Ada Elsworth Stuart and Alice Earl Stuart, two of the most prominent members of Lafayette's core group of women volunteers during the Progressive Era, at their estate, Earlhurst

Courtesy, Tippecanoe County Historical Association

Joan E. Marshall

After the terrible flood of the Wabash River following torrential spring rains in 1913, Lafayette, Indiana, Mayor George R. Durgan put the Lafayette Charity Organization Society (LCOS) in charge of relief for the homeless, and the city's Morning Journal lauded its work. Since its establishment in 1905, this voluntary association had become dominant in the city's poor relief system, replacing many isolated organizations with a network of private relief givers coordinated under its direction to help the poor help themselves. Part of LCOS's strategy was to subsume women activists from clubs, church societies, and charitable groups under its umbrella, making LCOS the place for Lafayette's elite women volunteers. LCOS's success was recognized in November 1913 when its board president, Thomas

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LCOS's embrace of volunteer organizations did not include Catholic, working-class, or African American groups. Nonelite women's groups were not listed in city directories or covered in newspapers. See Anne Firor Scott, "Most Invisible of All: Black Women's Voluntary Associations," Journal of Southern History, LVI (February 1990), 3-22. One exception was newspaper notice of the African American Royal Crescent Club's lobbying of the school board, demanding improvements at the segregated Lincoln School. See Lafayette Daily Courier, March 16, 1916. For African American women activists in Indiana (primarily Indianapolis) see Darlene Clark Hine, When the Truth is Told: A History of Black Women's Culture and Community in Indiana, 1875–1950 (Indianapolis, 1981).
Moran, was elected president of the Indiana Board of Charities and Corrections state conference. But just five years later, in November 1918, LCOS had fallen so far from its lofty position that the Journal (mistakenly) reported its demise. In one more year the fading LCOS was gone. What happened?

LCOS's dissolution was not unique. The loss of women volunteers to new interests—such as civic reform, women's suffrage, and World War I homefront efforts—was a critical factor in the waning of the Charity Organization Society. Some scholars see the process by which women activists were drawn away from participation in traditional religious/charitable organizations and toward public policymaking as simply an expansion of women's domestic sphere. Women were said to have followed their maternal interest in the wellbeing of children and families by gradually extending their nurturance and superior morality beyond religious/benevolent/cultural societies; this development led to civic matters and then on to the fight for women's suffrage. More recent researchers on women's activism in the Progressive Era analyze factors of race, ethnicity, and class and challenge the women's separate sphere paradigm, which focused on elite white Protestant native-born women. However,
even for this elite group, the separate spheres trope has limitations, as it discounts the significance of class and ignores the effects of mixed-sex interactions in women’s journey away from benevolent work.

Important steps on that journey reinforced the volunteers’ identity as women of a “superior” class. Both the women’s suffrage movement and the World War I homefront mobilization effort targeted women like those on the LCOS board precisely because of their social position. Sara Hunter Graham describes how Carrie Chapman Catt, leader of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), devised a “Society Plan” to recruit members from charitable organizations and women’s clubs in order to make suffrage more acceptable to those who were offended by the image of strident suffragists. Moreover, arguments that women should have the vote because they had the capacity to exercise it and that the votes of “superior” women could counteract votes of “inferior” groups enhanced the volunteers’ self-satisfaction and underlined their class status.8

Trained clubwomen from white middle and upper classes were sought to mobilize women volunteers for the homefront efforts. Elite class identification was also strengthened by women’s club membership, a critical factor in the movement of women into the larger political arena. Clubs served as a protected environment where women gained self-confidence by learning speaking and organizing skills. Ironically, at the same time that club membership increased their exposure to new ideas and widened their connections with similar women throughout the country in a national network of clubs, it also distanced clubwomen from those they had been seeking to help in charitable organizations by reinforcing class boundaries; club membership was often exclusive and reflected the community’s hierarchy. In addition, clubwomen’s lobbying public officials to persuade them to change laws also reinforced the women’s class position and kept them less sensitive to the needs of other classes.9


Although much research has examined the role of single-sex groups in the development of the self-confidence, autonomy, and indirect political style necessary for elite women to change their commitment from traditional charity work to wider civic participation, less attention has been given to the effect of women's interactions with the male civic establishment. Case studies in Galveston and in Tampa illustrate some of the ways that male civic leaders could affect the course of women activists. In both cities women's collaboration with men in the creation of city commission governments enhanced their social standing and also gave them the personal experience of political power. By contrast, when men opposed them, as, for example, Galveston's civic leaders opposed the Women's Health Protective Association's health ordinance reform, women activists became aware of the limits of class connections; as Elizabeth Hayes Turner observes, "As unenfranchised citizens, the women learned that parlor politics was no substitute for votes." Women's failures could also enhance gender solidarity and lead to actions to address newly perceived powerlessness. In Tampa the failure of elite white women activists to place a female on the school board led to the formation of the Equal Suffrage League the next year.

Much of the research on women's activism in the early twentieth century has concentrated on the evolution of organizations, ignoring the changing allegiances of influential volunteers. This article examines the demise of one midwestern community's charity organization movement and argues that it reflected the changing interests of a group of women volunteers essential to three interrelated private philanthropic organizations: LCOS, the Free Kindergarten and Industrial School Association (FKISA), and the Martha Home. From 1905 to 1920 a core group of women shifted their affiliations from mixed-sex charitable groups aimed at needy local residents to women's organizations centered on women's issues, including the

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vote for women. Their change in priorities came about because club work gave these women the skills, ideas, and techniques to step beyond benevolence into the civic arena. When their failures to influence municipal officials demonstrated the limits of elite women's influence, they formed female organizations aimed at civic participation and the vote for women. The public recognition of women's World War I homefront activities cemented the leadership of the upper/middle-class female community, which continued after the achievement of suffrage. The core volunteer women charity leaders were first and foremost women of their class, and each step on the way enclosed them more tightly within their gender and class, making them less sensitive to the needs of the city's poor and less interested in affiliations with benevolent organizations.

