The Charity Organization Society and Poor Relief for the Able-Bodied Unemployed: Lafayette, Indiana, 1905–1910

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In the first decade of the twentieth century poor relief policies and practices were rewritten and reworked to adjust to a changing perception of who was deserving of help and what kind of help they should receive. Before the national depression of the 1890s relief was limited almost exclusively to those residents who were unable to work because they were too old, too young, too sick, or too disabled. This deserving group did not include the able-bodied unemployed because of the prevalent belief (true or not) that jobs existed in this land of opportunity for anyone who was willing to work. The able-bodied unemployed were not only denied help they were blamed for their condition. It was their fault that they were out of work, poor, and needy. They lacked something or some things—industry, sobriety, or thrift. This belief was so strong that being down and out was considered both a shame to hide and a crime to punish. Those indigent able-bodied who left home to find work, denigrated as tramps, were excluded from official help and could be classified as vagrants and jailed.1

This commonly held negative perception of the poor was a central principle of the Charity Organization Society (COS), which focused on reforming character rather than giving alms with the overall goal of helping the poor to help themselves. Conceived in England and introduced in the United States after the depression of 1873, the charity organization society movement began to dominate the National Conference of Charities and Corrections by the early 1890s. The

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movement was well known in Indiana, the first society having been organized by the Reverend Oscar C. McCulloch in Indianapolis in 1879. By 1899 eleven Indiana cities had charity organization societies, and COS reformers who dominated the Board of State Charities had rewritten Indiana poor law according to charity organization principles. Local societies, first formed in large urban areas, reached many smaller cities between 1905 and 1915.2

Lafayette, Indiana, a city of almost twenty thousand people, announced its own charity organization society on September 12, 1905, with the banner headline “Lafayette Charity Organization Society Established to Encourage the Worthy Poor.” A group of leading citizens had labored for more than two years to prepare the way, and three months later, on December 5, 1905, the Lafayette Charity Organization Society (LCOS) began its relief work with Mary E. Fauntleroy as its general secretary.1 Its purposes were:

To bring into harmony and cooperation the charities of this locality.
To encourage thrift, self-dependence and industry among the poor.
To aid them toward self support and to establish friendly relations with them.
To prevent begging, guard against imposters and discourage indiscriminate giving; and generally to organize and maintain a whole system of relief upon the wisest and most effective basis.3

The LCOS in its first five years—a time period that included the panic of 1907 and the national depression that followed it—set out to achieve these purposes and to become the leader of the existing informal network of relief agencies.


3Lafayette Morning Journal, September 13, 1905.

4Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections (June, 1904), 29-31; Lafayette Sunday Times, March 1, 1903; Lafayette Weekly Courier, December 8, 1905, September 7, 1906, January 1, 8, 1909. The LCOS's general secretaries were experienced COS workers, Mary E. Fauntleroy (December, 1905–January, 1906) with the Associated Charities of Evansville and Mary W. Lindley (January, 1909–1913), an Indiana University graduate, with the Indianapolis COS.

In March, 1907, the county commissioners gave the "desirable" and "well lighted and ventilated" room on the northeast corner of the third floor to the Lafayette Charity Organization Society for an office for the General Secretary.

Credit: Tippecanoe County Historical Association, Lafayette, Indiana.
Quotation: Lafayette Sunday Times, March 31, 1907.

In a number of studies of welfare reform, social historians have indicated that the pressures of national depressions eventually forced COS reformers to realize that poverty-producing factors were not simply personal weaknesses but were tied to the economic climate, a realization that caused society members gradually to change their aim from reforming the individual to reforming the environment. According to these historians, the perception of a causal relationship between unemployment and poverty was more fully realized and even extended to transient homeless men after the depression following the panic of 1907.

Other scholars have contended that COS reformers were constant in the promotion of their own class interests in relief policies.

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and used those policies as instruments of domination or social control. For example, Michael Davis, in his examination of the labor press, asserts that an alliance of business, academic, and charity interests knowingly constructed tramps as a dangerous class in an effort to criminalize unemployment, maintain a ready labor supply, and incite a fear of radicalism. In contrast to this view, historian James Leiby claims that the COS members' defining factor was their religious orientation. “Charity organizers regarded themselves as religious people working in a religious tradition,” Leiby states, and they embodied a “Christian notion of a community linked by the spirit of love . . .”

Recently, welfare scholars have emphasized the tenacity of the idea of individual fault in poverty and the suspicion that the able-bodied are undeserving of aid and have attributed this persistence to society's need to uphold and affirm its basic values. According to welfare historian Clarke A. Chambers, the “deep cultural anxiety on the part of elites and middle Americans” who “feared subversion of values and cultural norms” is responsible for the “American habit of distinguishing between those perceived to be . . . ‘deserving’ or ‘undeserving’ . . .” Welfare policy analysts Joel F. Handler and Yeheskel Hasenfeld specify the work ethic as the dominant societal value underlying welfare policy. The distinction between the deserving poor (those unable to work because of conditions beyond their control) and the undeserving poor (the able-bodied not morally excused from work), they contend, affirms the work ethic and maintains industrial discipline by stigmatizing able-bodied nonworkers.

To gain a better understanding of the contradictions and ambiguities in welfare policy and practices, historians “must seek to under-

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3 Leiby, “Charity Organization Reconsidered,” 523, 530.


5 Chambers, “Uphill All the Way,” 499.

6 Handler and Hasenfeld, Moral Construction of Poverty, 11-54.
stand the workings... of [the] diverse settings within which the practice takes place.\textsuperscript{13} The Lafayette Organization Society's relief work with the able-bodied resident and nonresident poor together with its interaction with other community groups in the public and private sectors provides a local context in which to examine welfare practices and see welfare policy as it developed.

In 1905 the city of Lafayette, the county seat of Tippecanoe County, was a prosperous agricultural and commercial center situated in the northwest quadrant of Indiana in the upper Wabash River valley. The surrounding farms, valued at $14,078,470, produced excellent crops, especially corn and oats. A railroad center, Lafayette was the home of the Monon shops and was intersected by four lines with forty-four passenger trains daily. Ease of transportation made it the site of large jobbing houses dealing with all kinds of merchandise. Although Lafayette had failed in its attempts to attract large industries, it had numerous small plants that manufactured such varied products as strawboard boxes, pumps, electric meters, and safes. Only three plants employed more than one hundred workers, and only nine others employed more than fifty. The absence of large industries combined with a diversified economy made Lafayette much less vulnerable to hard times than most cities. As was true of most of Indiana, its residents were mainly white and native born, with just 2 percent black and 10 percent foreign born.\textsuperscript{14}

In 1905 poor relief from both public and private sources in Lafayette provided minimally for the needy who were deemed deserv-ing local residents.\textsuperscript{15} Because of the lack of jobs during the depression of 1893–1897 eligibility requirements for public poor relief had been enlarged to include able-bodied involuntarily unemployed residents, but that change had not erased strongly imbedded values regarding work and idleness. Even though the Fairfield Township trustee, as overseer of the poor, had the legal authority to assist the involuntarily unemployed, he gave no relief in that category during the period of prosperity that followed the depression of the 1890s.\textsuperscript{16} With jobs

\textsuperscript{13}Chambers, "Uphill All the Way," 496.


