
Parents and Foster Parents, Shapers of Progressive Era Child Saving Practices: A Case Study, Tippecanoe County, Indiana, 1887–1916

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The Progressive Era, which spanned the years between the turn of the century and World War I, was a transitional period during which the United States adjusted to the changes brought about by industrialization and urbanization. One of those changes was the growing number of the poor. Interest came to be centered on the care of dependent children as a panacea for this visible poverty. Many progressives thought that moving these children from the bad influences of their home environment to a more wholesome one would free the United States from poverty, crime, and vice in the future. It became almost a moral imperative to separate dependent children from indigent parents who were unable, and therefore unfit, to support them, thereby to rescue the child and save the nation. All over the country enthusiastic reformers joined together and formed associations to do this rescue work.¹

The main motive of the child savers of the Progressive Era would appear to have been social control. They sought to influence the behavior of children by inculcating the values and norms of the middle class, thus bringing the children into the social system they

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¹ For an overview of the Progressive Era in general see Arthur S. Link and Richard L. McCormick, *Progressivism* (Arlington Heights, Ill., 1983). For overviews of child saving in the Progressive Era see Michael B. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York, 1986), 113-45; Susan Tiffin, *In Whose Best Interest? Child Welfare Reform in the Progressive Era* (Westport, Conn., 1982); Walter I. Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America* (New York, 1974), 96-115.

felt was threatened. However, research into the practices of the children's institutions during this time give a much more complex picture than that of mere child saving. Children's institutions, sponsored by many religious and ethnic groups in different sections of the country, varied widely and employed diverse methods.² Some institutions were founded not to rescue children but to help sick parents who were unable to care for their children during epidemics of cholera or with diseases such as tuberculosis. On closer examination, rather than concentrating on clearly-defined social controlling behaviors, child savers often seemed to be in over their heads and, as Ronald D. Cohen says, "groping for answers to problems they only dimly understood."³

Nevertheless, many scholars dealing with specific children's institutions relate their findings to the narrow debate over the reformers' motives. Was it social control or benevolence? Did child savers act from self-interest to insure a social order that favored them, or did they act altruistically? Some critics of welfare history have called for a more comprehensive approach to child saving research—one that reaches beyond the institutional bias of the social control/benevolence debates to include interactive groups (especially clients) and their influence on the policies and practices of the institution. Clarke A. Chambers's trenchant analysis, for example, denigrates welfare historians for focusing on the provision and management of social services and ignoring the role of the

² Two authors who point out diversity among child saving methods are Leroy Ashby, *Saving the Waifs: Reformers and Dependent Children, 1890-1917* (Philadelphia, 1984); and Peter C. Holloran, *Boston's Wayward Children: Social Services for Homeless Children, 1830-1930* (Rutherford, N.J., 1989). Some studies of individual child savings efforts are Jeanne Abrams, "For a Child's Sake: Denver's Sheltering Home for Jewish Children in the Progressive Era," *American Jewish History*, LXXIX (1989-90), 181-202; Prissilla Ferguson Clement, "Families and Foster Care: Philadelphia in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Social Service Review*, LIII (March, 1979), 406-20; Thomas W. Cowger, "Custodians of Social Justice: The Indianapolis Asylum for Friendless Colored Children, 1870-1922," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXXXVIII (June, 1992), 93-110; Susan Whitelaw Downs and Michael W. Sheriden, "The Orphan Asylum in the Nineteenth Century," *Social Service Review*, LVII (June, 1983), 272-90; Arthur E. Fink, "Changing Philosophies and Practices in North Carolina Orphanages," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, XLVIII (October, 1971), 333-58; R. S. Patterson and Patricia Rooke, "The Delicate Duty of Child Saving: Coldwater, Michigan, 1871-1896," *Michigan History*, LXI (Fall, 1977), 195-219; Gary E. Polster, "To Love Work and Dislike Being Idle: Origins and Aims of the Cleveland Jewish Orphan Asylum, 1868-1878," *American Jewish Archives*, XXXIX (1987), 127-56; Miri Zmora, "A Rediscovery of the Asylum: The Hebrew Orphan Asylum Through the Lives of its First Fifty Orphans," *American Jewish History*, LXXVII (1988) 452-75.

³ Prissilla Ferguson Clement, "Orphanages in New Orleans, 1817-1914," *Louisiana History*, XXVII (1986), 337-51; Ann N. Morris, "The History of St. Louis Protestant Orphan Asylum," *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin*, XXXVI (January, 1980), 80-91; Marian J. Morton, "Homes for Poverty's Children: Cleveland Orphanages, 1851-1933," *Ohio History*, XCVIII (1989), 2-22; Ronald D. Cohen, "Child Saving and Progressivism, 1885-1915," in Joseph M. Hawes and N. Ray Hiner, *American Childhood: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook* (Westport, Conn., 1985), 273-309.

dependent poor. Bruce Bellingham takes a similar stand by pointing out a false assumption in the motive debate: that institutions' policies are imposed from above on passive, malleable subjects. He suggests that the child saving social controllist rhetoric was written over an "*actual practice* in which quite unreconstructed family strategies were facilitated." He proposes that in fact child savers did not often radically intervene in families.⁴ Both Chambers and Bellingham note the lack of focus by historians on ways in which poor parents used children's institutions for their own ends. Without a focus on parental behavior and resulting institutional action, previous analyses of changes in the practices and policies of children's institutions have been incomplete.

To find out how child saving organizations truly functioned it is necessary to examine them in their local context. This study of one child saving organization in Tippecanoe County, Indiana, goes beyond the narrow motive debate approach. Although it necessarily has an institutional focus, the Board Minutes and Annual Reports of the Tippecanoe County Children's Home Association (TCCHA) being the principal sources,⁵ this study includes three related groups: the parents of children placed in the Tippecanoe County Children's Home; the foster parents the TCCHA recruited; and the state agency that came to oversee the TCCHA, the Indiana Board of State Charities. What role, if any, did each of these three entities have in shaping the practices and the policies of the TCCHA during the thirty-year Progressive Era? And what was the relationship of the TCCHA's actual practices to its stated policies?

In 1890 Tippecanoe County was a burgeoning agricultural and commercial center. Situated in the northwest portion of Indiana in the Upper Wabash Valley, the area prospered because of its fertile loam soil and the development of its transportation possibilities:

⁴ For the social control argument in general see Francis F. Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (New York, 1971); and William Muraskin, "The Social Control Theory in American History: A Critique," *Journal of American History*, LX (June, 1973), 23-41. For the social control interpretation specific to children see Anthony M. Platt, *The Child Savers: The Invention of Delinquency* (Chicago, 1969); W. Andrew Achenbaum, "W(h)ither Social Welfare History," *Journal of Social History*, XXIV (Fall, 1990), 135-41; Bruce Bellingham, "Institution and Family: An Alternative View of Nineteenth Century Child Saving," *Social Problems*, XXXIII (October/December, 1986), s33-s57; Clarke A. Chambers, "Toward a Redefinition of Welfare History," *The Journal of American History*, LXXIII (September, 1986), 407-33; Peter L. Tyor and Jamil S. Zainaldin, "Asylum and Society: An Approach to Institutional Change," *Journal of Social History*, XIII (Fall, 1979), 23-43; Bellingham, "Institution and Family," s51.