In 1913, Lafayette, the seat of Tippecanoe County, a rich agricultural area of northwest Indiana, was a thriving city of just over twenty thousand people. Although the city had grown 11 percent between 1900 and 1910, it was sheltered from many of the problems stemming from immigration, urbanization, and industrialization that were common elsewhere in the northeastern states because of its homogeneous population (98 percent white and 95 percent native born) and its limited industrial base. With many small plants but no large factories, Lafayette was not an industrial giant. It was a railroad center, featuring many warehouses and a large mercantile trade. Although the diversified economy offered some protection from hard times, the ordinary laborer eked out a minimal living, teetered on the brink of poverty, and was easily felled by any passing misfortune.

Soon after Lafayette's settlement in 1826, religious women got together to help the needy poor. LCOS's precursors were citywide groups of volunteer churchwomen who organized each autumn to collect donations of flour, wood, and pork for distribution to the indigent during the cold weather. Relief efforts became more secular at the turn of the century; goods were distributed to the needy by the nondenominational FKISA, which was established in 1896. FKISA's

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Tippecanoe Journal and Free Press, March 25, 1847; Lafayette Weekly Courier, January 7, 1856, November 12, 1879; Lafayette Daily Courier, December 5, 1861;
purpose was to change "the homes and lives of the children of the poor for the better through education and moral training." With FKISA, the role of volunteers became more specialized; a paid professional teacher and interns from Purdue University did the face-to-face work with clients, leaving the management of the organization in the hands of a board of women volunteers and a male advisory board. As the number of industrial school and kindergarten pupils increased, handling poor relief became burdensome for the professional teacher, which prompted the establishment in 1905 of LCOS, a permanent year-round organization managed by a mixed-sex volunteer board and staffed with women professionals.

Lafayette volunteers were aware of the organized charity movement, which was promoted by the Indiana Board of State Charities. The board's eighth annual state conference, held in Lafayette in October 1899, included an address by national reformer Charles R. Henderson on the "Value of Associated Charities in Small Cities," as well as a session and a round table devoted to that topic. At that time four Indiana communities had charity organization societies; by 1906 there were eighteen communities and by 1914 fifty-five. The charity organization society movement was in the forefront of the professionalization of social work, replacing all-volunteer charitable organizations with agencies that included trained, paid workers. Lafayette volunteers had heard Rev. J. Challen Smith at the 1899 conference define a qualified secretary as "Some one who is trained by actual experience to do scientific charity work; some one who can give all his time and thought, who knows when to give and when wisely to withhold." The new Lafayette organization hired as its general secretary Mary E. Fauntleroy, who had worked for the Associated Charities of Evansville. The board supported her further training in the summer of 1906, when she attended the school of philanthropy in New York City and studied under Dr. Edwin Divine. After Fauntleroy identified a "crying need" for an industrial training home

Lafayette Weekly Journal, December 15, 1893; Alice Earl Stuart, "Record of the Formation of the Free Kindergarten and Industrial School and First Public Playground," manuscript ca. 1920, Free Kindergarten and Industrial School Association (FKISA) Collection (Tippecanoe County Historical Association, Lafayette, Ind).

Constitution of Lafayette Free Kindergarten and Industrial School Association, Article II, FKISA Collection.


Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections (June 1900), 49.

Lafayette Weekly Courier, December 8, 1905, December 7, 1906, January 8, 1909. In 1909 Fauntleroy resigned because of poor health and was replaced by Mary W. Lindly, an Indiana University graduate with ten years' experience in the Indianapolis COS.
Lafayette’s core group of women volunteers founded the Free Kindergarten and Industrial School Association in 1896 to help “the children of the poor.” The Industrial School offered sewing classes like this one at the turn of the century.

Courtesy, Tippecanoe County Historical Association
for “friendless and misdirected girls” who were “drifting into . . . paths of unrighteousness,”22 in 1908 LCOS sponsored the establishment of the Martha Home, a nondenominational organization run by a mixed-sex board and staffed with a paid matron.23

A group of thirteen women had crucial leadership positions with LCOS, FKISA, and/or the Martha Home.24 The organizations were peripheral to their male board members’ main interests, but for this core of women volunteers these charities were a central interest. Without their commitment, FKISA, LCOS, and the Martha Home would not have commenced, nor would they continue. These thirteen acted as managers, directing paid professionals, rallying community support, and affecting policy. They did not participate in the “friendly visiting” that characterized some volunteer work at this time. Only Ida Lahr, Irene Coulter, and Ada McMahan had any direct contact with clients. Lahr and Coulter assisted FKISA’s teachers for a short while, and McMahan served as medical consultant for the residents of Martha Home.25 Although there is little documentary evidence about the women’s feelings toward and perceptions of the poor, their lack of contact with clients and their organizations’ rigid focus on inculcating middle-class values suggest that they viewed the lives and needs of their clients through a class prism. Training poor females in sewing, laundry, and cooking prepared them to become well-qualified domestics, which also kept them in their place. Scraps of evidence seem to reveal a class-based bias, as seen in Alice Earl Stuart’s comments on the availability of industrial school pupils for serving at luncheons and dinner parties and in Mary Ely’s complaint to the LCOS Advisory Council about the imperfect sewing of Martha Home inmates. Ely criticized them for being unwilling to work under supervision and attested to a “need to educate poor women to secure a better attitude.”26 At the state conference in 1899 Father Francis H. Gavisk, an Indianapolis Catholic priest, criticized “a certain self-sufficiency on part of officers of charity organizations; a sort of toplofty attitude, a feeling of ‘I am better than you,’” which probably characterized the Lafayette women.27