\textsuperscript{15}Joan E. Marshall, "National Depression, the Poor, and Poor Relief: Lafayette, Indiana, 1896–1897, a Case Study," Social Service Review, LXIX (June, 1995), 285-308.

\textsuperscript{16}Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections (July, 1904), 65, (April, 1905), 59, (January, 1906), 58, (June, 1907), 65.
available the able-bodied were not morally excused from work and therefore not eligible for public relief.

The Indiana Poor Law as amended in 1899 required that the township trustee cooperate with charitable organizations in any way that would end "the unnecessary duplication of relief" and prevent "the creation of new families of paupers ... ." The law produced a climate that predisposed the trustee to work with the newly established LCOS, and the apparent result was an informal division of responsibilities with most of the direct relief of the traditionally worthy left in the trustee's hands. In 1906, for instance, the township trustee dispensed three-dollar grocery or fuel orders to eighty-five families, none of whom had heads of households able to work. Less than half (41 percent) of the LCOS's 557 applicants in its first three years (December, 1905-September, 1908) were too old, too sick, or too young to work (the traditionally worthy); only one-fifth (22 percent) of these applicants were given direct material aid, while another fifth (21 percent) were denied help.

LCOS board president Professor Thomas F. Moran proudly claimed that the work of the society had "very materially reduced" the amount of aid given officially by the township trustee. The average annual expenditures for outdoor poor relief were reduced by 20 percent, from $3,079 to $2,462, after the establishment of the LCOS; a 30 percent reduction in the number of working-age (17-60) recipients of public outdoor poor relief and in the number of families on public relief was also effected.

The informal division of responsibilities between the trustee and the LCOS allowed the society to concentrate on the able-bodied, investigating their worthiness and finding jobs for them whenever possible. General Secretary Mary Fauntleroy, in her first public statement, defined the unworthy as any able-bodied person who refused

17 Indiana, Laws (1899), 123.
18 Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections (June, 1907), 65. The 1906 poor relief recipients were sick, 53 percent; aged, 10 percent; disabled, 15 percent; widows without support, 4 percent; and sick nonresidents given transportation, 18 percent.
19 Lafayette Charity Organization Society Chronological Ledger of Applicants, December, 1905-January, 1914 (Alameda McCollough Library, Tippecanoe County Historical Association, Lafayette, Indiana); hereafter cited as Applicant Ledger. All data regarding LCOS applicants are based on compilations from this ledger. LCOS's applicants between December, 1905, and September, 1908, were categorized as follows: unable to work, 41 percent; family problems, 13 percent; homeless/out of work, 11 percent; character (intemperate, improvident, immoral, or incorrigible), 32 percent; no information, 3 percent.
20 Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections (June, 1910), 154-55. Cooperation between a community COS and the public poor relief official, the township trustee, was not unusual in Indiana at this time; for instance, see Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections (June, 1907), 188-89, for neighboring Crawfordsville.
21 Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections (July, 1904), 65, (April, 1905), 59, (June, 1907), 65, (December, 1907), 59. These figures compare the township trustee's numbers from the years of 1903 and 1904 with figures from 1906 and 1907, excluding the transitional year of 1905.
work. “Such a one is a professional beggar and unworthy of the assistance of anyone,” she stated, and she asked the public for “odd jobs of any description.” “In this way the charity organization will become a convenience for the general public as well as a help for the unfortunate.” The Lafayette Daily Courier praised the LCOS’s intent to exclude the undeserving, stating that “scientific” charity would make it “impossible for an able-bodied man to lounge around his home while his wife and children seek aid that he may live in idleness and get enough to drink.”

The LCOS’s focus on finding employment for those needing relief distinguished it from other alms-giving private charities. An examination of the LCOS’s General Register from December, 1905, to September, 1908, reveals that only a few applicants (11 percent) were out of work or homeless. Although only 46 asked for work, jobs were found for 121 of the 557 petitioners. If an applicant was unable to work, employment was often found for other members of the family. Sometimes applicants asking for garments were given jobs instead. The work was of all kinds—much of it temporary, as indicated by such notations as “secured work off and on all winter” or “secured several small jobs.” One single mother was given employment as a wet nurse. Many different hotels and local plants such as the Safe and Lock Company or Barbee Wire provided more permanent work.

In order to gain the cooperation of all the city’s charities, the LCOS assured existing charitable organizations that it would not “interfere” with or “supersede” them. Nonetheless, the society found it more difficult to secure their cooperation than that of the township trustee, in part because of their large number and variable character. The primary strategy for getting the support of other agencies was to include their members on an advisory council; however, despite the promise of the organizers of the nascent LCOS that “every church and institution in Lafayette and West Lafayette . . . [would] be represented in the council,” in practice a membership committee issued selective invitations. The 1908 advisory council included seven Protestant ministers, four educators, and representatives from three auxiliaries of the LCOS—Flower Mission, Young Women’s Christian Home, and Relief Bureau—the Free Kindergarten and Industrial School Association, the Women’s Christian Home Society, the Tippecanoe County Children’s Home Association, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, the Civic League, the Lafayette Daily Courier,

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24 Applicant Ledger, December 20, 1905, December 23, 1907.
25 Ibid., December 8, 1906, August 10, 1908.
26 Ibid., September 26, December 15, 1906, December 22, June 3, September 11, October 11, February 20, April 1, 9, 1907.
28 Lafayette Morning Journal, September 5, 1905.
the Young Men's Christian Association, and the Elks. The men and women of this LCOS coalition were middle-class citizens and, by and large, were neither of the wealthy nor of the working class. The policy-making bodies were weighted slightly in favor of males (the board of directors, six males and three females; the advisory council, fourteen males and fourteen females); but the committees—such as the relief bureau—that worked directly with the needy were all-female. The men in the LCOS coalition were primarily professionals and businessmen; most were educators and ministers, but the membership included newspapermen, bank directors, retailers, manufacturers, real estate and insurance dealers, and a funeral director. The women were spouses from these groups (except for one teacher, one Purdue professor, and one deaconess). The coalition was almost stereotypically WASP. The members shared the same political affiliation, Republican (just one Democrat), and the same general religious orientation, Protestant (just two Jews). These people were joiners. They belonged to many other charities and clubs—the Civic League, the YMCA, the Humane Society—and as such were active boosters in promoting their vision for their community and in securing their own place in it. The group had an air of snobbery about it. Many members were actively involved in organizing the city’s first country club, an exclusive group. The seven Protestant clergymen who served on the LCOS’s advisory council did not include any from the city’s churches with a “foreign” element, such as the Colored Baptists or the German or Swedish Lutherans.29

