, Mitchell served as a director on the

national board, and her successful membership campaign in Cleveland in 1941 was followed by her management of membership campaigns in several other cities. In 1944–45 she served briefly as the Cleveland chapter's first executive secretary. As a member of the board of trustees of the Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Orphan Home, Mitchell in 1960 led the fight that ended the segregation of the public facility's eight hundred black children, and in 1961, as a national vice-president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, she attacked the segregation of Cleveland's public housing projects. (See Figure 94.)

In 1952 Mary Spivey was elected NAACP president. A graduate of Smith College and the University of Michigan Law School, Spivey was an assistant prosecutor in Cleveland Municipal Court. During her term as president, the local chapter sponsored a statewide conference on fair housing.

FIGURE 93. Dr. Zelma George, appointed to the 15th United Nations General Assembly by President Eisenhower in 1960, confers with other members of the United States delegation. Western Reserve Historical Society

**ZELMA W. GEORGE** (8 Dec. 1903–3 July 1994) pursued many careers in addition to diplomatic service. Although first trained in music, after her graduation from the University of Chicago in 1924 she became a social worker in Chicago, and then a college administrator at Tennessee State University in Nashville. She received an M.A. and a Ph.D. from New York University; her dissertation was an expansive bibliography of African American music titles. In 1949 she played the lead in Karamu's production of *The Medium*, which then had a 13-week run on Broadway. George also served as director of the Cleveland Job Corps from 1966 to 1974, and sat on many advisory boards, including those of the American Red Cross, the League of Women Voters, and the National Conference of Christians and Jews.



FIGURE 94. Civil rights activist L. Pearl Mitchell. Mitchell was national vice-president of the NAACP in 1959. Western Reserve Historical Society

**L. PEARL MITCHELL** (1883 [1890]–6 Sept. 1974) was nicknamed “Miss NAACP.” Born in Wilberforce, Ohio, where her father, Samuel T. Mitchell, was president of Wilberforce College, Mitchell received her B.A. from Wilberforce, studied music at the Oberlin Conservatory, and taught music in the Illinois public schools. She came to Cleveland in the early 1920s and worked as a probation officer in the juvenile court from 1926 until 1944. Mitchell was a member of the Consumers League of Ohio and a national officer of Alpha Kappa Alpha.



The Cleveland chapter of the National Urban League was founded in 1918 as the Negro Welfare Association, a social service agency intended to ease the transition to urban life of the thousands of southern black immigrants to Cleveland. The organization, which changed its name in 1940, focused on equal access to housing and especially employment. Although the league’s executive directors were male until the appointment of Anita Polk in 1970, women served as officers and on the board of trustees. Hazel Mountain Walker was chosen the organization’s secretary in 1917 and served on the first board, as did Jane Edna Hunter and Belle Sherwin. By 1946, all league committees had female members, both black and white, including Elizabeth Magee, Lethia C. Fleming, Myrtle J. Bell, and Walker.

The most militant group during the 1960s, the Cleveland chapter of the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), also had female leaders. The national organization was founded in 1942 by pacifists who hoped to use nonviolent strategies to achieve racial integration. In 1946 members of Cleveland CORE were beaten as they picketed Euclid Beach Park, protesting its segregationist policies. Chapter president in 1946–47 was journalist Juanita Morrow. In 1962 the chapter was revived by Roena Rand and John M. Cloud, and in 1963 Ruth Turner became its

first executive secretary. Turner went to work for the national CORE in 1966.

CORE, the NAACP, and other civil rights groups in 1963 organized the United Freedom Movement, which pushed for fair employment in publicly financed projects and focused particularly on segregated public schools, staging nonviolent demonstrations at the Board of Education and school sites. The coalition itself fell apart in 1966, but the larger movement achieved some victories: the election of Mayor Carl B. Stokes in 1967 and 1969 and the court-ordered desegregation of Cleveland schools in 1978.

The civil rights movement gave new direction and energy to a long-established sorority for black women, Alpha Kappa Alpha. Since its founding in 1908 at Howard University, the service organization for college students and graduates had provided vocational guidance and college scholarships to African American women, and in 1964 the sorority's more than three hundred chapters enthusiastically endorsed the landmark civil rights legislation of that year. In 1965 Alpha Kappa Alpha won a \$2 million contract to administer the Job Corps Center for women in Cleveland, one of six in the country established by the Economic Opportunity Act, where young women were taught academic and vocational skills. The membership of the Cleveland chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha indicated the professional progress that black women had achieved: members included 110 teachers, five school principals, and six assistant principals; fifteen social workers, six librarians, three nurses, three lawyers, and six women in public service. (See Figure 95.)