22Lafayette Sunday Times, October 7, 1907.
23Lafayette Daily Courier, September 24, 1896; Lafayette Daily Call, February 11, October 4, 1897.
24The core group analyzed in this essay was composed of Selvena Blaine Alder, Lucy Post Coulter, Mary Post Ely, Flora Work Kern, Ida Lahr, Mary Marshall Haywood, Ada McMahan, Alice Earl Stuart, Ada Ellsworth Stuart, Caroline Shoemaker, Gertrude Simson Taylor, Eliza Jenkins Vinnedge, and Velnette Adams Wilson. What distinguishes these thirteen volunteers for LCOS, FKISA, and the Martha Home from scores of others was their leadership positions year after year.
26Lafayette Charity Association Society Advisory Council Minutes, February 1908–April 1910, November 9, 1909 (Tippecanoe County Historical Association, Lafayette, Ind.).
27Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections (June 1900), 112.
The core women fit the category of volunteers described by one historian as a "small group of the unusually favored." Because of their affluence and stage of life, they were comparatively free from domestic responsibilities. All thirteen were active members of Protestant churches (7 Presbyterian, 4 Methodist, and 2 Episcopalian). In the city's social scheme the women were in the top layer, daughters and wives of substantial citizens; their successful fathers were professional men (2 doctors, 2 ministers), businessmen (a hotel owner), bankers, and large landholders; their spouses were multifaceted businessmen and civic leaders (primarily Republican). Eight of their spouses, along with the two Stuart widows and McMahan, were on the list of "gentlemen" who contributed $100 each to the Lafayette Country Club's start-up fund. Nine of the thirteen were educated beyond high school at places as diverse as Mount Holyoke College, the University of Illinois, and an art school in New York City. The three unmarried women were employed professionals—McMahan was a physician; Caroline Shoemaker was Purdue's first dean of women; and Lahr was an accountant. Three more had taught school for several years before marriage. They traveled widely and belonged to a variety of organizations that had national agendas, and they were also closely connected to powerful men through kinship and marriage.

The two most socially prominent of the thirteen were Alice Stuart and Ada Ellsworth Stuart, who were friends and sisters-in-law. Their social standing rested on the positions of their fathers and husbands. Ada's father, Henry W. Ellsworth, was the grandson of Oliver Ellsworth, a delegate to the constitutional convention of 1787 and a United States Chief Justice; Henry was a Yale graduate who had been the owner of the Lafayette Courier and served as minister to Norway and Sweden under President James K. Polk. Alice's father, Adams Earl, had developed a large wholesale merchandising operation coupled with banking interests, and then went on to build a railroad, buy thousands of acres of farmland, and breed champion cattle, parlaying his interests into a fortune that was displayed in a grand estate, Earlhurst. The women's spouses, the Stuart brothers, were both graduates of Amherst College and Columbia Law School and were attorneys for the Wabash Railroad. Both widowed in the 1890s, the Stuart women were freed from spousal roles to become more active outside the home. In 1896 Alice became FKISA's first president and

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80Scott, *Natural Allies*, 80.
served often in that office for more than two decades. At Alice's elbow was her friend Ada, who served as vice president in 1897. The women were also side-by-side on LCOS's founding board and at the Martha Home's organizational meetings.30

The core women's place in the local social structure was reinforced by their club memberships, which included the Monday Club, the Parlor Club, and the Twentieth Century Club.31 Lafayette's most exclusive club, the Monday Club, included most of these women. The Monday's prospective members were looked over during an annual Guest Day and then culled with some sort of a blackball procedure. The details remain clouded in a coy extract from a history written by one of the original members: "When a lady in Lafayette came to me, after she had attended a 'Guest Day' meeting of our Club, and asked me what a person had to do to become a member of the 'Monday Club,' I smiled and gave no answer."32 The Monday Club encouraged self-improvement by presentations and discussions in programs that went beyond cultural topics to political questions about the role of women. One of the more frivolous presentations was Ada Stuart's impersonation of Mrs. Jellyby on the club's first Dickens Day in 1888, but eight years later in 1896 Ada spoke on "Decorative Art as a Profession for Women." The next year, Lucy Coulter's topic was "Margaret Fuller: A study of the Woman Question," and in 1903 subjects included "The Double Standard of Morality."33 The way club work prompted women volunteers to move into civic activism was described in 1916 by a Lafayette Journal columnist, the "Woman About Town." She wrote that clubs freed women "from their natural timidity and self-distrust, and afforded opportunities to study those things heretofore closed to them," which enabled them "to assert and cultivate their civic conscience."34

Karen Blair credits the organization of women's clubs into state and national federations with pushing local women's clubs toward community reform. After the Monday Club joined the Indiana Federation of Clubs in 1890, which connected Lafayette clubwomen with the National Federation in 1906, more of its study topics were aimed at civic improvement; a 1908 topic was "Civic Beautification," for


31Women's Club Collection (Tippecanoe County Historical Association, Lafayette, Ind.).


33Ibid., p. 5; Monday Club Booklets, 1896-1897, 1908-1909, ibid.

example. The Indiana State Federation of Clubs worked for legislation connected with the women's sphere, such as laws on pure food, better housing, and child labor. The federation also moved toward supporting women's suffrage, passing a resolution in 1909 to place women on every school board and finally endorsing the vote for women in 1913. The Monday Club followed by voting unanimously to support women's suffrage in 1915. That same year, Ely took the affirmative in a Monday Club debate, "Have men left tasks for women voters?"

Although some of the core women participated in federation events (Ada Stuart chaired the state program committee, and the two Stuarts traveled together to New York City to attend the biennial conference of the National Federation of Women's Clubs), they were not state or national club leaders. But they did bring ideas and techniques back to the local scene. They learned, for example, that rather than providing kindergartens or industrial schools for poor children one at a time, here and there, one could induce the government to do this across the board. Learning how to lobby for legislation affected Lafayette's core women's philanthropic work by enlarging their frame of reference and giving them another way besides fundraising to handle that work.

In 1908 two of Lafayette's women leaders, Alice Stuart and Nettie Wilson, applied their club-learned lobbying skills to work for a civic reform targeted by LCOS, the appointment of a municipal police matron to deal with women and children who came in contact with the authorities. At an Indiana Board of Charities and Corrections conference the year before, Wilson had supported the appointment of jail matrons to take charge of women inmates, and a police matron for Lafayette had been on LCOS's agenda since 1906; but it was a communication in 1908 from Amos Butler, the president of the Indiana Board of State Charities and Corrections, that jump-started the action. The police matron reform had particular appeal to the core women, because of the advantages that the presence of a police matron promised for LCOS and Martha Home. As noted in the minutes of the LCOS Advisory Board, a police matron could both relieve LCOS's overburdened secretary of extra duties connected with police referrals and supervise the residents of Martha Home, providing a remedy for its financial struggles.

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Lafayette Morning Journal, October 15, 1917; Courtney and Balz, Indiana Federation of Clubs, 193, 263.