⁵ *Tippecanoe County Children's Home Association Board Minutes*, Vol. 1-5 (December 30, 1886–November 4, 1927); hereafter cited as *CHAM*; *Tippecanoe County Children's Home Association Annual Reports*, Vol. 1 (1886–1905), Vol. 2 (1906–1929); *Tippecanoe County Children's Home Inmate Register*, Vol. 1 (January 20, 1887–September 14, 1894), Vol. 2 (July 24, 1906–September 14, 1937), all located at the Alameda McCollough Library, Tippecanoe County Historical Association, Lafayette, Indiana.

the Wabash River; the Wabash and Erie Canal; and four railroads. Although Tippecanoe County had failed to attract a large amount of industry and had an extremely small population of foreign-born residents (around 10 percent), it still had experienced a huge change from its rural beginnings. It was home to 188 small industries, employing 2,746 wage earners. In one generation its county seat, Lafayette, had grown from a handful of rude cabins in a wilderness to a bustling railroad center of over sixteen thousand people. During the next thirty years, between 1890 and 1920, Lafayette's population grew by 38 percent to 20,218, making up half of the county's population (40,063). The value of the county's manufactured products increased from 4.7 million in 1890 to 13.1 million in 1920, partly because of the relocation of the Monon Railroad shops to Lafayette.⁶

In December of 1886, just as the Progressive Era was dawning, a small group of concerned citizens of Tippecanoe County formed the Tippecanoe County Children's Home Association; and the very next month four children were moved from the County Poor Farm into the new County Children's Home. During the thirty years of this study, from 1887 to 1916, 840 children were admitted to the home for the first time. About half as many, 464, were readmitted. The population of the home remained about the same from decade to decade; the yearly average of first time admittees varied only from twenty-five to thirty. The home housed an equal number of boys and girls. Almost 90 percent of the entrants were under twelve years of age, with the majority of the children being between three and eight. Most of the children came from one-parent families, but the percentage with two parents steadily increased from just 16 percent between 1887 and 1896 to about 32 percent between 1897 and 1906. The percentage grew to 43 percent between 1907 and 1916. (See Graph A.) About two-thirds of the children arrived at the home with their siblings. Parental destitution and poor relief were the main reasons for commitment to the children's home throughout the entire thirty-year period.⁷

At about the same time that the TCCHA was being organized, another group of reform-minded citizens in Indianapolis were lob-

⁶ *Abstract of Returns of Fifth Census of the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1832), 34; *Bureau of the Census: Abstract of the Twelfth Census of the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1904), 155, 370; *Abstract of the Fourteenth Census of the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1923), 29, 60; *Ninth Census of the United States: Statistics of Population* (Washington, D.C., 1872), 26; *Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890: Vol. I, Population*, 410; *Report on Manufacturing Industries in the United States at the Eleventh Census, 1890, Part I*, 1895; Carl Leonard Jorosz, "The Industrialization of Lafayette, Indiana, 1850-1900: A Half Century of Frustration," (M.A. thesis, Purdue University, 1975); George W. Starr, "Industrial Development of Indiana," *Indiana University Studies in Business*, No. 14; Bloomington, Ind., 1937.)

⁷ *CHAM*, December 30, 1886, January 11, 1887; *Lafayette Sunday Times*, January 16, 1887; These numbers are based upon a compilation from the monthly board minutes, as are all following numbers, percentages, and graphs.



Three rented rooms in this building on Columbia Street became the first location of the Tippecanoe County Children's Home, which opened on January 20, 1887.

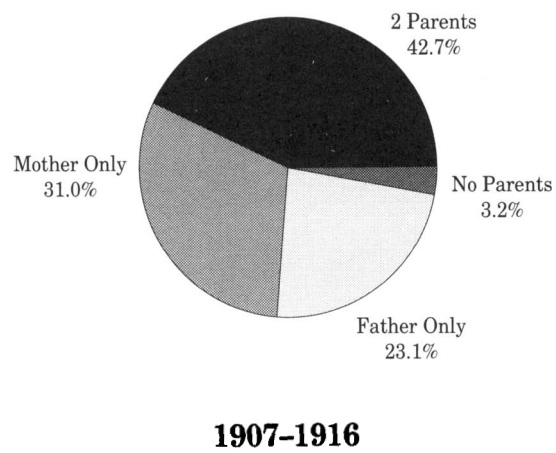
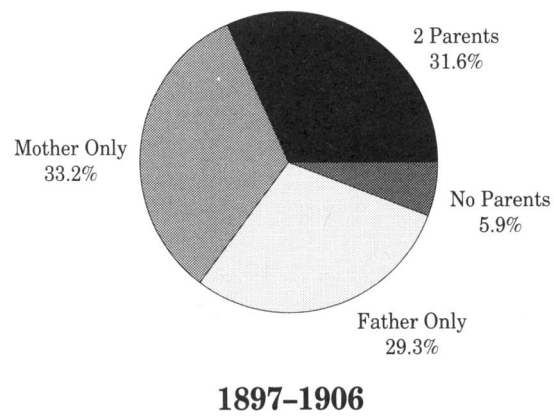
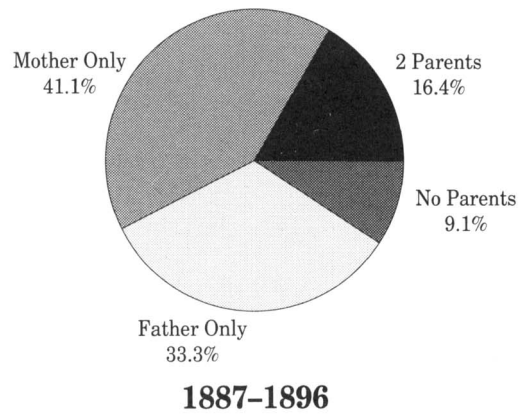
Courtesy Tippecanoe County Historical Association.



The Tippecanoe County Children's Home moved to this rented house on Twelfth Street (now Greenbush Avenue) on April 1, 1887.

Courtesy Tippecanoe County Historical Association.

A. Inmates' Parental Status



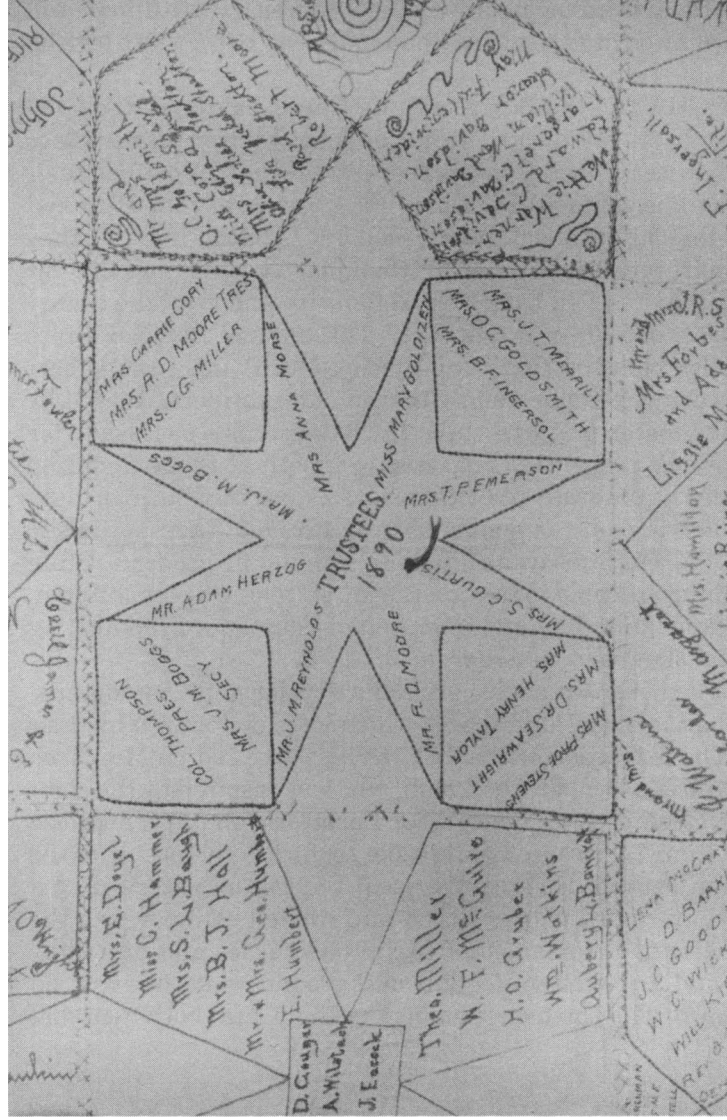
bying for a central agency to oversee all public charities in Indiana. After a first bill failed in 1886, the Board of State Charities was finally created by legislative action in 1889.⁸ This board was charged with the duty of investigating the whole system of public charities. The board gave immediate attention to the problem of child welfare, and its members visited children's institutions, collected information, and made recommendations to the state legislature.