Inspired by the drive for racial equality and the activist political temper of the time, the contemporary women's movement took shape in the early to mid-1960s. Ultimately it would encompass hundreds of organizations and institutions and thousands upon thousands of women from all walks of life. Despite this diversity, they shared one broad goal: to challenge the myths which described women as inferior to men and assigned them subordinate roles in home, church, workplace, and public space.

Women's growing political influence had already been acknowledged by federal legislation such as the 1963 Equal Pay Act and the 1964 Civil Rights Act's prohibition against sex discrimination in employment. The movement's largest group, the National Organization for Women, founded in 1966, hoped to use political strategies to achieve the integration of women into the economic, political, and social mainstream. An early (and still unattained) goal was the passage of a federal Equal Rights Amendment, finally endorsed by the League of Women Voters and other long-established women's organizations.

By the early 1970s, Cleveland women had begun a flurry of feminist organization-building, many focused on equal opportunity in the workplace. In 1972, 42.2 percent of the women in Greater Cleveland sixteen and over were employed. They constituted 37.6 percent of the total labor force. The National

FIGURE 95. Frances P. Bolton with Dr. Zelma George and Louis Seltzer on the rooftop of Cleveland Job Corps Center for Women, 7 Sept. 1967. The center is the oldest of its kind in the nation. Western Reserve Historical Society



Organization for Women, Greater Cleveland (1970), threw itself behind the Equal Rights Amendment, supported feminist political candidates, and pressured local media to employ women. The goal of Cleveland Women Working (1975) was improved wages and conditions in the workplace. The Cleveland Coalition of Labor Union Women (1974) hoped to unionize working women and strengthen their role within unions.

The Cuyahoga Women's Political Caucus (1971) sought to improve on the gains women had made in politics. In 1974 women held 12.9 percent of Cuyahoga County's elective offices; by 1978, 18.3 percent. About 80 percent of these were on school boards and city councils. Yet no women held any of the eleven elective county offices; only three were in the state legislature, and only one, Mary Rose Oakar, was in Congress. (See Figure 96.)

Other organizations addressed new issues. The Cleveland Rape Crisis Center opened in 1974 as a telephone hotline for rape victims but expanded its services to include programs to raise public awareness about women's safety and counseling for victims of rape and sexual abuse. Following the Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade* (1973), the National Abortion Rights Advocacy League (1974) sought to guarantee women's right to a safe and legal



FIGURE 96. Politician Mary Rose Oakar addresses a crowd in July 1979. Cleveland State University Archives

abortion. Women Together (1975) opened a shelter for battered women where they also received counseling and job training.

Symbolic of the broadened constituency of the women's movement was the Greater Cleveland Congress of International Women's Year (IWY) October 25–27, 1975. As conceived by the United Nations, IWY's objective was "to define a society in which women participate in a real and full sense in economic, social, and political life and to devise strategies whereby such societies could develop." Under the leadership of Gwill York, a seasoned volunteer and past president of the Junior League, the Cleveland event, described as the biggest in the country, attracted 45,000 to 50,000 people. (See Figure 97.)

The theme of the Cleveland congress, "Toward Equal Partnership," brought together more than three hundred institutions and organizations as participants and sponsors. Long-established women's groups such as the YWCA, the Junior League, the Federation of Women's Clubs of Greater Cleveland, the Fortnightly Club, the Women's City Club, the National Council of Jewish Women, and the League of Women Voters were joined by a host of new, explicitly feminist organizations, including the Cleveland National Organization of Women, the Ohio Equal Rights Amendment Task Force, Women's Equity Action League, the Cuyahoga Women's Political Caucus, and Project Eve, Cuyahoga Community College. Also represented at the

**MARY ROSE OAKAR** (5 Mar. 1940–), a Cleveland native of working-class Lebanese-American background, in 1976 became the second Ohio woman to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Oakar, who received a B.A. from Ursuline College and an M.A. from John Carroll University, taught at Lourdes Academy and Cuyahoga Community College before running for Cleveland City Council in 1973. During her tenure in Congress, Oakar was a forceful advocate for the elderly and for women, especially for pay equity. She was defeated in 1992.