Lafayette Morning Journal, February 4, 1908; Lafayette Daily Courier, April 4, 6, 1908; Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections (June 1901), 37-40; ibid. (June 1908), 120; Lafayette Sunday Times, September 3, 1906; LCOS Advisory
These organizational needs were not mentioned in the campaign for a matron led by LCOS committee heads Wilson and Stuart. Instead, they used arguments based on women’s unique morality. South Bend police chief James McWeeny, who had taken part in the previous year’s state conference along with Wilson, spoke under LCOS’s sponsorship and asserted that a police matron would bring her “womanly ability” to cases that demanded “a woman’s counsel and care.” Supporting editorials also centered on gender, asserting that men were not “temperamentally constructed by nature” to reform, but women with their “boundless sympathy” could “point the way to right living.” When Stuart and Wilson presented the need for a police matron to the city officials, the city officials sent them to the county commissioners; the commissioners, who claimed to have no jurisdiction in the matter, sent them to the sheriff; but the sheriff as a county employee could not employ a city matron. The Daily Courier expressed admiration for the women’s perseverance in fighting for “so meritorious a cause” and in going “to every city official, county official and even to the attorney general of the state.”

When the police matron proposal finally came to the city council for a vote on June 2, 1908, Stuart and Wilson attended but did not speak for themselves. Wilson’s description of her earlier work for the Indiana women’s prison illustrates the backseat role the core women had accepted in their mixed-sex ventures; Wilson had reported that, “While woman’s work for woman should always be aggressive, sane and sympathetic, we left it to men to investigate, nourish and bring to recognition and action among the lawmakers of our State this wise reform measure.” Although Wilson and Stuart themselves led the many preliminary meetings with city and county officials on the police matron issue they persuaded Republican State Senator Will Wood to speak on their behalf at the critical city council meeting. He, too, cited women’s special attributes, claiming that “Women have a sympathy and a knowledge of their own sex that no man knows anything about.” Nevertheless, the ordinance failed to receive the required two-thirds majority vote.


1Lafayette Morning Journal, February 26, 1908.
2Ibid., June 2, 1906.
3Ibid., April 4, 8, 1908.
4Lafayette Daily Courier, May 19, 1908.
5Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections (June 1908), 37.
6Lafayette Daily Courier, June 2, 1908.
The *Journal* blamed the failure of the bill on the police officials' belief that the matron would be a sentimental meddler who would interfere with their work. Other factors, however, may have entered into the decision. The Democratic city council would not necessarily have been persuaded to support the measure by a Republican state senator, nor would the councilmen, mostly men of humble origins, have been easily swayed by the committee women, who were described as "the most prominent women in Lafayette." The fight for a police matron did not end with this failure. The women's ally, Senator Wood, introduced legislation to change the Indiana police matron statute, which had excluded Lafayette because of size requirements, to include Lafayette specifically. The act passed but was never enforced, because it was (conveniently) lost and never reached the governor's desk for signing.

The intense involvement of Wilson and Stuart in the campaign probably made the failure of the police matron ordinance a personal defeat for them. This outcome triggered a decisive change, deflecting the core women from an emphasis on private charitable work to an effort to increase their political leverage. When the women pushed the police matron issue again in the mayoral election of 1913, they did not enlist a powerful man to speak for them to the city council, and they did not appear under the aegis of the mixed-sex LCOS. They lobbied as members of two new female organizations, the Woman's Council and the Lafayette Franchise League, both of which had been formed partly in response to the failure of the police matron project. With these organizations the core women who had been essential to FKISA, LCOS, and the Martha Home stepped beyond women volunteers' traditional area of benevolence and jettisoned the protective window dressing of prominent men who were members of the benevolent organizations. They also stepped beyond exclusive clubs, because the two new organizations needed large memberships to achieve their purposes.

Although the Woman's Council and the Franchise League shared some key leaders, they were two distinct organizations aimed at different segments of the female white middle-class population. The Woman's Council was aimed at more conservative women who might be put off by an active campaign for women's rights but who, nevertheless, had an interest in civic affairs. It joined clubwomen and philanthropic women in one body, with a membership composed of female representatives from the now-defunct LCOS Advisory Council and wom-

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*Lafayette Morning Journal,* June 2, 1908.
*Lafayette Daily Courier,* June 2, 1908.
en's social clubs. The Woman’s Council, like similar groups formed by clubwomen throughout Indiana, engaged in noncontroversial activities in the “municipal housekeeping” tradition, such as cleaning up dumps or sponsoring city beautification contests, and it interacted ami-
cably with the city leadership in the implementation of these pro-
jects,9 elicitig favorable comment on its “practical work . . . in making
Lafayette a cleaner and more beautiful city.”49 But it also used its
benign stance to create a wider bloc of women as a potential pres-
sure group by backing the establishment of a mothers’ club in every
school, groups that were represented on the Woman’s Council by a
Mother’s Council. Although the Woman’s Council recruited a large
membership base, its reins remained in the hands of the core women.
Officers Ada Stuart, Ely, Lahr, and Mary Haywood were reelected each
year with some reshuffling of positions. President Stuart also appoint-
ed core women as five out of six committee heads (the one excep-
tion being the housewives’ committee).50

The Franchise League aimed to attract women more open to
the goal of woman suffrage, but it moved gingerly toward that objec-
tive. Reports of the original meeting in McMahan’s parlor on March
7, 1912, show that the women treated the vote like a hot potato, with
the Courier stating its purpose was “to bring the franchise nearer to
women” and the Journal declaring that the group did “not expect to
ask for local suffrage,” but just wanted to have a voice in local affairs.51

The principal speaker at the organizational meeting, Indianapolis
suffrage leader Mrs. J. S. Barnhill, advocated woman’s suffrage as
a step toward “a civilization in which man and woman shall stand side
by side on the same equal moral, legal, and economic footing”; but
local speakers followed the conservative approach, connecting suf-
frage to the women’s sphere. Mrs. Emma McRae asked the women
who did not want the vote for themselves to work for the “reforms
that are bound to help a vast number of women”; and Henrietta
Calvin urged women to extend their traditional influence beyond the
home, saying, “women have an instinct for housekeeping and . . .
they must have one for municipal housekeeping.”52