The TCCHA and the Board of State Charities shared the opinion that the best way to care for dependent children was to place them out in foster homes. The members of the TCCHA defined their child saving mission as that of providing temporary institutional care until the children could be placed out in "good homes"; they believed their work benefited more than just the child and that for every child they rescued from "a life of misery and vice" the county was "spared a pauper or a criminal." The Indiana Board of State Charities also believed that "The Placing Out Plan" was the best method of caring for dependent children and that being reared by "industrious foster parents" gave the experiences necessary for "intelligent self respecting citizenship." Both of these fledgling organizations at the state and local level saw institutions in an auxiliary role, serving only as temporary way stations. Their optimistic faith in placing out foresaw no difficulties in finding good substitute parents willing and able to take on the job of raising foster children. Neither organization had any intention of helping or even dealing with parents of dependent children.⁹

Although these two bodies shared a similar child saving mission, they had inherent differences which were epitomized by their founders. The formation of the TCCHA was sparked by Mrs. Tom Cory, the wife of a local businessman, who was inspired by the sight of small children at the County Poor Farm; she simply wanted to rescue children. To accomplish this she turned to the pastor of the Presbyterian church. He with the local Baptist minister called a meeting of interested people—men and women connected to the town's successful agrarian/commercial businesses and united by social ties and a shared protestant background, who then formed the first board. The thirteen members of the board, both men and

⁸ Genevieve C. Weeks, "Oscar C. McCulloch: Leader in Organized Charity," *Social Service Review*, XXXIX (June, 1965), 209-21; "State of Indiana Laws Concerning Children," *Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections*, XLIV (March, 1926), 9-10.

⁹ *Tippecanoe County Children's Home Association's Annual Reports*, Articles of Association (Article I), 1; *ibid.*, By Laws of Association (Article 8, Section 2), 6; *ibid.*, January 10, 1888, 16; *First Report of the Board of State Charities* (March 1, 1889–October 31, 1890), 54; *Fifth Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1893–October 31, 1894), 72.



In 1890 the board of the children's home raised \$100.00 for the home by charging ten cents for each name embroidered on this album quilt.

Courtesy Tipppecanoe County Historical Association.

women, were drawn from the same protestant, middle-class, Republican pool throughout the years.¹⁰

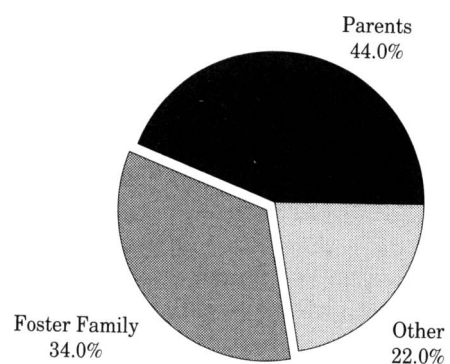
Oscar McCulloch, on the other hand, had a much larger goal in mind than just saving children when he lobbied for a state board of charities. Although he was the pastor of a Congregational church in Indianapolis, his motivation was more secular than religious; he sought efficiency in charities through planned state legislation and wanted to create “order out of chaos.” This goal followed from his decade-long involvement in the charity organization society movement. He had studied organized charity methods in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia and then had founded and led the Indianapolis Charity Organization Society. After the Board of State Charities was established, McCulloch, as a member of the new board, handpicked the first secretary of that board, Alexander Johnson, another experienced organized charity worker from Cincinnati. These men were the equivalent of professional social workers, although social work had not yet been established as an academic field. The secretary and his successors shaped policy and dominated the state board. In contrast to the Board of State Charities, the TCCHA had no paid professional administrator and was run entirely by its volunteer board.¹¹

The TCCHA’s goal to save children by placing them out in substitute families ran into difficulties almost immediately. Only about one-third (34 percent) of children leaving the home were placed out with foster parents between 1887 and 1896, and this figure diminished in the succeeding decades to 29 percent between 1897 and 1906 and to 17 percent between 1907 and 1916. (See Graph B.) Why

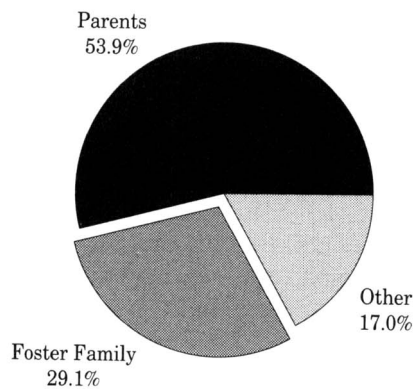
¹⁰ A short, undated history written by Frances Boggs, secretary of the TCCHA from 1887 through 1925 (Alameda McCollough Library) describes the thirteen-member board. A small core were active leaders over many years. The first president, Colonel Chester G. Thomson, was a Presbyterian, a Republican, and a businessman who owned a small meatpacking business; he was replaced after twenty-one years by Albert Jamison, who was a Baptist, a Republican, and a businessman (Jamison Brothers Hardware). Frances Boggs, a Baptist and the wife of a successful farmer, John (who was also on the board), was the secretary for over thirty years. The post of treasurer was held by Emma Moore, a Baptist and the wife of a dealer in real estate and loans (Ralph D., also a board member) for twenty-eight years. The annual fund drive was in the charge of Anna Curtis for eleven years; she was an Episcopalian and the wife of a dealer in dry goods and notions.

¹¹ Frank Dekker Watson, *The Charity Organization Movement in the United States: A Study of American Philanthropy* (New York, 1922), 203. For an in-depth picture of the Indiana reformer Oscar McCulloch see Genevieve C. Weeks, *Oscar Carlton McCulloch, 1843–1891: Preacher and Practitioner of Applied Christianity* (Indianapolis, 1976); For an overview of the charity organization movement see Katz, *Poor House*, 58–84, and for the Indiana Charity Organization Society see Watson, *Charity Organization Movement*, 202–204, 258–63; Although the state board consisted of six members appointed by the governor (three of each political party, both men and women), they followed the lead of the secretary. For more on the leadership of Oscar McCulloch and the first three secretaries, Alexander Johnson, Ernest P. Bicknell, and Amos W. Butler, see John A. Brown, *Historical Sketches of Public Welfare in Indiana and Indiana State Conference on Social Work* (Indianapolis, 1963), 21–22; and Alexander Johnson, *Adventures in Social Welfare* (Fort Wayne, Ind., 1923), 81–169.

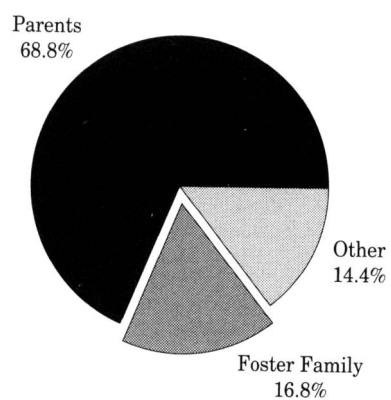
B. First Placement from Children's Home



1887-1896



1897-1906



1907-1916

were so few foster placements made when placing out was the method of choice? The TCCHA could not achieve its goal alone. It needed the cooperation of both the natural parents of the dependent children and the substitute parents who would provide the foster home: natural parents were required to sign a release surrendering their child for placing out, and substitute parents had to volunteer for fostering and then carry through by rearing the child. This essential cooperation was not easy to achieve, as the TCCHA soon discovered.