congress were a wide array of religious groups—from the B'nai B'rith Women's Council to the Sisters of St. Joseph to the Eastern Orthodox Women's Guild—and ethnic organizations—from the Karamu Women's Association and the Women's Committee of the Urban League to the Ukrainian Gold Cross and the National Council of Jewish Women. Participants came from across the economic spectrum as well. Some represented women's professional gains and aspirations: Women's Clergy of Greater Cleveland, Policewomen United, Women Historians of Greater Cleveland, the Greater Cleveland Nurses Association, and Federally Employed Women. Others addressed the economic inequities that remained: the National Welfare Rights Organization and the Women's Equity Action League. All local colleges, including some previously closed to women such as John Carroll University, were also represented. (See Figure 98.)



FIGURE 97. Cleveland athlete Frances Kaszubski, U.S. shot-put champion and 1951 Pan-American bronze medallist, flanked by such notable Cleveland women athletes as Stella Walsh and Madeline Manning Jackson, addresses a Greater Cleveland Congress International Women's Year Conference in 1975. Western Reserve Historical Society

FIGURE 98. Project Eve at Cuyahoga Community College in 1975, part of the Greater Cleveland Congress of International Women's Year project. Western Reserve Historical Society

The wide variety of workshops, lectures, and exhibits reflected this diversity. According to a special Gallup Poll prepared for the congress, the majority of Cleveland women had conventional aspirations, believing that marriage and children were necessary for "an interesting and satisfying life." Significantly, younger women and African American women were more likely to prefer combining a job with marriage and children. The congress's programs were intended to focus on these women's concerns, most of which had not been addressed by earlier generations of women: daycare, women's health, women in the media, the female chief executive, jobs for low-income women, and women in divorce. Some workshops discussed topics that had earlier been taboo: abortion, rape, lesbianism, legalizing prostitution, sexuality, and alcoholism.

Plans for a women's center were finalized during the preparations for IWY, and the result was WomenSpace, officially opened in spring 1976. WomenSpace serves as the coordinator and initiator of women's activities in the Cleveland area through its newsletters and directories of women's organizations.

Despite the indisputable progress celebrated by IWY, women—as they had since the city's beginning—constituted an alarming proportion of those in poverty. This "feminization of poverty" was dramatized by the rising number of women and children on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (formerly Aid to Dependent Children), the cash assistance program for single mothers who headed households. In 1957, 3,192 families received AFDC; in 1967, 13,099. The vast majority of these family heads were single women; the vast majority of AFDC beneficiaries—36,412 of the 47,912 in 1967—were their children, 87.3 percent of them nonwhite.

Female-headed families continued to sink into poverty. In 1969, 24,817 Cleveland families—13.4 percent of all families—had incomes below the poverty level. Of these, 13,870 were headed by women; almost all had children under eighteen living at home. Almost 24 percent were in the labor force but unable to earn enough money to lift their families out of poverty. (See Figure 99.)

In 1962 the state of Ohio cut its contribution to AFDC grants to 75 percent of the state standard for subsistence, and the next year, to 70 percent. Despite the War on Poverty launched by Lyndon B. Johnson's administration in 1964, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in 1966 declared AFDC payments in Ohio "grossly inadequate to provide support and care requisite for health and decency." A commission established by the Stokes administration in 1967 declared that the city was experiencing "a crisis in welfare."

Continued cuts in public assistance prompted the organization of the welfare rights movement. Building on earlier

grassroots activities such as the Mothers' Campaign for Welfare, the Reverend Paul Younger of St. Paul's Community Church founded Citizens United for Adequate Welfare (CUFAW) in early 1962. CUFAW staged demonstrations at the Cuyahoga County Commissioners office, Cleveland City Hall, and in 1966, a Walk for Decent Welfare to the statehouse in Columbus. In 1967 CUFAW joined the National Welfare Rights Organization. Cleveland welfare rights activists continued to pressure county officials to provide welfare recipients with basic needs and their children with free school lunches.

The movement empowered some welfare recipients to become community activists. Among these was Lillian Craig, a Cleveland native and a founder of the National Welfare Rights Organization. Unable to accept a scholarship to St. John's College, Craig was forced to go on welfare as the divorced mother of three. Her participation in CUFAW encouraged her to speak at demonstrations and rallies and to coauthor *The Welfare Rights Manual*, which explained the welfare system to recipients.