The Woman’s Council and the Franchise League shared the
immediate goal of putting a woman on the school board. The idea
had been endorsed by the Indiana Federation of Clubs three years ear-

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48Lafayette Morning Journal, February 29, April 26, 1912, February 18, April
9, 13, 1914; Lafayette Daily Courier, April 10, 1912; Lafayette Weekly Courier, March
14, 1913; Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections (June 1915), 279, 384-89.
49Lafayette Morning Journal, March 17, 1913.
50Ibid., February 29, 1912, April 15, 1915; Lafayette Weekly Courier, May 10,
1912; Lafayette Daily Courier, March 1, 6, 14, April 12, 1912.
51Lafayette Daily Courier, March 7, 1912; Lafayette Morning Journal, March
8, 1912.
52Lafayette Daily Courier, March 15, 1912.
The Changing Allegiances of Women Volunteers

lier and was also a tactic of the Women’s Franchise League of Indiana, which was a member of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Interest in female school board representation in Indiana originated in 1909 when the League’s precursor, the Indianapolis Suffrage Society, used the issue as a way “to stimulate interest and give an outlet for the energy of its members,” and discovered that women “who were indifferent to the larger aspects of suffrage” were “eager for a woman on the school board.”

In almost all of Indiana’s municipalities school boards were appointed, not elected, which meant that women needed the right to vote for mayors and city councils in order to affect appointments to school boards. Lafayette’s women leaders were aware of the state League’s program; just a month after the Lafayette League’s first meeting, Ada Stuart, Ely, Lahr, and McMahan attended the state convention at Indianapolis. The new Lafayette Franchise League was among the first branches of the state organization, and its tie to the state league was strengthened with McMahan’s election as a director. In 1913 she helped prepare a pamphlet for the Woman’s Franchise League of Indiana entitled “Suggestions for Suffrage Programs,” which included “Police Women and Jail Matrons” and “Women as School Commissioners and Trustees” as topics.

The petitions presented to the city council in June 1912 by McMahan, Lahr, and Wilson of the Lafayette Franchise League and the Woman’s Council did not argue that women had a right to vote; instead they claimed that a woman, to be selected among three nominees (Lahr, Wilson, and Ada Stuart), should be appointed to the school board because “the problems of the school . . . are essentially problems of the home and women.” McMahan contended that a woman board member was “proper” because mothers knew more than men about young people. Although the city councilmen declared themselves “honored” by the presence of the women, they appointed Bennett Taylor, an action that rubbed salt into a wound. Taylor was the husband of Gertrude Taylor, a core woman and a founding

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53Courtney and Balz, Indiana Federation of Clubs, 194; Anthony et al., History of Woman Suffrage, VI, 171-80.
54Anthony et al., History of Woman Suffrage, VI, 171.
55Ibid., 172.
56Lafayette Morning Journal, April 2, 15, 1912; Woman’s Franchise League of Indiana, Suggestions for Suffrage Programs (Indianapolis, 1913), Lafayette Franchise League Collection (Tippecanoe County Historical Association, Lafayette, Ind.). “Municipal Suffrage” was the title of an address presented to the Lafayette Women’s Christian Temperance Union in 1906 by Helen M. Gougar, a well-known Indiana suffragist of the 1880s and 1890s. Minutes of the Frances Willard Union, 1905–1909, November 9, 1906, Women’s Christian Temperance Union Collection (Tippecanoe County Historical Association, Lafayette, Ind.).
57Lafayette Daily Courier, March 15, 1912.
58Lafayette Morning Journal, May 21, 1912.
member of the Franchise League. The same effort, for Ada Stuart as the sole candidate, met with the same result in 1913.59 These failures illuminated the powerlessness of the disenfranchised women and spurred more action for suffrage by the Lafayette Franchise League and for more direct political civic involvement by the Woman's Council. The local league worked wholeheartedly for women's suffrage, following instructions from the Indiana Franchise League to produce press releases, fairs, plays, and other programs aimed at influencing state legislation. Core women spread the word in presentations such as Flora Kern’s “Women’s Suffrage—Its Status in Indiana” at the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) Spring Institute in 1914. The Lafayette league was connected to the national campaign through the state league and received communications and support from national leaders such as Carrie Chapman Catt. In November 1916 Taylor hosted a tea for national leader Anna Howard Shaw, whose appearance was headlined “Eloquent Talk Charms Crowd,” and Dr. Effie McCollum Jones, director of NAWSA, spoke at three Tippecanoe County locations on Suffrage Sunday in 1917 “to carry the appeal ‘Wake Up! Women of Indiana!’”60

While the Franchise League was working toward state suffrage legislation, the Woman's Council and its auxiliary Mother's Council concentrated on ousting the unsympathetic Democratic city administration; they backed the Citizens party, a political coalition of Republicans and Progressives, in the mayoral election, ostensibly to improve the moral tone of the city, which their study committee had found wanting. Although these women were treading on new turf, their rationale remained firmly within women's special, albeit expanding, sphere and traded on their gender's acknowledged moral superiority. The Woman's Council and the mothers' clubs announced their support for “any party that will eradicate the city's evils and purify the city”; the mothers' clubs petition claimed that the immoral conditions under the present administration were “a menace to the peace of our homes the moral safety of our sons and daughters and the general welfare of the community.”61

Citizens party candidate Thomas Bauer welcomed the women’s support. He recognized that their widely aired criticism of the prostitution and gambling that occurred during the incumbent’s administration could have an impact on what was expected to be a very close election, and he adopted as the first plank on his platform a pledge to enforce “every law which relates to public purity and civic

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60Lafayette Franchise League Collection; Lafayette Morning Journal, November 14, 1916, June 29, 28, 1917. The core women's connection to the state organization became closer in 1917 with the election of Ada Stuart's daughter, Marie Stuart Edwards, as its president.
61Lafayette Weekly Courier, October 17, 1913.
decency. In addition, Bauer specifically wooed these women with a plank supporting the Woman's Council's new push for a police matron. He also promised that under his administration "every man, woman, and child in the city will be treated alike," with "no discrimination shown in any particular." Parlor politics added to his openness to the core women's issues, since outspoken advocates of his candidacy included LCOS president Thomas Moran, Martha Home board member Rev. Oscar McKay, and spouses of core women Haywood and Selvena Alder.