Although some natural parents were willing to release their children for placement in foster homes, many parents did not want to sign away their children and took them back rather than give them up. This problem was immediately evident and so severe that at the end of the first year of operation the association petitioned for a state law to place children of unfit parents in "good hands without interference." In addition to their emotional reasons for wanting to keep their own children, families often needed the child's contribution to keep the family afloat. In an 1887 case, for instance, parents coaxed their seven-year-old son away from the home to "beg in the streets." In 1888 a mother took her twelve-year-old daughter back so that she could work in the paper mill.¹²

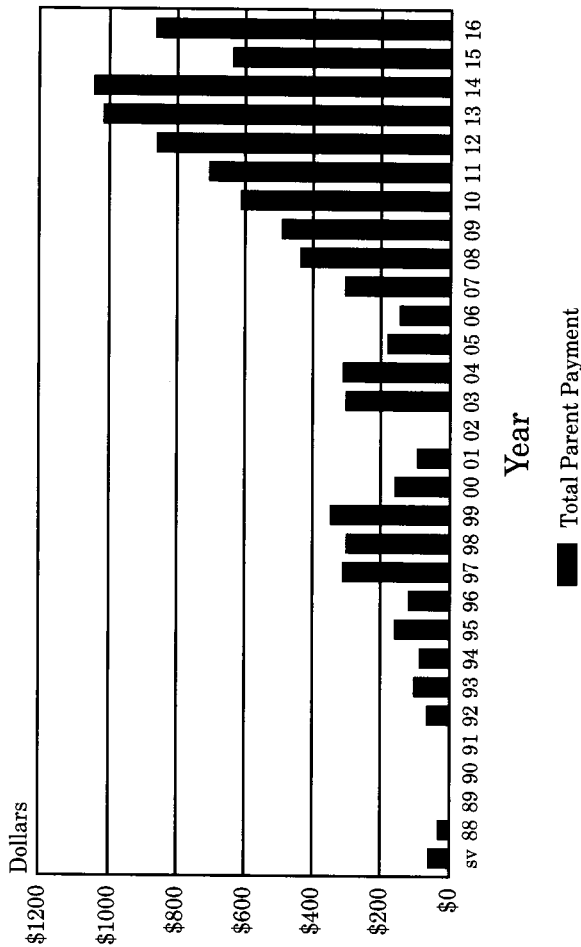
Despite the association's vigilance, determined parents managed to "steal" their children. Even those who had been successfully placed out were not safe. For instance, one of the home's first residents, Edna F., was lured from a foster home back to her "miserable" one and was lamented as "a ruined girl, now." The TCCHA attempted to make it plain that placed out children now "belonged to the home" and held many discussions about ways to get back children who had been "spirited away" by their parents. But the problem of interfering, non-cooperative parents remained and vexed the association during the entire period from 1887 through 1916.¹³

Clearly, some parents actively blocked the TCCHA's child saving plans. Others used the children's home for personal reasons. A precedent was set in April of 1887 (the first year of operation) when Robert C., a one-year-old, was taken into the home for a two-and-a-half week stay at his parents' request. They paid \$7.50 for his board. Another precedent was established a few months later, when

¹² *Tippecanoe County Children's Home Association Annual Reports*, January 11, 1888, 10; *Tippecanoe County Children's Home Inmate Register*, 2; *CHAM* Vol. 1, March 11, 1889.

¹³ *CHAM*, Vol. 4, February 9, 1907; All names of parents and children in this article are fictitious; *ibid.*, Vol. 1, June 13, 1887; *Tippecanoe County Children's Home Inmate Register*, 1; *CHAM*, Vol. 1, March 14, 1888; *ibid.*, Vol. 2, February 10, 1896; *ibid.*, Vol. 3, May 11, 1903, June 11, 1903; *ibid.*, Vol. 4, June 10, 1910; *ibid.*, Vol. 5, November 11, 1915; *ibid.*, Vol. 1, June 13, 1887, March 14, 1888, May 11, 1889, January 8, 1891; *ibid.*, Vol. 2, June 6, October 8, November 10, 1894, September 10, 1895; *ibid.*, Vol. 3, May 11, June 11, 1903.

C. Parent Payments for Board



1887 – 1916

the Reception Committee accepted a sick mother with five children, expecting her “to be a substantial help for the matron” as soon as she was well. She did work as a domestic in the children’s home in return for her family’s board.¹⁴

Although directors of the TCCHA had not envisioned the organization as a provider of temporary care at the request of parents, they gradually accepted this role as needy families asked for help. In the first decade eighteen children were supported by mothers working in the home and forty-two more were paid for by parents. This was just 17 percent of the total. The percentage of children whose parents had placed them in the home temporarily increased to 34 percent between 1898 and 1906 and to 69 percent in the 1907 to 1916 time period. The steady increase in paid temporary placements brought in larger and larger fees that were included in the treasurer’s annual report. (See Graph C.)

The reasons for parents’ requesting to board their children varied widely. One widower placed his three children in accordance with his wife’s death-bed wish. A mother who had run away from an abusive husband needed child care to enable her to work as a live-in domestic. In general, children with two parents were much less likely to be boarded than those with only one parent. Only 30 percent of the children supported by paying or working parents were from two-parent families. These children also stayed for shorter periods of time. The median length of stay for children with two parents was just thirty-five days, it was forty-one days for those with just mothers and fifty days for those with fathers only. Often, when one of two parents was incapacitated, the couple’s children were boarded just until that parent recovered. For example, in 1915, a father placed five children in the home and paid \$7 a week for their care while their mother was hospitalized.¹⁵

Rather than being boarded just for the duration of a temporary setback, children with one parent frequently were placed for longer periods because of chronic need; their mothers or fathers, trapped in low-paying labor and domestic jobs, were unable to work and care for children at the same time. Many of them kept in touch with their children, however, both visiting them in the home and taking them out for visits. For instance, when Mrs. S.’s employer, Dr. Coulter, went on vacation, he allowed her to take her children into his house for the summer. A similar case involved a single father who took back his son temporarily while he was laid off from his job at the Monon Shops. Often a remarriage allowed for the reunification of the family. In 1913, for example, Mr. H. reclaimed his children after he married a “good sensible” woman “with a few acres

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, April 11, August 11, 1887.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, June 13, 1887; *ibid.*, Vol. 5, September 11, February 11, 1915.

near Stockwell." Sometimes luck made reunification possible. In 1907 a mother who had boarded her children at the home for two years took them back after she inherited some money from a relative and bought a farm.¹⁶

The TCCHA ran its temporary boarding service as a business. Parents who needed to have their children cared for at the home could apply to the Reception Committee. The committee judged the worthiness of the situation and arranged for some sort of payment from the parents. The actual amount was adjusted to the individual case. In 1894, for example, Mrs. O. paid half of her three-dollar-a-week salary as a domestic for one of her children, while the township trustee paid for the other child out of poor relief funds. Mothers frequently worked at the children's home to pay their children's board, an arrangement which gave the matron some much-needed help. The TCCHA terminated the agreement when the mother's work did not meet expectations; one mother was sent back to the County Poor Farm with her child, because she made more work "than she accomplished." Some mothers left when they found a better situation, which was the case for one woman in 1894 who worked in the home just until she could find a place to sew.¹⁷

The TCCHA was unsentimental about payment for services rendered and often had meetings to discuss ways to extract outstanding amounts owed. In July of 1898 when little Charles B. died in the home, the TCCHA was careful to charge his mother for the expenses of his medical care and funeral. After the Board of Children's Guardians and the Juvenile Court were formed in Tippecanoe County in 1906 and 1907, the TCCHA referred defaulting parents to these bodies for legal action. Very few parents were allowed to place their children gratis, and then only under special circumstances and for a limited time. The February, 1916, board minutes noted such a case of "real Charity" when they kept five siblings, aged two to eleven, while their widowed mother recuperated from an operation.¹⁸