FIGURE 99. Cleveland Women Working protest low wages during National Secretaries' Week in 1978. Cleveland State University Archives



These tumultuous decades brought great progress to Cleveland women, especially those whose ethnicity or class had earlier slowed their gains. Many pioneered in the professions and politics and led and joined protest movements on behalf of others and themselves. Poverty remained, however, as Cleveland women looked toward the city's third century.



# Epilogue

BREAKING UP THE OLD ORDER: WOMEN TAKE CONTROL OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS, claimed the *Plain Dealer's* front page on August 8, 1993. Claire Freeman, executive director of the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority; Carol Cartwright, Kent State University president; Claire Van Ummersen, Cleveland State University president; Sammie Campbell Parrish, Cleveland Public Schools superintendent; Stephanie Tubbs Jones, Cuyahoga County prosecutor; and Jerry Sue Owens, Cuyahoga Community College president, were the first women in these posts. They were "not bra-burning feminists," the *Plain Dealer* reassured, even though they earned hefty salaries, ranging from \$83,000 to \$140,000, controlled multi-million-dollar budgets and hundreds of jobs, and made decisions crucial to the whole Cleveland community. They led "some of the most important, and in some instances, most troubled" of the community's public institutions: the public universities had suffered budget cuts, the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority was as riddled with scandal as its housing stock was deteriorated, and the public school system struggled with physical deterioration and the psychological and financial costs of forced busing. These talented women had put their careers at risk, and their leadership illustrated both the progress and the perils of women's lives at the end of the twentieth century. (See Figure 100.)

If the male-dominated "old order" was not dismantled during this period, it was at least challenged. Building upon the

Toward the  
Third Century,  
1980–1996



momentum of the women's movement and federal and state legislation promoting equal opportunity, women made great strides in education and the workplace, climbed the corporate and professional ladder, and emerged as highly visible political actors. Yet an increasingly conservative political climate did not always support feminist goals. In 1982 the Equal Rights Amendment failed to be ratified by the states. The administrations of Ronald Reagan and George Bush opposed an equal rights amendment and sought to curtail abortion rights. Deep cuts in social welfare programs hurt women and children most. As Cleveland approached its third century, the future of its women remained unclear.

Nor could Clevelanders predict with confidence the future of their city. A serious recession in the early 1980s and the ongoing deindustrialization of the national and local economies continued to erode the manufacturing base that had undergirded the city's prosperity for decades. More than one-third of Cleveland's manufacturing jobs disappeared between 1979 and 1991; real wages of the remaining jobs decreased 18 percent; the city continued to lose population. Yet during the administration of George V. Voinovich (1980–1990), the national media declared Cleveland a "comeback city." With the cooperation of local banks and businessmen, Voinovich made the city solvent again and initiated steps to restructure the economy by encouraging service industries, especially medicine. A downtown building boom changed the Cleveland skyline, and developers designed ambitious plans for the lakeshore.

Successful women and feminist activists made local headlines. The League of Women Voters under president Mildred (Mrs. Julian C.) Madison (see Figure 101) hosted the fourth presidential debate between Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan in 1980. In 1981 Municipal Court Judge Blanche Krupansky became the second woman ever named to the Ohio Supreme Court (the first had been Florence E. Allen). In 1982 Karen Horn was chosen president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland (she also became the first woman to be inducted into the Union Club in its 111 years). In 1984 State Representative Mary O. Boyle was elected Cuyahoga County commissioner, the first woman in that job. The Cleveland Police Department hired its first female homicide detective, and the Fire Department its first female firefighters. The Cleveland Brewers beat the Columbus Pacesetters to become the 1983 champions of the National Women's Football League. Cleveland Women Working: 9to5 picketed the National City Bank, charging it with sex discrimination, and named Sohio "Scrooge of the Year" because of the low salaries of its female employees. Hard Hatted Women rallied at Public Square, demanding that more women be hired on construction jobs and admitted to unions. *The New Cleveland Woman* publicized women's victories and struggles. WomenSpace and the National Organization of Women estab-