Although the LCOS achieved substantial support for its self-appointed leadership role, cooperation was far from universal. Advisory council minutes complained about lack of cooperation from some church aid societies and the Jackson Club (a Democratic organization),30 but the biggest thorn in the side of the LCOS was a small nondenominational evangelical organization, the Union Mission. Unlike the LCOS the Union Mission was not part of a national movement, nor was it sponsored by a group of leading citizens. It sprang from the efforts of one man, Frank Wetzel, a forty-eight-year-old

29This demographic profile of the active LCOS members is based on an analysis of the eighty names in the LCOS’s ledger of board, council, and committee members from 1907 to 1910, in conjunction with information in Lafayette city directories. Only six of the eighty people were on a tax list, printed in the Lafayette Sunday Times, of 477 “wealthy citizens” who owned over $10,000 worth of assets. None of the eighty were nonprofessional wage earners or officers of the twenty-one trade unions in Lafayette. Lafayette Charity Organization Society Advisory Council Members and Committees, 1907–1910 (Alameda McCollough Library); Lafayette City Directory, 1907 (Indianapolis, 1907); Lafayette City Directory and Tippecanoe County Gazetteer for the Year 1907 (Marion, Ind., 1907); Lafayette City Directory, 1908–1910 (Indianapolis, 1909); Lafayette Sunday Times, July 9, 1905; Lafayette Morning Journal, November 6, 1909.

30Lafayette Charity Organization Society Advisory Council Minutes (February, 1908–April, 1910), September 14, 1908, January 11, 1909 (Alameda McCollough Library); hereafter cited as Advisory Council Minutes.
sometime cooper, sometime traveling salesman, who with his wife and four-year-old child returned to Lafayette in July, 1904, after a sixteen-year absence. Wetzel's intention was to bring the "rescue work" he had pursued in Peoria, Illinois, to his old hometown. In Peoria he had gone house to house relieving destitution and distributing Bibles. He was a United Brethren with no formal religious training, and his mission had no connection to any denomination.\(^\text{31}\)

Wetzel's Union Mission gained a foothold in the community almost immediately, partly as a result of his self-promotion through newspaper announcements and public appearances but also because it filled a void in the community left by the Salvation Army's departure in 1897. In 1904 Lafayette had no evangelical Christian group that strongly appealed to the working class and sought to rescue sinners through faith in Christ and to help the poor. Wetzel established a relationship with law enforcement officials by inviting the city police to refer the needy to him and by conducting weekly services at the jail, which was also the county sheriff's home. Within two months Superintendent Wetzel was conducting three Sunday services, including a large Sunday School, and had organized a picnic for poor children (to become a yearly event) which began with a parade of young people waving American flags and led by a brass band. In December 210 people attended the mission's first annual Christmas dinner for the poor. By the end of the first year Wetzel had acquired an assistant, John Nichols, a machinist from the Monon shops, and had published his annual statistics, which boasted of thirty-three conversions and forty-eight jail meetings, as well as 370 meals served, lodging found for 134, garments distributed to 1,250, and employment secured for 12. The year's work was financed by $884 received from collections, donations, and lectures.\(^\text{32}\)

The mission's annual statistics also mentioned work with twenty-four wayward girls and homes found for seventeen children, indicating that Wetzel had ventured into areas already claimed by two well-established organizations, the Young Women's Christian Home Association (YWCHA) and the Tippecanoe County Children's Home Association. In 1904–1905 the Reverend Oscar McKay, YWCHA's board president, was actively working to form a COS in Lafayette. As a result of rumors that surfaced after Wetzel received favorable publicity for securing the custody of two girls who had run away from the YWCHA home, McKay was compelled to issue a denial that the YWCHA and the Union Mission were going to consolidate. This denial foreshadowed future incompatibilities with the LCOS.\(^\text{33}\)

\(^{31}\) Lafayette Morning Journal, July 22, 1904; Lafayette Evening Call, July 23, 1904.

\(^{32}\) Lafayette Daily Courier, July 27, 1904; Lafayette Morning Journal, July 29, August 1, September 3, 5, 6, December 24, 26, 1904; Lafayette Sunday Times, May 14, July 30, 1905; Lafayette Weekly Courier, June 9, 1905.

\(^{33}\) Lafayette Morning Journal, August 18, 23, 1904.
Even though the Union Mission had provided general relief in Lafayette for a year and a half, Wetzel was not invited to belong to the LCOS’s advisory council. The Union Mission’s alms giving epitomized the kind of charity that the LCOS opposed—indiscriminate giving without investigation of worthiness. Differences boiled out into the open after the LCOS had been in operation for a year. The *Sunday Times* reported that Wetzel had been “bitterly assailed by certain energetic workers of the opposition society” in reply Wetzel protested against the “meddling” in his affairs and threatened suit for “slanderous ways.” Although the specifics of the alleged slander were not spelled out, the general accusation apparently intimated that Wetzel was a “graftor” with “ill gotten goods diverted from the purposes from which they were intended.”

34 The one-sided newspaper accounts described Wetzel as “a self-appointed agent of charity who seeks a monopoly on gifts and donations” and “demands the good people of Lafayette contribute to charity through him.” These descriptions are certainly ironic since the LCOS itself was openly seeking a monopoly on donations. Although Wetzel was accused of ungentlemanly rhetoric, the LCOS’s response was belligerent in tone: “if you are in my way, step down and out, else you may get hurt, morally I mean.”

35 Wetzel went to the Ministers’ Association, an organization that had already endorsed the LCOS, to try to explain his side of things, but the ministers walked out before he finished his presentation. Although the *Sunday Times* suggested an investigation to settle the matter, this was not done.

36 The ill feelings between the LCOS and the Union Mission smoldered on, fueled by LCOS attacks. The society’s general secretary denigrated the mission’s picnics, pointing out that the LCOS worked “quietly” to improve conditions for the poor rather than “parading our poor children in the streets as paupers headed by a brass band.”