Even though the TCCHA had accommodated its practices to fit natural parents' needs, it still clung to and promoted the idea of child saving by placing out. If parents were unable to make their payments, they were expected to release their children for placement in foster homes. For instance, in 1913 a defaulting mother was given three choices: pay up, come get the child, or sign him

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, April 7, 1913, February 11, 1915, April 17, 1913; *ibid.*, Vol. 4, March 11, 1907.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, May 11, June 6, 1894; *ibid.*, Vol. 1, March 14, 1888; *ibid.*, Vol. 2, February 9, 1894.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, April 10, 1894, July 12, September 7, 1897, January 8, 1898; *ibid.*, Vol. 4, December 9, 1912; *ibid.*, Vol. 2, July 8, 1898; *Tippecanoe County Board of Children's Guardians Minutes*, January 18, 1910 (Alameda McCullough Library); *CHAM*, Vol. 5, February 10, 1916, March 11, 1915.

away. At the time of this ultimatum the mother, a live-in domestic, had paid \$50.75 but still owed \$45.50; she had fallen behind because of sickness. As was explained in an annual report, "If there seems to be no hope that they [the parents] will be able to take the children and support them, we often can then persuade them to let us place the child in a good home and thus save the county from another pauper."¹⁹

The TCCHA's annual reports reflect a changing attitude toward parents' worthiness. At first the reports gave only negative accounts of the children's home environments, describing the "filth and degradation" of "homes of vicious poverty" where the children's "bright active minds were traced with defacing lines seamed and scarred by premature conflict with sin and life's bitterness—the laws of heredity in the balance against them." These reports also deplored the children's return to their parents, expecting them to be "dragged down to their [the parents'] wretched habits." Such child-saving rhetoric gave the impression that all the parents with whom the association dealt were unfit to raise their own children.²⁰

In the years between 1897 and 1906 the portrayal of parents in the annual reports softened. While some still contained derogatory elements (one even expressed the wish that the children were all orphans so that the association did not have to fear their return to the low level of their parents), others presented parents in a more positive light, conceding that just being poor did "not always destroy the parental love." After 1906, negative descriptions of parental homes were almost entirely absent in the annual reports. The larger environment, "the temptations and pitfalls of the world," were now identified as evil.²¹

Descriptions of the TCCHA's growing service of parental boardings began to appear in the annual reports of the second decade. In 1898, for example, the report told of parents "who paid a little something" toward their children's board until they could "again take them and care for them."²² These descriptions of the boarding service, however, did not reveal the fact that it was becoming the home's primary service.

The TCCHA's added service of temporary boarding was in conflict with the policy of the Board of State Charities on ways to help dependent children. Although the state board realized that temporary board was provided by many of the county orphan homes, including the one in Tippecanoe County, they deplored it. Writings

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, January 7, 1913; *ibid.*, Vol. 3, June 11, 1903; *ibid.*, Vol. 4, September 9, 1913; *Tippecanoe County Children's Home Association Annual Reports*, January 12, 1898, 69.

²⁰ *Tippecanoe County Children's Home Association Annual Reports*, January 12, 1892, 41, January 10, 1893, 49, January 9, 1894, 52.

²¹ *Ibid.*, January 12, 1898, 68, January 29, 1914.

²² *Ibid.*, January 12, 1898, 69.

in its annual reports lobbied against this “objectionable feature” that allowed parents who were “well able to support their children” to shift their responsibility to others. They saw the large numbers of children who were returned to parents from orphan homes as proof that the parents were receiving unwarranted aid.²³

The efforts of the Board of State Charities resulted in the enactment of state laws that made it impossible to support children in orphan homes with public funds unless they were released by their parents and made wards. The new laws brought a more constrictive legal procedure to effect wardship. But legal changes did not eliminate the practice of accepting temporary placements at orphan homes. The placements were still made and were paid for in other ways, such as private donations or parental payments. However, even if parents themselves were required to pay to “the point of self denial,” the state board still opposed temporary arrangements, calling them “of doubtful value” because they made it too easy for parents to shirk their responsibilities.²⁴

The state board’s negative attitude toward parents and parent boarding, unaffected by actual interactions with parents, remained essentially unchanged. To the Board of State Charities poor parents remained suspect. They were seen as leading their children “into pauperdom” by teaching them that it was “unnecessary . . . to engage in honest employment or to master a trade or education or occupation requiring time or effort.” The state board felt that parents of dependent children could and should obtain help only from existing county poor relief; even then, the board averred, the children were “supported in idleness or dissipation.”²⁵

Natural parents were not the only obstructions to the TCCHA’s goal of saving children by placing them out in substitute families. Child saving required substitute parents willing to commit to the rearing of a foster child. The TCCHA had trouble finding and keeping such foster parents.

Becoming a foster parent in Tippecanoe County was not difficult. The TCCHA gave lip service to concern over the quality of the foster homes, saying, “All possible care is taken to ascertain that the home offered is a desirable one.” Applicants, however, were only

²³ *Fourth Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1892–October 31, 1893), 76–77; *Seventh Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1895–October 31, 1896), 26; *Twelfth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1900–October 31, 1901), 96–98; *Thirteenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1901–October 31, 1902), 130–31; *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1905–October 31, 1906), 22–23; *ibid.* (November 1, 1905–October 31, 1906), 22–23.

²⁴ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1906–September 30, 1907), 119; *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (October 1, 1907–September 30, 1908), 16–17; *Twelfth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1900–October 31, 1901), 97–98.

²⁵ *Seventh Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1895–October 31, 1896), 27.

Highest of all in Leavening Power.—Latest U. S. Govt. should Use

Royal Baking Powder

ABSOLUTELY PURE

<p>Homes Wanted.</p> <p>The Children's home have a number of children for whom they would like to secure good homes in the country. MRS. J. M. BÖGGS, C. G. THOMSON, Pres. Secretary.</p>	<p>Harper's Bazar.</p> <p>During the month of April Harper's Bazar will furnish valuable information to women on the changes of fashions incident to the season, and will give particular attention to wedding toilettes, brides' and bridesmaids' gowns, and everything belonging to a church or home wedding. Children's clothing in illustration and descrip-</p>
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Cripple Creek via Colorado Springs.
The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway is 4 HOURS quicker from Chi-

An advertisement for foster parents placed by the Tippecanoe County Children's Home in the *Lafayette Home Journal* of April 13, 1896.

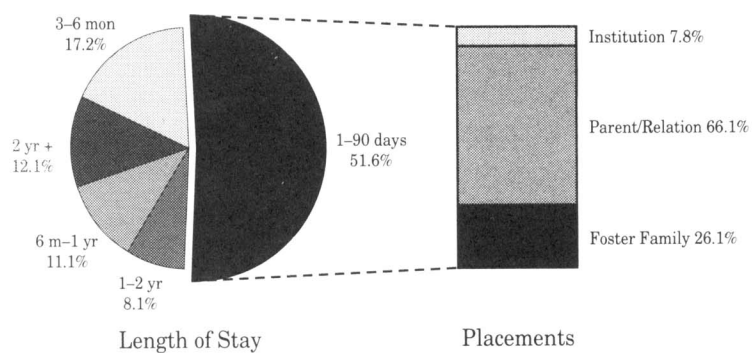
asked to submit one or two references. Sometimes even this minimal check was ignored. The board minutes of September, 1894, describe an unknown man who appeared at the door during a board meeting "wanting to take a child on trial." The stranger was given Mary C. on the spot after only a hasty consultation, "although he was a Catholic." Not only was it easy to become a foster parent, but, if the children did not please, it was also easy to dump them. The TCCHA gave assurances that children who did not prove satisfactory "would be taken back without hesitancy"; any child could be taken "on trial" and returned at any time with no questions asked.²⁶

The excessive length of time between placement in the children's home and placing out in a foster family indicates the TCCHA's difficulty in finding enough foster homes. Children were to be placed out "as soon as practicable,"²⁷ and about half of the residents were out within ninety days; but very few of those went to foster homes. The majority of those placed within three months of arrival were returned to their own families; from 1887 to 1906 only about 26 percent went to foster families. This small percentage was reduced to 12 percent in the years between 1907 and 1916. (See Graph D.) On average, children waiting to be placed in a foster home stayed at the children's home twice as long (402 days) as those who returned to their own families (192 days). (See Graph E.)