FIGURE 100. Prominent women institutional leaders of Cleveland in front of the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Public Square: (from left) Carol Cartwright, president of Kent State University; Cleveland State University president Claire Van Ummersen; Cleveland Public Schools superintendent Sammie Campbell Parrish; Cuyahoga County prosecutor Stephanie Tubbs Jones; and Jerry Sue Owens, president of Cuyahoga Community College, August 1993. The Plain Dealer





FIGURE 101. Mildred R. Madison addresses her city council colleagues in 1975. In 1980, the League of Women Voters, with Madison as president, brought the fourth U.S. presidential debate to Cleveland. Cleveland Public Library

**MILDRED MADISON** has been active in several areas of Cleveland politics, including Cleveland City Council, 1973–77, the Ohio Board of Education, the Cleveland Area Arts Council, and the Greater Cleveland Neighborhood Centers Association. In 1982 she received the Public Service Citizens Award for Ohio from the National Association of Social Workers.

lished the Josephine S. Irwin Award, named for the Cleveland woman who had participated in both the woman suffrage and the contemporary women’s movements; it is given annually to women who have made significant contributions to the cause of women’s rights. (See Figure 102.)

But there were disquieting stories, too. A member of the Displaced Homemakers Network warned: “Even in an era when women have made landmark strides toward political and economic equality, a sizable proportion of American women are still only one man away from poverty.” In an effort to cut welfare costs, an Ohio legislator introduced a bill that would offer three thousand dollars to any female recipient of Aid to Families with Dependent Children who underwent sterilization. (Women lawmakers pointed out that the bill did not provide similar incentives for male sterilization.) In 1987 Women Together, which had opened the city’s first shelter for battered women eleven years earlier, opened an expanded facility

because, although the organization had sheltered about 450 women and children in the preceding year, it had turned away 1,500 more. Templum House, the other facility for battered women, had housed 700 people during the same period. An estimated 3,000 homeless women and children spent Christmas Eve 1988 in the city's eight shelters for women. (See Figure 103.)

In 1993, WomenSpace, which in 1987 had opened the Zelma George Shelter, published *Assessing Our Quality of Life: Where Cleveland Area Women Stand in Education, Health, Employment and Personal Finances*. The report compared women's lives in 1970 and 1990.

Greatest gains had been made in education. Both nationally and locally, the number of women who had graduated from high school and college continued to rise, as did the proportion of women receiving graduate degrees. In 1990 women constituted 51 percent of the undergraduate enrollment in Ohio public colleges and universities, 53 percent of those enrolled in master's programs, and 43 percent of those pursuing doctorates. Most professional schools, especially law, business, and dentistry, were still dominated by men, but women were rapidly catching up in some nontraditional fields, especially medicine.

Women had joined the labor force in greater and greater numbers. In 1970, 43.4 percent of Cleveland area women worked outside the home, constituting 37.2 percent of the workforce; in 1990, 58.7 percent of all women worked outside the home, constituting 45.2 percent of the workforce. (See Figure 104.) Working women were increasingly likely to have small children. Women had greater access to nontraditional professions such as law and medicine but made only tiny gains in skilled jobs such as electricians and machinists. In 1992 only about a dozen Cleveland women had leadership positions in union locals or district offices, and only two women served on the twenty-five-member board of the AFL-CIO Federation of Labor. (See Figure 105.)

The gap between men's and women's earnings was closing. In 1970, women's median annual income for full-time work was 58.9 percent of men's; in 1990 it was 70.5 percent. Women still clustered in traditionally female occupations such as clerical work and service industries, which paid less than male-dominated occupations. Women who entered those occupations still got paid less than men, and men who entered female occupations earned more than women. (See Figure 106.)

Women made indisputable headway in local politics. Since 1923, Clevelanders had elected thirty women to city council. In 1991, nineteen women held elected political office in Cuyahoga County; they held 15 percent of the elected public offices and 21 percent of the elected judicial positions. In 1993, five-term state representative Jane Campbell was touted as a possible Democratic nominee for Ohio governor. Dr. Bernadine Healy, former director of the National Institutes of Health, aspired to the

FIGURE 102. ERA supporters lead a march down Shaker Blvd. in August 1981. Cleveland State University Archives



FIGURE 103. A rally in June 1981 against violence against women. Cleveland State University Archives





FIGURE 104. A young woman focuses on job strategies in front of a downtown employment office, from a *Cleveland Press* series on job opportunities for women in September 1981. Cleveland State University Archives

FIGURE 105. Operating Engineer Deborah Dickson operates a backhoe at the “See Jane Build” project sponsored by Hard-Hatted Women, 1993. Courtesy Hard Hatted Women

“See Jane Build,” the project of **HARD HATTED WOMEN** and staffed by members and women volunteers, built this home at 2209 E. 36th St. in conjunction with Habitat for Humanity’s Adopt-a-House project. Hard Hatted Women’s purpose is to encourage the recruitment and employment of women in nontraditional trades such as construction.