The women responded by appearing at Bauer's nomination on October 13, 1913; on October 31, they formally endorsed him after he addressed a group of 250 women, whom he praised by saying, "No man could but feel very proud at having such a gathering before whom to speak." Bauer won the election by 16 votes, and the Citizens party took control of the city council. The women's efforts in airing the morality issue had made a difference in the city election. Former Mayor Durgan later acknowledged this when he announced himself to be a candidate for the next election. He stated, "I have but one promise to make during this campaign and that is, if elected, I will give the city a more moral administration than this one which was elected on 'moral' issues."

The women's elation was short-lived. Plank or no plank, the new mayor did not immediately appoint a police matron, despite another petition from the Woman's Council. When the matter was forced upon the mayor's attention in February 1914 by the temporary closure of the bankrupt Martha Home, he still put it off, saying, "We first want to make the police department properly efficient and then we will take up extra features." The Martha Home's board of directors was particularly anxious for this appointment, expecting a city-paid police matron to relieve them of the burden of providing the home matron's salary. But Mayor Bauer waffled, warning that "It remains to be seen just what position she will occupy in relation to the Martha home or like institution," but then promising, "In due time we will take up this police matron matter and try to solve the problem to the satisfaction of all concerned."

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*Lafayette Weekly Courier*, October 17, 1913.


*Lafayette Morning Journal*, October 17, 1913.


*Lafayette Weekly Courier*, November 7, 1913.

*Tippecanoe County Democrat*, October 19, 1917.


When a police matron was finally appointed by Mayor Bauer a year later, in March 1915, neither the appointee nor her duties were what the Martha Home directors had hoped for. The mayor bypassed the woman recommended by the Martha Home board and hired Eunice Martin, who was recommended by the metropolitan police board and whose responsibilities were not to include the Martha Home. After experiencing the euphoria of helping to win an election, the core women learned a bitter lesson. Although their group had the power to put a plank on the Citizens’ platform and to affect the outcome of an election, without the vote they lacked the necessary clout to get the police matron post implemented in the way they wanted. In the end, the women’s contribution and social connections had not mattered a whit; a male peer with power ignored their lobbying efforts just as the previous Democratic municipal officials had.

Without the expected boost of municipal funding for the matron’s salary, Martha Home was in financial crisis. Moreover, the new police matron complained to the police superintendent that two unsupervised teenaged girls who were locked in Martha Home would be at “the mercy of the flames” in case of fire. Martha Home’s board issued defensive statements and accused Martin of making a malicious accusation because of jealousy, adding that “The present police matron is not helping the city a particle in the rescue and relief work.” After weathering these crises, with the help of a front-page fundraising campaign that conspicuously displayed the names of the Stuarts as patrons, the Martha Home limped along with fewer residents and a more limited mission, reflecting its precarious financial condition. Martha Home gave up its attempt to train residents, blaming the building’s small size and the constantly changing occupancy. It was moving away from serving the dependent poor, and the majority of its residents were now self-supporting boarders.

FKISA was also moving away from its original purpose. The group’s move, however, did not stem from a failure to get government funding for their work; on the contrary, the changes occurred because they had succeeded in getting local government to take over their projects. Although the kindergartens were managed by FKISA, since 1907 some of their expenses had been paid with county tax money. In 1914 the high school began to offer domestic science courses, and the public school began a vocational program that duplicated and improved upon the Industrial School curriculum, causing an immediate drop in the Industrial School enrollment and leading to its demise two years later. While the need for FKISA’s services was diminishing, the association was in a solid financial condition because

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74Ibid., September 24, 1915.
75Lafayette Daily Courier, September 25, 1915.
they sold a donated lot for almost $5,000, which added a cushion to the annual tag day fundraising, in which on a given day members of the organization sold tags that donors wore to show they had given (and to persuade others to give).  

LCOS was in the opposite situation. The downturn in the national economy in 1914 resulted in local unemployment and an influx of unemployed transients, which more than doubled its client load and strained its financial resources. In December and January alone LCOS expended half of its annual income, prompting the general secretary to complain about the "severe drain" brought on by the "constant demand." The proceeds from a hastily scheduled charity concert in March 1915 were insufficient, and by the end of the year LCOS needed an immediate infusion of cash. Its condition remained so precarious that in January 1916 a newspaper reported that, without immediate financial aid, "the work will have to be abandoned."  

In the light of the resources available to Lafayette's women leaders, the financial problems of LCOS and the Martha Home do not seem insurmountable. Their sister organization, FKISA, had a surplus of $5,000 in its coffers. Alice Stuart, LCOS's vice president, had rescued the organization in the past and had donated $10,000 to Home Hospital in 1916. While these women had access to personal wealth and the ability to raise money, their enthusiasm was focused elsewhere.

March 1915, a crisis month for the Martha Home and LCOS, was the month that Lafayette's Franchise League distributed a special suffrage newspaper issue as part of a frontal assault for the vote. The Courier cited the women's journalistic work as an accomplishment that "argues most emphatically against the theory that the woman's sphere extends only so far as the walls of the kitchen and the sewing room." However, a front-page poem emphatically demonstrated that their argument for suffrage was a gendered one—women's votes, by reflecting women's special qualities, would improve society. The first stanza claimed:

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78Lafayette Weekly Courier, October 3, 1913; Lafayette Daily Courier, October 23, 1915.


81Lafayette Morning Journal, April 7, 1916.