37 Newspaper editorials criticized the mission’s Christmas dinner, calling it “mistaken charity” because “a public dinner . . . breaks up the family circle and attracts members away from the rightful observance of the day.” In talks entitled the “City Mission and How I see It,” given to groups such as the women’s circle of the Baptist Church, the LCOS general secretary even attacked Wetzel’s religious mission. Later, in 1910, LCOS board members helped to organize a competing city mission because of so-called serious difficulties in the Union Mission. This new mission offered a Christmas dinner, too, competing with Wetzel for the attendance of the poor. Despite the
LCOS's efforts to discredit it, however, Wetzel's mission continued to provide religious services and poor relief. Its summary of services in the last five months of 1908, for example, listed numerous distributions: 510 meals; 117 nights lodging; 128 garments; 2 tons of coal; as well as employment found for 10. In January, 1910, the mission sponsored a well-attended revival meeting featuring music and outside speakers.\textsuperscript{40}

The Union Mission endured because it received enough money and goods through donations to function and because the needy poor of Lafayette went to it for help. Despite the LCOS's preemption of contributions from the Merchants' Association and other organizations, the Union Mission continued to receive strong support, collecting $750 for the five months ending in January, 1909, for example. The revenue loss resulting from the diverted donations was partially made up by larger amounts that were collected in corner kettles from ordinary people, whom the \textit{Sunday Times} described as from "more modest quarters," rather than from the "influential citizens" who sanctioned the LCOS. The Union Mission also had the support of the city officials (all but one of whom were Democrats) and the city police (half Democrats and half Republicans). The police continued placing women and children at the mission rather than at the LCOS-supported institutions despite the pressure to do otherwise.\textsuperscript{41}

The needy poor of Lafayette, who had historically put together the means of survival from any and all sources, did not necessarily heed the LCOS's behavioral demands. Garden seeds for poor children to plant for food remained at the LCOS office for want of takers, a long-planned saving system to inculcate thrift never got off the ground, and Lafayette's poor continued to patronize the mission. The mission's Christmas dinner was attended by 248 people in 1907 and was prepared for 500 in 1908. The Union Mission's continued attraction can be partly understood in personal terms. Destitute families might well prefer a place run by someone like themselves rather than by someone who looked down on their character. The mission also added some color to hard lives. Its Christmas entertainment, for example, with songs, children's recitations, and Santa with toys for the little ones, was certainly more fun than the receipt of a basket of food after a screening to determine if one deserved help and anoth-

\textsuperscript{40} Lafayette \textit{Daily Courier}, May 14, 1908; Lafayette \textit{Morning Journal}, January 12, December 26, 1910; Record Book of the Lafayette City Mission, 1910, p. 5 (Alameda McCollough Library); Lafayette \textit{Weekly Courier}, January 5, 1909.

\textsuperscript{41} Lafayette \textit{Daily Courier}, January 12, 1909; Lafayette \textit{Sunday Times}, December 2, 1906, December 3, 1905; Lafayette \textit{Morning Journal}, October 8, 1908; Lafayette \textit{Weekly Courier}, October 16, 1908, June 4, 1913. In 1913 when the State Board of Charities finally brought formal charges against Wetzel (charges that were dismissed), the longtime Democratic mayor of Lafayette, George Durgan, and two city prosecuting attorneys appeared for him as character witnesses.
er to be sure one was not getting a second basket from a different source.42

The depression following the panic of 1907 jeopardized the LCOS’s strategy of using employment as a means of relief and as a way to differentiate the deserving from the undeserving. When the national depression began with two jolts in the New York stock market in March and October, 1907, the effects at first appeared to be minimal in Lafayette. By the beginning of 1908, however, Lafayette’s newspapers were commenting on the unemployment. The Journal noted that many men were hunting work while the Courier observed: “Almost every industrial institution of which the city boasts is running on short time or has laid off some men.” Editorials continued to note the hard times throughout 1908 and into 1909. In November, 1908, for example, the Journal commented: “Many men have been idle, there has been little opportunity for saving and an increase in the number of destitute is expected”; and as late as June, 1909, the newspaper reported: “There are men out of work . . . business and industrial conditions are improving but it takes time after a crisis for industrial conditions to get to the substantial basis.”43 No official numbers of unemployed in Lafayette exist; however, some idea of the effect of the depression on labor can be inferred from United States census statistics. In the five-year period of prosperity from 1899 to 1904 the average number of wage earners in the city increased 25 percent, from 1,343 to 1,786; in the next five years, which included the depression, the average number of wage earners fell 7 percent, to 1,660.44 As in many communities, hard times peaked in Lafayette during the year beginning with the winter of 1908.

As noted by COS historian Frank D. Watson, many unemployed managed by themselves the first year but were unable to do so the second. The LCOS’s advisory council minutes confirm the local unemployment, noting in December, 1908, that “unemployed exist who need to be cared for”; in January, 1909, that there was “no work in case men applied”; and in December, 1909, that there were “calls for work but no calls for workers.” From September, 1908, to August, 1909, LCOS applicants in the homeless, out-of-work category increased dramatically. Almost one-half (94 out of 194) of the LCOS’s new applicants (both residents and nonresidents) were classified as out of work or homeless (compared to 4 in 1905–1906; 17 in 1906–1907; and 42 in 1907–1908). In addition, 16 ongoing cases were also listed in this category, making a total of 110 in that one year. In January, 1908,

43 Lafayette Morning Journal, October 28, 29, 1907, February 8, November 13, 1908, June 15, 1909; Lafayette Daily Courier, November 28, 1907, January 30, February 8, 1908.
Fauntleroy admitted to difficulty in finding "employment even for the most deserving." The last notation in the General Register of a job found at a manufacturing plant was in April, 1907, and after February, 1908, no jobs at hotels are noted either.45

By making special efforts the LCOS did provide some kind of work for thirty-seven applicants between September, 1908, and August, 1909. Examples of the LCOS's creativity included giving a woman laundry equipment and providing axes for two men who were to pay for them within thirty days. In January, 1909, the society tried to set up a woodyard, but snow soon stopped that effort. In addition, in April, 1909, the LCOS placed advertisements in the local newspapers asking for jobs relating to spring housecleaning. A few longtime clients did small jobs for the LCOS, such as running errands for ten cents or cleaning the office for sixty cents, but no amount of extra attention could eliminate the depression's effect on the job market. In 1908–1909 the percentage of applicants who received no aid more than doubled from that of the preceding year (from 18 percent to 43 percent), and only two applicants refused work that was offered (1 percent as compared to 12 percent).46

45 Watson, *Charity Organization Movement*, 381; Advisory Council Minutes, December 14, 1908, January 25, December 12, 1909; Lafayette *Daily Courier*, January 8, 1908; Applicant Ledger, April 1, 1907, February 13, 1908.

46 Applicant Ledger, December 14, 1908, January 25, April 25, June 19, 1909.
Considering the number of working people affected by the depression throughout the nation, the local homeless and out-of-work residents who were helped by either the LCOS or the township trustee were relatively few. (Most of the LCOS's homeless and out-of-work applicants were nonresidents.) The LCOS aided only twenty such residents (new applicants and continuing cases) between September 1, 1908, and August 31, 1909, and public poor relief was given by the township trustee to approximately twenty-six more in this category. The small number of unemployed residents who were helped by either private or public relief givers indicates that the majority of Lafayette citizens struggled along on their own. Research by Leah Hannah Feder found that in a number of eastern cities in this period relief from charitable agencies was the last of several options, including emigration and use of savings, chosen by the unemployed. Similarly, in Indianapolis savings from thrift accounts were also depleted.47