Republican nomination to the United States Senate, and Cuyahoga County Commissioner Mary O. Boyle to the Democratic nomination. (See Figure 107.)

Less optimistic was the report’s assessment of women’s health and safety, issues which had been made public by the women’s movement. Women’s life expectancy continued to lengthen more rapidly than men’s: a woman born in 1985 could expect to live seventy-eight years, a black woman five years less. Death rates for the most deadly diseases—heart disease, stroke, pneumonia, influenza, and diabetes—had dropped over the preceding quarter of a century, but heart disease, cancer, and stroke remained the leading causes of death for women. Lung cancer rates for women quadrupled (and doubled for men) between 1960 and 1984. In 1987 Cleveland women, black and white, had rates of breast and genital cancer higher than the national average. Medical research routinely ignored women, who had been excluded from national studies of heart disease, AIDS, osteoporosis, and even breast cancer. Women (and their



FIGURE 106. Cleveland native Karen Nussbaum, 1994 director of the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, and co-founder and past executive director of 9to5, the National Association of Working Women. Courtesy of the Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor



FIGURE 107. State Representative Jane Campbell, founder of the Cleveland women's organization WomenSpace, addresses the Building Blocks Conference for the prevention of Drug Abuse, November 1992. Courtesy office of State Representative Jane Campbell

dependent children) were much less likely than men to have medical insurance. The consequent lack of prenatal care helps to explain why Cleveland's infant mortality rate was almost twice the national average in 1993, making it "among the worst 10 cities in the nation."

The report presented shocking evidence that Cleveland women were less safe in their own homes and on the city streets in 1990 than two decades earlier. "Battery is the single major cause of injury to women; much more significant than automobile accidents, rapes or mugging. . . . The family setting is one of the most frequently reported areas of physical violence; preceded only by wars and riots." Two Cleveland hotlines for battered women, at the Center for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Templum House, received more than 17,500 calls in 1990, almost all from spouses, most of them women. From 1986 to 1990, the number of reported rapes rose in Cuyahoga County from 983 to 1,073, and in the city of Cleveland from 773 to 846. (Officials estimate that for every reported rape, two to ten more are committed.) (See Figure 108.)



FIGURE 108. Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Stephanie Tubbs Jones, 1993. Courtesy Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office

The most disheartening finding of *Assessing Our Quality of Life* was the persistence of women's poverty. Although the city lost population from 1980 to 1990, the number of Clevelanders who were poor continued to rise. Almost 40 percent of the city's population lived below the poverty line in 1990, an increase of 49 percent in a decade. Blacks were four times more likely than whites to be poor: more than half of the black population in Cleveland lived in poverty.

As they have since the city and private charitable agencies began keeping track, mothers without husbands had the highest risk of becoming poor, especially if the mothers were nonwhite. Single-parent female heads of household had a poverty rate seven times higher than the rate for two-parent families, making women and their children the poorest group in the city and the country. The numbers of single mothers had

continued to rise: in 1990, 22.6 percent of all families with children in Cuyahoga County were headed by women. Although the numbers of families on Aid to Families with Dependent Children increased, the mean welfare payment for households in Cleveland—\$3,644—represented a decrease due to inflation.

In conclusion, the report urged women not to take for granted the hard-won gains that some had made but to continue to press for social change. If they did not, those gains might vanish for all women. WomenSpace itself closed on April 26, 1995.

In the casket to be opened at Cleveland's bicentennial celebration, the Woman's Department of the Centennial Commission left this greeting:

**TO WOMEN UNBORN  
1896 SENDS GREETING TO 1996**

We of today reach forth our hands across the gulf of a hundred years to clasp your hands. We make you heirs to all we have and enjoin you to improve your heritage.