A wondrous change will sure be seen
When women vote;
Our politics will all be clean
When women vote;
From gambling dens, from poor, and dice,
There'll be no evils to entice
When women vote. 83

The issue listed eight core women on the league's board, with Lucy Coulter as president. The Lafayette Franchise League that year increased its membership to 120, an achievement noted by state league leader Harriet Noble at a district meeting held at Lafayette in November 1915. She lauded the Lafayette league as "one of the most progressive in the country and composed of determined and intelligent women." 84

Mary Ely's conflicting interests in 1915 are representative of the core women and their gravitation toward women's issues. A founding member of the Franchise League and first vice president of the Woman's Council, Ely had also been a member of the LCOS advisory board and was president of Martha Home. 85 In her appearance before the FKISA board in January and February 1915, she did not ask for help for the limping women's shelter or the financially strained LCOS; instead, she came in her role as Woman's Council director to ask for money to purchase a building to serve as a community house for women's activities. The Woman's Council wanted their own building, a space for their affairs outside the confines of their parlors or church halls, as a symbol of their new status as activists in civic affairs. But a community house was not immediately obtained. Although the FKISA board favored a woman's building at the end of 1915, following supporting reports by Ada Stuart and Lahr, at the March 1916 meeting they put the community house on hold. 86

In 1915–1916 no one ever suggested the use of FKISA's money to bail out the Martha Home or LCOS, possibly because another solution was being explored: a federation of all the city's charities, so that their needs would be taken care of in just one fund drive. Federation appealed to the core women, who no longer needed or wanted the responsibility of keeping these organizations afloat. Ada Stuart
and Haywood had key positions in the yearlong series of federation meetings beginning in December 1915, which included representatives from the city charities, city and county officials, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Merchants Association. The plan that finally emerged created a Social Service Council of charities, with individual charities theoretically giving up individual fund campaigns. However, this plan was immediately undermined by exceptions. Charities with long-established ways of raising money were allowed to keep them, such as FKISA's tag day and the Salvation Army's kettles. In the end only two organizations were completely dependent on the new Social Service Council—the Martha Home and LCOS. Rather than helping these two ailing organizations, the Social Service Council put another layer of bureaucracy between them and their donors.87 When LCOS general secretary Lillian Mahin saw her job diminished in authority, she resigned. LCOS was without an administrator for six months, because the search committee headed by Alice Stuart waited until federation plans were completed before hiring a new general secretary.88

During this period the Salvation Army, a presence in the city since 1911, nudged LCOS from its central place in the city's charity network, receiving generous donations and widespread community support. Large crowds attended its evening gospel services; it housed hundreds of derelicts and aided scores of families. Army aid went beyond basic needs to providing garden lots, free shaves and haircuts, and even sewing classes.89 Four years earlier, LCOS had seen the Salvation Army as a threat to its control of the city's charities, recommending that the Army stay out of charity work even though it was doing "commendable work along religious and other lines";90 but in 1916 LCOS's annual report pointed the finger at itself, faulting its assumption of "duties which it had neither the staff or the funds to discharge."91 The report acknowledged LCOS's failure to coordinate Lafayette's charities into an efficient network, describing the year's charity work as "a turmoil of indiscriminate giving" at Christmas followed by "apathetic disregard," and it ended with the hope that the new Social Service Council would affirm the value of

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88Lafayette Weekly Courier, April 6, 1916; Children's Home Association Board Minutes, April 10, 1916 (Tippecanoe County Historical Association, Lafayette, Ind.); Tippecanoe Board of Children's Guardians Minutes, April 1916 (Tippecanoe County Historical Association, Lafayette, Ind.).
89Lafayette Morning Journal, October 17, 1912.
organization in charity work. LCOS's new secretary, Theodosia Williams, a well-qualified graduate of the University of Chicago, took over a fatally impaired LCOS in November 1916 and resigned less than a year later.

The Social Service Council looked strong on paper. Its two guiding principles were cooperation to prevent needless duplication and one campaign/one donation financing; and its officers included Ada Stuart and Haywood. But the four male bankers on the finance committee raised only half the amount needed for the year in a lackadaisical campaign. The Social Service Council attributed its financial problems to competition from World War I homefront activities, and in November 1917 it chided Lafayette residents for ignoring their own community, declaring that "Giving to the stricken abroad ought not to deprive the really needy at our own door steps." But even before war work became fashionable, the core women, whose energy and status were essential to fundraising, were moving away from charity work toward political and suffrage activities.

Moreover, America's declaration of war did not interrupt efforts to place a woman on the school board. The political climate for this reform had become more favorable because of the headway made by the Indiana Franchise League. The Indiana General Assembly of 1917 amended the state constitution to delete the word "male" from the section on voter qualifications and also passed a partial suffrage bill immediately granting women the right to vote for presidential electors, municipal officials, and delegates to a proposed constitutional convention. With women apparently able to vote in the 1917 municipal elections, Lafayette's women leaders again presented a woman to the city council as a candidate for the Lafayette school board. Undeterred either by the observation of the Tippecanoe Democrat's "Man on the Corner" that candidate Alder was "not the mother of children," or the fact that suffrage was in sight, the core women continued to pursue the strategy of placing school board membership within the woman's sphere. The "Woman About Town" columnist wrote, "Suffragist or no suffragist, all must admit that there is no sphere of civic life more related to womankind than the public schools."

Alder was a board member of Martha Home, the Children's Home, the Social Service Council, and the Franchise League and was

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92Ibid., November 7, 12, 1916, October 10, 1917.
93Ibid., December 6, 9, 1916; Lafayette Morning Journal, February 7, May 21, October 10, November 9, 1917.
94Lafayette Morning Journal, November 7, 1917.
95Phillips, Indiana in Transition, 501-502; Lafayette Morning Journal, June 4, 1917; Tippecanoe County Democrat, November 2, 1917. The new Indiana suffrage law was declared unconstitutional by the Indiana Supreme Court in October 1917.
96Tippecanoe County Democrat, June 8, 1917.
97Lafayette Morning Journal, June 7, 1917.
Serena Alder, elected by Lafayette city council members to the school board in 1917, was the first woman to serve on the board.