In Lafayette the very few unemployed who sought relief indicated that they were not looking for "the easy life" of three-dollar grocery vouchers and secondhand clothes. Although some might have benefited from what COS historian Watson identified as the first source of help in a community, the "invisible relief fund" from kin, friends, and neighbors, the mass of struggling unemployed residents refused to define themselves as charity cases through applications for formal relief. Eligibility rules allowed for relieving the distress of the involuntarily unemployed residents, but shared values did not. The working poor, like the middle-class reformers, believed that work was an individual responsibility and that not working was shameful. Few able-bodied men were willing to accept the onus and stigma attached to asking for official help. The Courier, in fact, speculated that many of the poor, "too proud to tell of their condition," would never be identified. LCOS President Moran concurred: "A great many of the deserving poor are rather backward about making their wants known and in many cases suffering and privation result."48

Thirty-three-year-old Harry Runda was a case in point. A family man with five children, Runda was out of work for three months but did not apply for any kind of relief. He was known as "a good worker," and he tried to support his family with occasional jobs as a teamster. One June day carrying a load of cherries into town to sell, with his ten-year-old son by his side, he stopped his team on the bridge over the Wabash River and jumped. It was said that he committed suicide because his family was destitute and because of his failure to procure steady employment. Newspaper accounts suggested a

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47 Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections (December, 1907), 59, (June, 1909), 132. The cited public relief figure is an average of two twelve-month periods (twenty-one residents in 1908 and thirty-one residents in 1909); Feder, Unemployment Relief, 191-93.

48 Watson, Organized Charity, 162; Lafayette Daily Courier, December 10, 1907; Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections (June, 1910), 155.
benefit baseball game to help the Runda family. The *Journal* editorialized under the heading, “A Case That Appeals,” “His death puts a responsibility on the community.”

The LCOS immediately took over the Runda relief effort. The general secretary, board president, and treasurer met in the *Journal’s* office just three days after the suicide to devise a plan for this “worthy” case. They approved the baseball benefit, added a moving picture benefit at the Arc Theater, and opened a special relief fund. The local press deemed the response to the appeal “remarkable”; merchants, businessmen, and neighbors gave liberally. The *Journal* published a daily listing of contributors to the fund, which totaled $850. The contributors were assured that the money would be disbursed and used “to the very best advantage” under the direction of the LCOS. The money, placed in a trust fund at the Lafayette Savings Bank, was to be given to Mrs. Runda in installments for rent and necessities and was expected to last four or five years until the children could be employed. The LCOS provided more than financial help for the Rundas; the advisory council minutes reported that the general secretary visited the Rundas every two or three days.

The response to the Runda case was quite different from that to another publicized case that same year. James Deboe, an African-American hod carrier and a family man with six children, lived in a two-room shack that also housed his wife’s insane brother, her sister, and her sister’s child. On January 22, 1909, the township trustee, the probation officer, and two policemen descended upon the Deboe home with an order from the juvenile court to remove the children. The officials found conditions described as “the worst ever known to exist in the city.” Deboe was at work that day, but five of the “half clad” children were “romping amid the squalor” while the sixth, an infant, was nursing at his mother’s breast. Mrs. Deboe was lying uncovered on a filthy cot, so weakened by tuberculosis that she could not turn over. The officials sent her to St. Elizabeth’s Hospital where she died a few days later; she was just thirty years of age. They removed the children and placed them temporarily with other families and then at institutions in Indianapolis. Two of them also died of tuberculosis within months. The insane brother was placed at the poor farm where he died two years later.

The wretched conditions raised questions about the adequacy of poor relief and private charity in Lafayette. A *Journal* editorial

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moralized, "It is past understanding how such a case could have escaped the charity workers, the police, and even the neighbors of the stricken family." The editor suggested that other families "of the same desperate character" could exist, but no special funds or benefits for this miserable family were initiated. In fact, just one week later the Journal retracted its criticism and upheld the LCOS, saying that the case was a "new discovery" and adding, "It is comforting to know that charity was given and an effort made to improve the surroundings of the family."52

Despite the Journal's defense, the Deboes' case was not a new discovery. The LCOS and the township trustee had been aware of conditions in the Deboe shack for almost a year. A relative had reported the family to the society on February 4, 1908. Ten days later, after the assistant secretary had visited and investigated, the family received clothing from the LCOS and food from the township trustee. Listing improvidence as the cause of distress, the society implied that Deboe had not managed his resources well enough to take care of his dependents. Half a year later, in October, the LCOS again investigated the Deboe shack in response to a report regarding the illness of Deboe's sister-in-law. Her case was dismissed with no dispensation of aid. On December 28, 1908, a month before the official action, the district nurse reported that the Deboes needed help because of illness. Nothing was done until an LCOS volunteer reported the case again ten days later, at which time a visit was made and provisions dispensed. In just one week the oldest Deboe son, twelve-year-old Willie, asked for more help, and the family received additional provisions. The LCOS visited the Deboes again on January 19; three days later neighbors once more called attention to their condition, and official action was taken.53

At the advisory council meeting of January 25, the general secretary defended the work of the LCOS, pointing to a recent donation of fifty garments for the children. An explanation exonerating the LCOS also appeared in the Journal under the signature "one interested." The letter stated that the LCOS had given the Deboes food and clothing during the winters of 1907–1908 and 1908–1909, but when it became evident that the family could not care for itself (for example, the children did not know how to put on the donated clothing), the case was reported for "official action." The writer went on to claim, "But for personal investigation and prompt action the family might have continued a charge for years to come." In fact the surviving children did remain wards as did the next generation. Just five years later daughter Ida Deboe released her illegitimate child to the Coun-

ty Board of Children's Guardians who placed the infant in the Indianapolis Orphan Asylum for Colored Children.\textsuperscript{54}

It was true that the LCOS had given direct help to the Deboes, but it was without a sense of urgency. The aid was slow in coming and minimal, with no continuity or follow up. The children's situation was not deemed critical as they were not included on the lists of children presented to the Board of Children's Guardians by the general secretary. When the Deboes were finally referred to that board on January 12, action was delayed until old cases were off the docket.\textsuperscript{55} Perhaps race helps to account for the dilatory response to the Deboes' plight,\textsuperscript{56} but another more potent factor was that of deservingness. The deserving were those morally excused from work. Mrs. Runda, a widow and a mother of five children, one a two-week-old infant, could not possibly be responsible for her condition. There was no moral slur on her dependency. The newspapers painted an appealing picture of "a frail woman" who was "left to fight the world's battles" or as "the little woman who is left dependent with five children to care for." As the \textit{Journal} put it, "The case of Mrs. Runda, her helplessness, the injustice of it all, has appealed to all." And so it did—everyone wanted to help a mother who hoped "to keep the family together, until her children can be earning something." James Deboe's situation did not have this universal appeal. He was an able-bodied male, working but not earning enough to support his eleven dependents. The categorization of improvidence (used three separate times to describe his case in the LCOS General Register) implied a deficiency on his part. The newspapers had no empathetic descriptions of his situation and no suggestions of help to keep his family together. Not a word was written about low wages; no efforts were made to find Deboe better-paying work. Able-bodied working men were suspect.