That rich heritage, preserved and improved, includes

- the Cleveland Institute of Art (the former Western Reserve School of Design for Women)
- the Cleveland Museum of Art
- the Cleveland Orchestra
- the Cleveland Play House
- Karamu House
- the Music School Settlement
- the Cleveland Public Library
- Lakeside Hospital of University Hospitals
- Mount Sinai Hospital
- St. Vincent Charity Hospital
- Parmadale Children's Village of St. Vincent De Paul
- Beech Brook Inc.
- Bellefaire
- Eliza Bryant Center
- Eliza Jennings Home
- the Center for Human Services, formed from Cleveland Associated Charities and the Cleveland Day Nursery Association

- the Central Branch of the Young Women's Christian Association
- Friendly Inn Settlement
- the Phillis Wheatley Association
- Hiram House Camp
- Alta House
- Merrick House
- West Side Community House
- Goodrich-Gannett Neighborhood Center
- the Jewish Community Center
- Planned Parenthood of Cleveland (formerly the Maternal Health Association)

Although proud of their city, the Woman's Department acknowledged its serious problems: "Many of the people are poor, and some are vainly seeking work at living wages. . . . Some of our children are robbed of their childhood. Vice parades our streets and disease lurks in many places that men and women call their homes."

The women of 1896, therefore, left this last challenge to the women of 1996: "WHAT ARE YOU DOING FOR CLEVELAND?"

Many of those ills remain. Poverty, especially of women and children, persists and grows. Drug dealers and gangs parade some streets. Violence robs children of their childhoods—and their lives. Thousands of Clevelanders are homeless.

Yet the women of 1996 might respond to this challenge:

- We continue to raise and support our children, often alone.
- We work in the factories, stores, and offices.
- We create and sustain Cleveland's cultural life.
- We have been elected and appointed to public posts.
- We serve the community in dozens of organizations, including the League of Women Voters, the Women's City Club, Alpha Kappa Alpha, the National Council of Jewish Women, and the Federation of Women's Clubs of Greater Cleveland.
- We staff and direct the settlements, libraries, and family service agencies.
- We teach in the daycare centers, elementary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities.
- We provide medical care in hospitals and clinics.
- We have created new institutions and agencies to care for those who cannot care for themselves: the Zelma George Shelter and Templum House; the West Side Women's Center; the East



Side Catholic Shelter; the Salvation Army Women and Children's Shelter; the Bellflower Center for Prevention of Child Abuse; Cleveland Health Care for the Homeless; and Hitchcock House.

- We have invented new ways of helping women at WomenSpace and the Women's Community Foundation.
- We work for a just world for ourselves and others in Women Speak Out for Peace and Justice, Hard Hatted Women, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Urban League, the National Association of Working Women: 9to5, the National Greater Cleveland Welfare Rights Organization, the Greater Cleveland National Organization for Women, and dozens of other organizations.

If the women of Cleveland in 1996 look less confidently to the future than did Mrs. Kate Brownlee Sherwood in 1896, they nevertheless will have left a proud legacy to the women of 2096.

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coedited with Russell Duncan.



In 1895 the city fathers of Cleveland formed the Cleveland Centennial Commission and included a separate Women's Department at the urging of Mary Bigelow Ingham. This led to the production of the groundbreaking study of women and the history of Cleveland entitled *Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve*.

*Women in Cleveland: An Illustrated History*, a project of the Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, continues the work begun in the pioneering 1895 research. Now, however, thanks to modern technology and the rich array of picture sources, it is possible to put the emphasis on representations of the lives of women in Cleveland.

The author and editors have assembled more than 200 pictures, many of them organized in fascinating photo essays on the following topics: Growing Up, Sports and Recreation, Marriage and the Family, Work, Fashion, Clubs and Associations, and Growing Old.

The text covers women's activities in various phases of Cleveland's history: the difficult pioneer period of 1796 to 1830; a time of definition, religion, and reform from 1830 to 1865; the role of women in providing social services in the period from 1860 to 1930; women in the work force and professions; women as practitioners and patrons of the arts; the suffragette period; the Depression and World War II; the increased opportunities for women from 1850 to 1980; and the situation of women in Cleveland today.

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The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History: Illustrated Volumes

EDITED BY DAVID D. VAN TASSEL AND JOHN J. GRABOWSKI

*Indiana University Press*

BLOOMINGTON AND INDIANAPOLIS