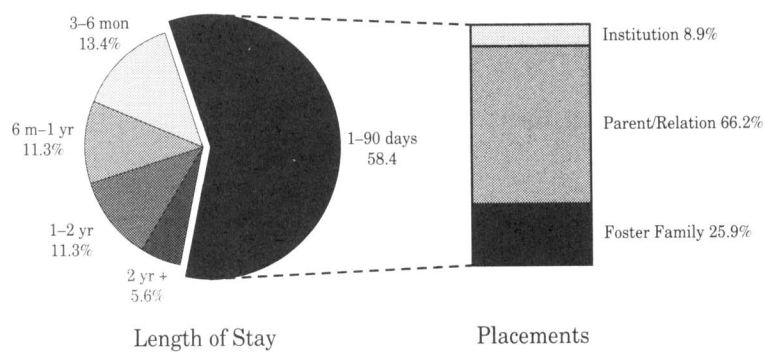
²⁶ *Tippecanoe County Children's Home Association Annual Reports*, January 10, 1888, 16; *CHAM*, Vol. 2, September 11, 1894.

²⁷ *Tippecanoe County Children's Home Association Annual Reports*, January 10, 1888, 16.

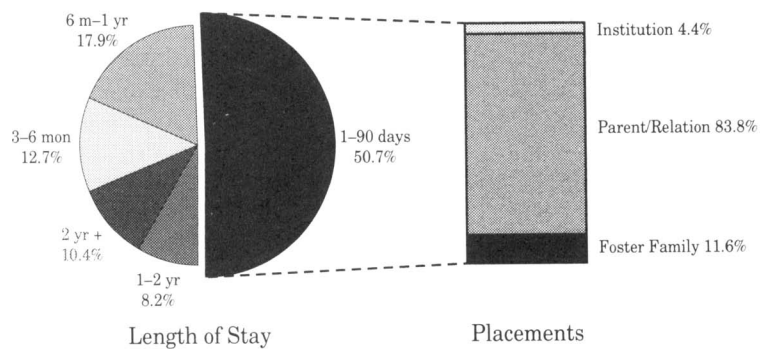
D. Length of Stay & Placement



1887 - 1896

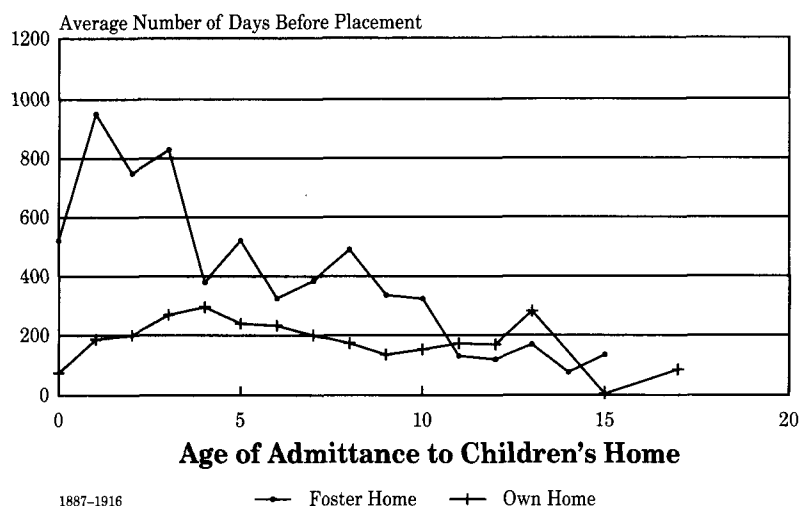


1897 - 1906



1907 - 1916

E. Length of Time Before Placement in Foster Home or Own Home



Another indication of the lack of available foster homes was the concern of the Tippecanoe County commissioners over costs at the children's home. A child at the children's home cost the taxpayers a twenty-five-cent per diem, while a child in a foster home cost taxpayers nothing. In 1894 and 1896 the commissioners called on the TCCHA to explain why children remained in the children's home so long instead of being rapidly placed out in foster homes. To recruit more homes the TCCHA in 1896 advertised in the newspapers for country homes for children, just as they had asked for places for boys on farms in 1889.²⁸

Additionally, the TCCHA board members welcomed outside help in recruiting families. From 1894 to 1896 they used the service of the Children's Home Society, a private statewide placing agency. In 1896 a city missionary, Mrs. Brown, arranged many placements and even took children to the annual meeting of Quakers held at the Farmer's Institute to introduce them to possible foster parents. Beginning in 1897, state legislation gave the TCCHA a partner in the job of finding "good homes": a state agent who was to assist in the placement of children and their subsequent supervision. By 1916 there were eight state employees doing this work; nonetheless, the help of the state did not eliminate the problems with supply. As was previously noted, the percentage of foster placements in

²⁸ *CHAM*, Vol. 2, June 9, July 12, 1894, April 13, 1896; *ibid.*, Vol. 1, July 8, 1889; *ibid.*, Vol. 2, April 13, 1896.



The Watson property on the corner of Heath and Tenth streets served as the children's home from 1890–1930. This photograph shows the home as it appeared between two additions, one built in 1897 and the other in 1907.

Courtesy Tippecanoe County Historical Association

the first ninety days decreased between 1907 and 1916, even though the state work force increased from three to eight.²⁹

Forty-three percent of the children placed in foster homes for the first time were returned to the children's home. Many of those returned were placed out repeatedly. The usual explanation for failed foster placements was that the child *did not give satisfaction*. The TCCHA board minutes use this stark phrase over and over again. More detailed explanations often pointed to unsatisfactory work performance. In 1888, for instance, Lucy G. was returned as not old enough to do the work wanted and in 1898 Jim M. as too small to do farm work. The sad fact was that many foster parents were motivated by a desire to gain cheap labor rather than a benevolent wish to rear middle-class children. Foster parents returned younger children for different reasons: Alice C. was untruthful; Dora V. was a thief; Dottie did not talk plain; and baby C. was cross and unwell. Even adoptions were not forever. Opal S.'s new family, for instance, returned her because of her adoptive mother's poor health.³⁰

²⁹ *Ibid.*, April 10, 1894; *Tippecanoe County Children's Home Association Annual Reports*, January 14, 1896, 61, January 12, 1897, 65; *ibid.*, Vol. 2, May 11, 1896; *Eighth Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1896–October 31, 1897), 21–22, 55–59; *Twenty-seventh Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (October 1, 1915–September 30, 1916), 18.

³⁰ *CHAM*, Vol. 1, October 13, 1887, September 12, 1888; *ibid.*, Vol. 2, June 11, 1898; residents who were old enough to work were placed in foster homes much faster than younger children. Length of stay was closely related to age. See Graph E; *CHAM*, Vol. 1, March 11, January 18, July 8, 1889; *ibid.*, Vol. 2, May 11, 1896, April 8, 1889.