Deboe's case illustrates the lack of sympathy for the needy able-bodied male and the blind eye turned toward economic causes of poverty, even during a depression. As a resident, however, Deboe was eligible for help. He and his dependents did receive services from a combination of public and private sources. He had a job, albeit a low-paying one; he had a place to live, albeit a shack; he got help, albeit inadequate. A nonresident's lot could be far worse.

\textsuperscript{54}Advisory Council Minutes, January 25, 1909; Lafayette \textit{Morning Journal}, January 30, 1909; Tippecanoe County Board of Children's Guardians Minutes, January 8, April 14, 1914 (Alameda McCollough Library).

\textsuperscript{55}Tippecanoe County Board of Children's Guardians Minutes, October 7, December 17, 1908, January 12, 29, 1909.

\textsuperscript{56}No obvious bias appears in LCOS actions toward the seventeen black applicants between December, 1905, and September, 1909. For example, the LCOS gave a great deal of varied aid to a black family man who would not be classified as able-bodied: John Morgan, who was ill (traditionally worthy), received provisions, shoes, and visitas, and work was found for other family members. LCOS Day Book, July 3, 7, October 24, November 5, 1908.

\textsuperscript{57}Lafayette \textit{Morning Journal}, June 21, 22, July 20, 1909.
Hundreds of nonresidents, dislocated because of the aftereffects of the panic of 1907, rode the rails into Lafayette during 1908 and 1909. The LCOS did not exclude these able-bodied nonresidents from consideration for aid as previous Lafayette private charities had done and as the township trustee still did. Although the revised poor law of 1901 permitted the trustee to provide some form of hard manual labor for able-bodied nonresidents, this option was not exercised in Lafayette as it was in some other Indiana cities, such as Anderson, where the men were put to work clearing stumps. Almost half (46 percent) of the LCOS's applicants from September 1, 1908, through August 31, 1909, were homeless nonresidents (all but six of them males). The society treated these men more superficially than residents, giving no aid to 51 percent of the eighty-nine nonresident applicants and only helping one a second time. The LCOS's concern about nonresidents was directed more toward tactics to deal with the overall "tramp problem" than toward helping individual transients through a desperate situation.58

The tramp problem was not a new one. Vagrancy was a crime in Lafayette, and the local press represented nonresident transients as nuisances and threats. Nevertheless, rather than being fined and imprisoned for up to thirty days as called for in a city ordinance, tramps who requested shelter for themselves were rarely formally charged or sentenced and were usually fed breakfast before they left. The State Board of Charities (run by COS reformers), which was vehemently against police-station lodging, condemned Lafayette's permissive policy of providing shelter and breakfast. According to the board's 1902 annual report, Tippecanoe County was the "worst offender" in the state, receiving 632 tramps in the Lafayette jail, while neighboring counties housed less than 100 that year. In 1906 the board denigrated Lafayette as a tramps' "haven" because the jail sheltered an annual average of 705 vagrants. It concluded that by offering an "open door to the bum" Tippecanoe County was "being played for a good thing by those who hate work."59

Scholars posit that behind the common permissive policy of police lodging was the need to keep a cheap mobile labor force at hand. That need for cheap available manpower was lessening in Indiana because of the impact of improved machinery and of the increasing use of electrical power and internal combustion engines on the farm and in the city. The changing situation in Lafayette can be seen in farm machinery advertisements picturing multiple disc harrows, double-gearied drive seeders, and running gang plows and in a report

58 Indiana, Laws (1901), 327; Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections (June, 1909), 330.
Many unemployed nonresidents rode the rails into Lafayette across the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, & St. Louis (Big Four) Railroad Bridge.

Tippecanoe County Historical Association, Lafayette, Indiana.

in the Daily Courier of an excavator, a “remarkable labor saving machine,” used in sewer construction, operated by three men, and said to do the work of one hundred men by removing nine hundred yards of earth in ten hours.60

With less need for a mobile labor force, the proposal for a stone pile to keep tramps away from Lafayette, an idea bandied about for decades, became more popular. In 1906 the LCOS’s first annual report joined the chorus and called for a “stone pile for the employ of vagrants.” The Tippecanoe County Board of Charities and Corrections advocated one, saying it would be “a good discipline . . . for the idler, the hobo, the lazy tramp.” The two daily newspapers also championed the proposal. The Courier, decrying the expected “fall and winter crop of ‘vags’ furnished food and lodging free at county’s expense,” emphasized the stone pile as a deterrent. The Journal concurred, noting that “counties having stone piles have been bothered little by the weary-wanderers.”61 Some county jails in Indiana did have a stone pile, such as the one at Elkhart where the sheriff claimed that its

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LAFAYETTE PATROL WAGON
ACCORDING TO THE LAFAYETTE Daily Courier, January 4, 1909, the Patrol Wagon Made 260 Calls in 1908.

LAFAYETTE METROPOLITAN POLICE FORCE
HEADQUARTERED ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE COURTHOUSE, THE POLICE PICKED UP MANY OF THE "TRAMPS" WHO CAME TO LAFAYETTE.

Tippecanoe County Historical Association, Lafayette, Indiana.
TIPPECANOE COUNTY SHERIFF’S RESIDENCE
THE COUNTY JAIL, WHERE MANY TRAMPS WERE LODGED, ADJOINED THE SHERIFF’S RESIDENCE AND WAS SURROUNDED BY A WALL.

Tippecanoe County Historical Association, Lafayette, Indiana.

looming “spectre” substantially reduced the number of vagrants. It was not a stone pile, however, that ended the custom of jail lodging in Lafayette. Rather than transients being deterred by the specter of work, it was local government officials who were deterred by legalities and money.

The State Board of Charities had identified the fee system that recompensed county sheriffs for jail inmates as one of the abuses of the Indiana jail system. The board argued in its 1904 report that a sheriff had no legal right “to admit a tramp to the county jail, discharge him the next morning and charge the county for his board and lodging.” The report also quoted the state attorney general’s opinion that payments were illegal if the tramps were not committed to jail by a judge. In Lafayette jail lodging involved an informal agreement between city and county officials; the county paid turnkey fees of twenty-five cents in and twenty-five cents out, as well as forty cents for board, to the county sheriff for the tramps brought in by the city police. The county sheriff made some easy money, and the city police

62 Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections (June, 1903), 196.
63 Amos W. Butler, “County and Municipal Corrections,” Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections... from May 6 to May 12, 1903 (Atlanta, 1903), 395; Indiana, Fifteenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities (November 1, 1903–October 31, 1904), 102.
had an easy way to deal with the ubiquitous tramp. The *Sunday Times* attacked the fee system by pointing out that the sheriff profited from jail placements. Its columnist, "The Man about Town," hinted at possible collusion among the city and county officials, sarcastically adding, "I am not saying that Sheriff Ray does not earn every cent he receives, for I have never boarded at his hotel, consequently I am not competent to speak of the quality of his table, the service or the merit of his management."64