Although the board minutes include descriptions of children's unsatisfactory performances in foster homes, they refer only occasionally, and then obliquely, to problems with the foster parents themselves. In 1890, for example, the matron discovered that Edith P.'s foster home "was not the place for a child." The minutes refer to a particularly poignant case which took place in 1906 when Betty H.'s father and brother came to the board complaining that Betty was dying from harsh treatment in her foster home of four years. Betty was returned to her family and was at first reported to be improving slowly. Five months later the association approved an expenditure of \$1.50 for a spray of flowers for her funeral.³¹

Despite the fact that the TCCHA was aware that some parents mistreated their foster children, it did not act to remedy the problem. After just three months of operation the board decided that "in future they must be very particular in regard to homes to which children were taken," but the TCCHA took no steps to do so. The board frequently expressed concern regarding selection and supervision, but although the matron was sent to investigate on occasion, these concerns were never translated into the adoption of regular corrective procedures. The volunteer board had many responsibilities, including raising funds, operating the home, and dealing with natural parents and foster parents, and it neglected foster parent selection and supervision. It was not until 1912 that one board member was assigned to look after foster homes and make routine visits. Even then, mistakes were made. A newspaper article of August, 1913, reported that twelve-year-old Thomas L. was picked up by the police on his way back to the children's home from a foster family in Brookston. He ran away because of the severe beatings he had received for not doing the required work. He showed the officers a bad cut and several scars on his arms made by his foster father with an iron rod, as well as a badly bruised ear from a blow by his foster mother. The board minutes simply said "after investigating the home it was found not suitable for the boy."³²

The TCCHA's reticence in detailing problems with foster homes was even more evident in the annual reports than in the board minutes; the yearly public statements only mentioned the difficulty in finding foster homes in a few off-hand requests for help. Addressing the problem of potential foster parents' ulterior motives, the 1906 annual report appealed for families who did not want "to save a servant's wage, but were sincere and earnest in wishing to help a child." The board ignored the failure of foster placements by reporting the number of returned children without explanation. Gradu-

³¹ *Ibid.*, April 10, 1890, May 11, June 11, October 10, 1906.

³² *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, April 11, 1887, February 8, 1892; *ibid.*, Vol. 2, April 10, 1893, July 12, 1894; *ibid.*, Vol. 4, February 10, 1913; *Lafayette Weekly Courier*, July 18, 1913; *CHAM*, Vol. 4, August 12, 1913.

ally qualifying phrases were added to the usual wording of "good permanent homes," such as "we trust," or "which seem to be permanent," or "that doubtless will be permanent." In the 1908 report the two reasons for the large return to the children's home from foster homes were tersely presented: "some of the homes not being satisfactory, we request their return, in other cases the children did not suit those who had taken them away."³³

The tone of the annual reports toward those foster parents who returned children grew a little more critical over time. In 1912 the board commiserated with impatient foster parents: "Can we wonder when even some parents grow impatient with their own children." But by 1917 the board's response sharpened to reproach of foster parents for being unable to "withstand the imperfections of the child's nature" and to condemnation for foster families who thought of a child as a "play thing." The TCCHA also began to take responsibility for some of the failures in placing out children; the annual report of 1909 explained: "Many mistakes were made in choosing the home for the child and they must be rectified." These mistakes, though, were described as "errors of the head and not of the heart." Although members of the TCCHA did eventually acknowledge the scarcity of foster parents and failures of foster homes in their annual reports, they did not make public the severity of the problem.³⁴

The Board of State Charities was well aware that county orphan homes were not successful in implementing the child saving method of choice, placing out in foster families; but the state board did not cite inadequate supply of possible substitute parents as contributing to this failure. In fact, it stated that Indiana, with its "plentiful" food and population "not yet too thick," had a "wealth in her family homes open to children." That many of the possible foster parents who comprised this so-called "wealth" were motivated by self-interest and did not desire children "for their own sakes" was admitted. Those who were only looking for "cheap servants" were acceptable for a child whose "only hope in life is to be a menial." Teaching a child "to work and respect honest labor" was the most important job of good foster parents, but care had to be taken that the child be matched to the home and not be overworked.³⁵

³³ *Tippecanoe County Children's Home Association Annual Reports*, January 17, 1899, 74, January 29, 1914, January 28, 1907, January 17, 1901, 81, January 25, 1912, January 31, 1911, January 25, 1909.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, January 25, 1912, January 30, 1917, January 25, 1910, January 30, 1913.

³⁵ *First Report of the Board of State Charities* (March 1, 1889–October 31, 1890), 55; *Twenty-first Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (October 1, 1910–September 30, 1911), 165; *Eighth Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1896–October 31, 1897), 36.

The state board realized that better selection of foster homes and “proper and sufficient” supervision would improve fostering, and it successfully lobbied for the aforementioned state agent to do this work. It was the intention of the resulting 1897 state legislation that all children in foster families be visited at least once a year by the state agent to “reconcile adverse conditions and prevent trouble” and to encourage both the child and the foster parent. Because the single state agent was unable to visit all the wards in the state, the Board of State Charities lobbied for more workers and got them one at a time. Finally, in 1913, with an increased work force (seven field workers and one state agent) the objective of annual visits to all children was met. But increased supervision did not stop the failure of many foster placements.³⁶

The state board found two other culprits for the continuing failures: the natural parents and the county orphan homes. The board’s 1892 report claimed that “a constant difficulty in finding the best homes, which is encountered in nearly every county, is in the disinclination of people to take into their families little children from their own neighborhood, owing to the danger of interference and annoyance from the relatives of the children, often disreputable or dissolute.”³⁷

Every annual report from 1907 through 1916 contained an attack on the small county orphan homes for failing to train the children to fit into a normal family. The state board cited frequent criticisms of foster parents that children from institutions had to be taught “the simplest tasks of farm and household duties.” In addition to teaching such everyday skills as respect for elders and table manners, the county homes were supposed to provide industrial training for older boys and girls and correct physical defects including bad teeth and enlarged tonsils. If a child out on trial was returned, the orphan home was expected to analyze the failure and “give the child what it needs to modify the deficiency.”³⁸

³⁶ *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1905–October 31, 1906), 131; *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (October 1, 1907–September 30, 1908), 200; *Thirteenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1901–October 31, 1902), 34; *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1903–October 31, 1904), 15, 88; *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1904–October 31, 1905), 105; *Twenty-third Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (October 1, 1911–September 30, 1912), 141.

³⁷ *Third Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1892–October 31, 1893), 61, 79.

³⁸ *Twenty-fourth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (October 1, 1912–September 30, 1913), 199–200; *Twenty-first Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (October 1, 1909–September 30, 1910), 38; *Twenty-third Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (October 1, 1911–September 30, 1912), 142; *Twenty-fifth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (October 1, 1913–September 30, 1914), 16; *ibid.*, 143; *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (October 1, 1907–September 30, 1908), 199; *Twenty-fourth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (October 1, 1912–September 30, 1913), 154–55; *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (October 1, 1907–September 30, 1908), 200.

The state board's solution for neutralizing the effects of disruptive parents and improving the training of potential foster children was to replace the several county children's homes with one central state institution. This state institution would train the children properly before placing them out and would place the children as far from their natural parents as possible—"beyond the bounds of evil reputation of antecedents." In 1912 Indiana's General Assembly finally authorized the establishment of this state institution but never appropriated any money for it, so the idea never reached fruition.³⁹

What impact did the Board of State Charities have on the local practices and policies of the TCCHA? Through 1896 the two bodies had a cordial and complimentary relationship. The members of the board of TCCHA attended conferences on charity sponsored by the state board, and the state board made annual inspections of the Tippecanoe Children's Home. A number of these visits produced positive reports, such as the one on September 29, 1891, where the home was found to be "well furnished and equipped," with "sufficient help . . . to keep the house and children in good order"; the children were found to be "well fed and clothed"; and the management was said to be "excellent."⁴⁰

Relations between the two organizations changed, however, after legislation in 1897 (lobbied for by the Board of State Charities) created a state agency for dependent children under the state board. The Board of State Charities became more than just an advisor. With the state agency now responsible for all work with dependent children maintained at public expense, county orphan homes such as the TCCHA were obliged to report to the state. Although the TCCHA was glad to have the state agent's help in finding foster homes and happily reported the change in the annual report of 1897—"of the 13 children placed in good and permanent homes, part of these have been through the agency of our new state agent, W. B. Streeter"—the board minutes also record some transitional friction. In October of 1897 the secretary tells of some "mistakes" the state agent had made in regard to homes and in March of 1898 the TCCHA was upset by the unwarranted "censure" by the state agent of a child returned from a state-found home. However, the very next month the matron told of "a fine home" the state agent had found. On the whole, the TCCHA and the state agent worked together harmoniously on foster placements.⁴¹

³⁹ *Fourth Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1892–October 31, 1893), 79; *Twenty-seventh Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (October 1, 1916–September 30, 1917), 26–27.