The controversy over sheriffs’ fees had reached the courts in Tippecanoe County in 1905, with ex-sheriffs and the county commissioners filing claims and counterclaims. In April, 1906, the commissioners refused to pay the current sheriff the customary boarding costs for vagrants pending the outcome of a superior court case to decide on the legality of jailing tramps without trial and commitment. Jail lodging of tramps in Lafayette stopped immediately; instead, transients were legally charged with the crime of vagrancy and sentenced to fourteen days in jail if convicted. This change caused a new fear—that the two-week jail term would attract tramps rather than discourage them. A *Courier* editorial warned, "a long sentence holds no terrors" for tramps who will be "well fed, warm and know they will have a home every night."65 This fear proved unwarranted. At the end of the year Sheriff Ray reported fewer vagrants in jail for the preceding quarter than for any other quarter during his term of office.66

The city police also changed their behavior as a result of a new legal interpretation—an appellate court decision in December, 1906, finding the provision of a station house for the detention of persons arrested by city police to be a municipal responsibility. Since the city of Lafayette had no structure for detention and the county jail was no longer available, the police discontinued picking up large numbers of vagrants. Putting a favorable spin on the change, the police superintendent boasted that after a "bitter war on Wearie Willies" the number jailed for vagrancy in the winter of 1906-1907 was reduced to only forty-one.67 The end of jail lodging, however, did not stop the influx of transients to Lafayette.68 Large numbers of tramps still

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64 *Lafayette Sunday Times*, January 27, 1907, January 22, August 27, 1905.
65 *Ibid.*, October 8, 1905, May 13, 1906; *Lafayette Weekly Courier*, April 6, 20, 1906. Conditions at the jail were far from inviting; negative reports from the Indiana Board of State Charities and the Tippecanoe County Board of Charities commented on unclean cells, dirty bedding, and a continual offensive odor from the sewage and led to a grand jury investigation in 1907 which found that the jail environment endangered the health of the prisoners. *Lafayette Sunday Times*, October 14, 1906, January 27, June 2, 16, 1907; *Lafayette Morning Journal*, October 8, 1907; *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities* (November 1, 1902–October 31, 1903), 186-87.
68 *Lafayette, Indiana, Police Department*, Annual Reports for 1907, 1908, 1909 (Alameda McCollough Library). A lesser number of homeless were still jailed under the category of safekeeping, sixty-four cases in 1908 and ninety-seven in 1909 (about one-tenth of those previously jailed for vagrancy).
came to the city and found shelter anywhere they could—at schools, the icehouse, or even the county courthouse. In fact, the courthouse was such a popular spot that an iron fence was built to lock the main corridor at night to keep the homeless from "slipping in. . . and resting till morning."  

The cessation of jail lodging presented the LCOS with an opportunity to press for a solution to the tramp problem compatible with its principles, one that would eliminate indiscriminate giving and differentiate between the able-bodied who were and were not willing to work. After extensive groundwork, which included educational lectures, meetings with civic groups, and visits to other cities, the LCOS secretary in October, 1908, formally proposed the creation of a municipal lodging house with a woodyard or rock pile "where every able-bodied man is required to give the equivalent in labor for meals, clothing and lodging." This work test would weed out those with "a tendency to be lazy" from those who were "deserving of assistance."  

The LCOS's two general secretaries shared a perception of tramps as probable idlers. In 1908 Fauntleroy stated in the Morning Journal, "In many cases where aid was solicited the men were able-bodied but had a tendency to be lazy"; in 1909 Mary Lindley remarked to the advisory council, "It is very apparent that tramps reporting at Room 40 are seeking for the most part something for nothing."  

The work test had been commonly applied in large cities during the depression of the 1890s as a way to indicate worthiness: vagrants could thereby demonstrate a willingness to work when real jobs were unavailable. In practice, however, the test was difficult to effect. As COS historian Watson pointed out, it had to be simple enough for anyone to perform but at the same time it had to be difficult enough to be a true test; he warned that it should not destroy one's self respect.  

Scathing comments by COS chairman of the Friendly Inn Committee in Terre Haute, Dr. Millard Knowlton, reveal the work test's shortcomings. Knowlton contended that limited labor in a woodyard, rather than testing willingness to work at a steady job, made the tramp's life easier by allowing him to work two or three hours instead of laboring at a regular eight-hour-a-day job. Knowlton also questioned the motives of charity workers, suggesting that they created woodyards for self-glorification and "took great delight in seeing these old 'bums' exert themselves enough to saw wood." In questioning the

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70 Advisory Council Minutes, February 24, June 22, September 28, 1908; Lafayette Daily Courier, October 1, 2, 5, 1908; Lafayette Morning Journal, November 10, 1908.
71 Lafayette Morning Journal, November 10, 1908; Advisory Council Minutes, April 25, 1909.
72 Feder, Unemployment Relief, 169-81; Watson, Charity Organization Movement, 121.
benefit to the individual, he declared, “We feed him, house him and work him, and then toss him on, one day nearer the aimless brute.”

Before the LCOS had to face any of the practical problems associated with a municipal lodging house, however, it had to secure the cooperation of city officials—the police who dealt directly with vagrants and the city council that funded their disposition. City officials had not cooperated with the LCOS in the past. In the spring of 1908 the city council failed to approve an ordinance for an LCOS-desired jail matron, and policemen placed women and children at the unapproved Union Mission rather than at the LCOS-approved Young Women’s Christian Home.74

Although city officials had already agreed to pay the county a smaller board fee for the few homeless that were now charged with vagrancy, the majority of the transients still had no official shelter. The mayor and the city council were exploring other options to care for the nonresident homeless. When the weather turned colder, the city policemen, on their own, began to take those tramps considered not dangerous to Wetzel’s Union Mission. On December 22, 1908, much to the LCOS’s dismay, the council entered into an agreement with Superintendent Wetzel to shelter and feed “any deserving person who might apply” for a twenty-five-cent per diem, stating: “This will relieve the police department of a great source of trouble”; it would also save “unfortunate men” from being arrested for vagrancy. The contract with the Union Mission, the city council felt, provided at least “a temporary solution of the tramp problem.”75

The city’s Union Mission contract preempted the LCOS’s proposed municipal lodging house, but the society persevered in its efforts. At the January, 1909, advisory council meeting, the general secretary denigrated the Union Mission’s shelter, describing it as “in a cold basement” where the homeless slept “on a canvas cot with one blanket.” Council members discussed a plan to have the sanitary conditions at the mission investigated and proposed asking a sympathetic priest to tell Catholics not to support Wetzel, a suggestion later partially erased from the minutes. The LCOS tramp committee did find a landlady who would lodge tramps for a fee; but, discouraged about the possibility of the needed support of police and city council, members feared that they would have “to leave the police to dispose of homeless men as they see fit.” In February and March of 1909, however, the committee met with both the police chief and the mayor to try again; the minutes recorded that “nothing was accomplished” and “no sympathy” found. Six months later the committee

73Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections (June, 1910), 172-75.
74Lafayette Daily Courier, October 8, 1906, June 2, 1908; Advisory Council Minutes, October 26, 1908.
75Lafayette Weekly Courier, December 14, 25, 1908; Lafayette Morning Journal, December 22, 1908.
attempted to keep the issue alive by bringing it again to the Civic League, but no action was taken. To seal the matter, in December, 1909, the city council renewed its contract with the Union Mission. Raising the fee to thirty-six cents, the council explained: “many who apply to the police department for shelter are worthy persons and deserve better treatment than being placed in jail.”

The LCOS failed in its attempt to establish a municipal lodging house with a work test. The city council, ignoring the recommendations of both daily newspapers, the Merchants’ Association, and the Ministers’ Association, gave its vote to the Union Mission, an organization that epitomized the kind of charity that the LCOS contended did more harm than good, alms giving with no work requirement and with no discrimination between the deserving and the undeserving.

Why did these municipal officials “readily” approve the Union Mission rather than the proposed municipal lodging house backed by so many influential citizens? All but one of the ten councilmen and the mayor (ten Democrats, one Republican) came from very modest circumstances. Included on the council were a butcher, a drayman, a clerk, and a grocer. Many of them had started working as children; for example, Jacob Dienhard, who became a bellboy at the Lahr Hotel when he was eleven. Many of them had worked their way up, as had S. J. Hannagan, who first earned fifty cents a day at a stave factory but who bought his own saloon in 1894, or Tom Hogan, who worked at the McFarland Drug Company at three dollars a week but owned the business by 1887. These men, remembering their early experiences, empathized with the working poor. Although the wealthiest councilman, Ferdinand Dryfus, owned and operated a large pork packing plant, he was well known as a “champion of the poor”; he, too, had begun at the bottom after arriving from Germany when he was thirteen. Mayor George Durgan’s orphaned father had been raised on a Tippecanoe County farm as an indentured servant. Mayor Durgan, first a traveling salesman, then a dealer in pianos and organs, often appointed workingmen to city positions; for example, a boilermaker at the Monon shops to the position of assistant fire chief. His natural sympathy for the poor lasted until the end of his political career; as a congressman in 1934 he replied to an attack on his votes for money-spending bills by saying, “I’ll vote more billions if it is necessary to keep the people from starving and keep them in jobs.”

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77 General Richard P. DeHart, ed., The Past and Present of Tippecanoe County (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1909), I, 698, 707, 710, 861-62, 919, 934, 938; Lafayette City Directory, 1907; Lafayette City Directory and Tippecanoe County Gazetteer for the Year 1907; Record of Poor Children’s Indentures for Tippecanoe County, Indiana, 1833-1846, pp. 56-57 (Alameda McCollough Library).
78 Lafayette Weekly Courier, January 5, 1906; Indianapolis Times, April 30, 1934.
Knowing firsthand that at any time misfortune could strike and force one over the poverty line, these public officials differed from the better-positioned, better-educated members of the COS coalition who presumed that most applicants for relief were potentially undeserving. With a more sanguine view of human nature, city officials saw no need for an artificial work test to eliminate slackers. They believed that any policeman could judge whether a tramp was a potentially dangerous vagrant or a benign unfortunate needing shelter.

Rather than striving toward a Christian community with the poor, as Leiby described COS workers as doing, the LCOS distanced itself with "scientific" charity work that affirmed the successful lives of its members. Fauntleroy's derogatory description of the LCOS applicant exhibits a distinct attitude of superiority and attests to the perceived chasm between the society and the working poor: "Through ignorance or stupidity his conception of living has been dwarfed and deformed, and he is incapable of intelligent conclusion." COS reformers, on the other hand, were "to the manor born," "normal human beings, in tune with our surroundings, [who] must for our own protection, as well as the protection of society advise, guide, and cure and lift them, if possible, to a higher level."

In the first decade of the twentieth century, public and private relief efforts in Lafayette, Indiana, consolidated under the local leadership of the LCOS and legitimated by the state poor law of 1901, recognized a relationship between the economy and unemployment and offered limited help to unemployed able-bodied residents. Rather than simply granting temporary emergency aid, the society preferred to find jobs for the unemployed. Very few able-bodied unemployed residents, however, availed themselves of the newly allowed relief. Contrary to the assertions of some welfare historians that a reforming elite imposed its values on the working poor, in Lafayette shared attitudes toward work and individual responsibility precluded such an imposition. The working poor were not passively acted upon by the LCOS coalition; they were doing what they could to keep body and soul together without resorting to relief from either the township trustee or the LCOS. As Handler and Hasenfeld proposed in their analysis of welfare, relief practices and policies did affirm the work ethic as a basic value of society; in Lafayette in the early twentieth century both the working poor and the middle-class LCOS coalition held to this value.

The economic depression following the panic of 1907 compromised the LCOS's job-finding strategy but did not change the society's underlying focus from individual responsibility to economic

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causes and remedies. In a city with few immigrants, no large industries, and no unruly mobs, even though charity organizers acknowledged the scarcity of jobs, even though the working poor saw their jobs eliminated by depressed business conditions, Lafayette’s citizens were unrelenting in their belief in an individual’s responsibility to support himself and his family. This underlying consensus, however, did not change the perception of the poor as flawed nor alter the belief that their destitution resulted from that flaw. Although aware of the lack of jobs, the LCOS held to its suspicion that most able-bodied unemployed nonresidents were lazy “no-goods” looking for a hand-out. The society insisted that a work test was needed to weed out those idlers; city officials did not agree. The city council’s actions, officially at least, questioned the denigration of tramps as dangerous criminals and ended jail lodging as a means of providing a floating work force. By accepting the city’s obligation to house the homeless nonresident, the council also officially recognized the nonresident able-bodied unemployed as deserving of help. This more sympathetic response to the working poor’s situation came from a group who, by and large, had experienced that life. The LCOS coalition, on the other hand, was composed primarily of professionals who had never been wage earners and had never been poor.

The return of prosperity did not diminish the LCOS’s desire to identify those who were willing to work; in the annual report of October, 1910, members still expressed their wish for a municipal lodge with a stone pile or woodyard because of its effectiveness in applying a work test when employment was not available at local factories.80 The persistence of this idea was not just a Lafayette phenomenon, nor one of just that time period. Watson noted in his 1922 survey of the American charity organization society movement that although most professional social workers had come to realize that poverty was a result of complex social causes they had failed to educate many who continued to divide the poor into the “worthy” and the “unworthy.”81 The view that poverty is a consequence of personal deficiencies and the suspicion that the able-bodied unemployed are undeserving remain strong influences in today’s welfare reform.

80Lafayette Weekly Courier, October 7, 1910.
81Watson, Organized Charity, 516-17, 526.