⁴⁰ *Second Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1890–October 31, 1891), 106.

⁴¹ "State of Indiana Laws Concerning Children," (*The Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections*, No. 144; Indianapolis, 1926), 21; *Tippecanoe County Children's Home Association Annual Reports*, January 12, 1898, 69; *CHAM*, Vol. 2, October 11, 1897, March 11, April 9, 1898.

Behind the scenes, however, the Board of State Charities was working for an exchange of power. Seeing that Indiana was supporting more dependent children at a much higher cost than Michigan, Minnesota, or Wisconsin (states with a central state institution rather than county orphan homes), the state board lobbied for more state control over dependent children. They wanted “more centralization with regard to the care of dependent children, a more definite placing of responsibility, and more active efforts in placing children in family homes [which] would, without doubt, lead to a reduction in the number of children supported, a lessening of the public expense and better work for the children.”⁴²

Most of the suggested changes were gradually enacted by the state legislature, and each one diminished the powers of the TCCHA (and all other county orphan homes). In 1901 the Board of Children’s Guardians law authorized statewide court-appointed county boards for the protection of children who had been “abandoned, neglected or cruelly treated by parents or guardians.” It also empowered county officials to commit children to orphan homes, indenture children, or have them adopted “without the consent of their parents” but with the consent of the court. This act gave another body the power to place children in the Tippecanoe County Children’s Home. And in 1907 the juvenile court law took away the TCCHA’s authority to make children wards and place them on public support. The court became the sole authority for this action. In 1909 annual written licenses to be approved by the Board of State Charities were required for all children’s institutions.⁴³

In Tippecanoe County, when the Board of Children’s Guardians and Juvenile Court started working together in 1907, there was an immediate effect on the TCCHA’s practice. As a result of successful cases against “unfit” parents in the juvenile court, the Board of Children’s Guardians placed many children removed from their “bad” environments in the Tippecanoe County Children’s Home. This sudden influx of new residents pushed the population over capacity and beyond the abilities of the matron to care for them. Consequently, when the Board of Children’s Guardians transferred some children to White’s Manual Labor Training Institute, a large children’s institution operated by the Indiana Yearly Meeting of the Quakers in Wabash, they were refused admittance because of lice infestations. The Board of Children’s Guardians, embarrassed by this event, condemned the children’s home for its “crowded and unsanitary conditions” as well as for “the lack of training and the slow improvement of table manners and habits of thrift and cleanli-

⁴² *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1905–October 31, 1906), 127.

⁴³ *Burns’ Annotated Indiana Statutes*, Vol. II, Article 10, Sections 3187-3188 (Indianapolis, 1901), 123-24; “State of Indiana Laws Concerning Children,” 11, 23, 27-28.

ness." "For the betterment of the children," the board acted to have sixteen residents removed from the children's home to other institutions, pointedly asking that "each child be made clean and ready to leave." Since the Board of Children's Guardians was responsible for the overcrowded conditions, the TCCHA felt humiliated and wronged. All it could do, however, was to correct conditions by enlarging the building in accord with the specifications set by the Board of State Charities.⁴⁴

The TCCHA had become impotent, losing its central place in county child welfare and its authority to affect directly children on public support. The one area where the TCCHA retained control was in its service of boarding children (non-wards) as a temporary help to parents. That service was not supported by tax dollars but by private donations and parental payments. Boarding grew to be the TCCHA's primary service.

Even though the Board of State Charities gained a large measure of control over county institutions and dependent children through state legislation, its direct influence on TCCHA's practice was limited to the minority of residents who were wards. The TCCHA continued to board increasing numbers of children despite condemnation by the state board. The actions of the Board of State Charities could have contributed indirectly to the continuation of boarding practices by causing the TCCHA to react to its own legislated impotence by becoming more open to parent placements where they still had control.

As the Progressive Era was ending, help was available for needy children in conjunction with their parents—not solely in separation from them as it had been thirty years before. Why had this local service for local children developed, notwithstanding the progressive trend away from localism toward integrated central control and government intervention? It could be argued that the TCCHA held on to a nineteenth-century local volunteer orientation because of its consistently conservative board members or because Tippecanoe County had escaped much of the turmoil connected with urban and industrial changes.⁴⁵ Certainly these were factors, but they were minor ones compared to the influence of parents and

⁴⁴ CHAM, Vol. 4, November 9, December 8, 1906, March 11, April 9, 1907; *Tippecanoe County Board of Children's Guardians Minutes*, Vol. 1, June 26, August 7, October 9, 23, November 3, 1906, May 3, May 10, 1907; *ibid.*, Vol. 4, May 11, August 12, 1907; *ibid.*, Vol. 1, May 10, June 4, 1907; CHAM, Vol. 4, August 12, 1907; *Lafayette Weekly Courier*, February 28, 1908; CHAM, Vol. 4, August 3, 1907.

⁴⁵ Tippecanoe County was one of many sections of Indiana that was little affected by industrialization and urbanization. It experienced a slow, steady expansion and weathered industrial depressions with no bank failures and no labor unrest. Jorosz, "The Industrialization of Lafayette"; *Lafayette Daily Courier*, July 30, 1896; *Lafayette Sunday Times*, October 25, 1896, July 18, September 5, 1897; *Lafayette Weekly Courier*, January 2, 1894, April 2, April 16, 1895, May 18, 1906, August 14, December 11, 1908; *Lafayette Weekly Journal*, May 3, 1897.

foster parents. The gradual development of a boarding service for needy parents in Tippecanoe County was not unique; it was not limited to that organization, to that locality, or to the state of Indiana. Throughout the country other similar boarding services evolved in child saving associations.⁴⁶ The extent to which natural parents and foster parents, acting in their own self-interest, shaped the actual practices of progressive child saving groups all over the country indicates that the role of these groups has been largely overlooked because of the institutional bias of welfare historians.

The founders of both the Tippecanoe County Children's Home Association and the Indiana Board of State Charities shared a common Progressive Era perception of dependent children as having only tenuous ties to their parents that could be snipped and reattached permanently to good substitute families. The state board was as fully convinced in 1916 that placing out was the best way to help dependent children as it had been in 1890. The TCCHA's child saving preconceptions, however, were undermined in the very first months of operation of its children's home. Its services were shaped by interactions with active partners—natural parents and foster parents. From these interactions the TCCHA learned that natural parents of dependent children were not all bad and that substituted parents were not all good; they learned that children could not easily be separated from their natural parents, nor would foster children necessarily be assimilated into a substitute family as if they belonged there. The realities of their practice forced the TCCHA reluctantly to let go of the child saving belief that all dependent children should be separated from their families and placed in so-called good homes. Consequently, by 1916 child saving by placing out had receded into a minor activity. Through no intention of their own, the members of the TCCHA had become not child savers but family helpers by providing the service of temporary boarding of children for needy parents; its primary service became one that helped parents in a way that preserved the natural family unit. The TCCHA's rhetoric in their annual reports slowly followed the reality of their services, but never fully caught up. Although additional case studies of other localities are needed, this study demonstrates the power to day-to-day interactions with parents and foster parents in changing one organization, the TCCHA, from evangelical child savers to pragmatic family helpers. It confirms Bruce Bellingham's view that hard-pressed poor parents, rather than being passive subjects of child savers' power, actually used children's institutions as a family resource.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ashby, *Saving the Waifs*, 32.

⁴⁷ Bellingham, "Institution and Family," s35.