Courtesy, Tippecanoe County Historical Association

deaconess of the Presbyterian church. Widow of banker William W. Alder, a prominent Republican, she was backed by Mayor Bauer (who had rejoined the Republican party).\(^8\) The core women's efforts on her behalf were noted by the Democrat's "Man on the Corner," who observed that councilman Hinders, a drayman, was lobbied by the group—"the same faction that backed Mr Bauer in his campaign of four years ago"—as if he were the guest of honor at a "Pink Tea" and sarcastically suggested that Hinders' constituents would be "proud" when they saw their councilman "with one of his newly discovered lady friends gliding gracefully through the dreamy waltz . . . with the gal-

\(^8\)Lafayette Daily Courier, June 19, 1917.
But even so, Alder’s election did not come easily. McMahan’s presentation on her behalf prompted “The Man on the Corner” to point out that McMahan was an “old maid,” caustically adding, “I am sure she will not be offended when I call attention to the fact that she, also, is not a mother.” The vote of the council members deadlocked after fifteen ballots. At the next city council meeting, Alder finally won on the fourth ballot, leading the twenty women present (including the two Stuarts, McMahan, Caroline Shoemaker, Lahr, Kern, and Haywood) to applaud. The Courier reported that a “motherly” Alder would “exert a most wholesome influence” on the public school system described as “distinctly women’s sphere.”

One discordant note in Alder’s election was sounded by an unsigned letter in the Democrat from a disgruntled Franchise League member, who complained that the election of Alder had been engineered by a small elite group. The writer called it “a crooked deal” and asked, “Is it right for a few women of wealth to pick out the woman that they wish?” Apparently the core group maintained control even as the membership of its organization broadened.

The same coterie who pushed for Alder’s election to the school board dominated the homefront leadership positions available to women. Their war activities dovetailed with their interests in civic activism and suffrage. These women were members of the corps of fourteen and four-minute “men” who spoke on patriotic topics; some served on the community service committee connected with Camp Purdue; and some had their own special war relief charities, such as Haywood’s French and Belgian orphans. Alice Stuart was appointed as the only woman member of the Tippecanoe County of Defense. From this position she could select other women for highly visible homefront posts; she chose FKISA cofounder Lucy Coulter as the chairman of the Hoover Food Pledge Campaign and appointed her sister-in-law, Ada, to organize the federally mandated registration of women.

Women were most persuasive on the homefront in liberty loan bond and thrift stamp campaigns, chaired by Alice Stuart. When the men who managed the first two liberty loan drives turned to women to help with the subsequent campaigns, the Journal’s “Woman About...”

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86Tippecanoe County Democrat, June 22, 1917.
87Ibid., June 6, 1917.
88Lafayette Morning Journal, June 5, 19, 1917. For another campaign for a female school board member see Wedell, Reform Impulse in Memphis, 112-32.
89Lafayette Daily Courier, June 19, 1917.
90Tippecanoe County Democrat, June 8, 1917.
91Lafayette Morning Journal, June 18, July 29, August 15, September 10, 18, October 20, 26, November 14, 1917, February 8, 15, March 29, May 28, 1918; Lafayette Weekly Courier, September 7, 14, 1917; Tippecanoe County Honor Roll (Lafayette, Ind., 1919), 12-13, 19-23, 32.
Town” columnist crowed that something had happened that was unheard of three years earlier—women were asked to cooperate with men. She reported that one woman asked, “Are we to work under the direction of men?” The answer was, “No we are to work WITH the men.” The mayor told them, “You can map out your own campaign.” After a planning meeting, Alice Stuart declared enthusiastically that although the women realized the “stupendousness of the task,” they felt “confident,” and pledged “to do more than a man’s part to make Tippecanoe County shine in the Liberty Loan effort.” Alice Stuart delegated duties to other Franchise League members, including her sister-in-law, Ada. These campaigners did such “remarkable work” in signing up 1,767 subscribers in the third liberty loan drive that the very next month they were enlisted in the Red Cross drive—up to that time a man’s province. The Journal reported that the Red Cross executive committee regarded themselves as “particularly fortunate” to have the services of those campaigners, “fresh from their recent victory.” These women were equally successful in the thrift stamp organization, exceeding their quota by $12,000, a “feat” deemed the “most remarkable” ever performed by Tippecanoe County women.

In this exhilarating time, women working together were accomplishing something noticed by the outer world, something different from their former work for charities. The “Parada” in 1910, for example, a large entertainment producing a “parade of youth and beauty” for the benefit of LCOS and put together by the same core of committed women and chaired by Ada Stuart, paled in comparison with these war drives. The women’s war work displayed the skills they had learned in clubs and the self-confidence they had achieved in striving for school board representation. Recognized with respect, the women silenced the ridicule sometimes aimed at their club work. Moreover, they accomplished important tasks without the need to lobby powerful men. As the Journal’s “Woman About Town” declared after the war, “The strife, terrible as it was, gave women a place—one might say a business place—in this world and they are not going to give up what they have won without a battle.” Their comradery and pride were demonstrated in a parade in May 1918 organized by

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105Lafayette Morning Journal, March 30, 1918.
106Ibid., March 25, 1918.
107Ibid.
108Ibid., May 16, 1918.
109Ibid., June 5, 1918. For Indiana women’s part in the liberty loan drives see Walter Greenough, The War Purse of Indiana: The Five Liberty Loans and War Savings and Thrift Campaigns in Indiana During the World War (Indianapolis, 1922), 181-98. Lafayette women were slightly ahead of the curve, planning their own campaign in the third rather than the fourth drive and having a woman as chair of the thrift stamp campaign.
110Lafayette Morning Journal, December 6, 9, 13, 1909.
111Ibid., February 8, 1918.
**Dr. Ada McMahon, Among the Most Active Leaders in the Drive to Get a Woman Appointed to the Lafayette School Board and Director of the Indiana Franchise League, Served in France as a Physician in a Hospital Treating French Soldiers during World War I.**

Courtesy, Tippecanoe County Historical Association

McMahan, a Red Cross director, before she went to France. The parade celebrated women, supposedly because the Red Cross was known as “the greatest mother in the world,” but it really was celebrating women’s war work. The Purdue military band and the Purdue attachment of the U.S. Army led hundreds of marching women, including Red Cross production workers, Junior Red Cross societies, nurses, and “every woman’s group in town.” Some of the core women rode on floats—Lucy Coulter on the Red Cross Home Service Float and Alice Stuart on the Council of Defense float.

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11Tippecanoe County Democrat, August 2, 1918; Lafayette Daily Courier, October 11, 1918; American Legion Auxiliary, Dept. of Indiana, *Indiana Women in the War* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1936), 1, 44. McMahan circumvented the United States Armed Services’ ban on female doctors by volunteering as a physician in a French hospital sponsored by the Women’s Overseas Hospital Association under the auspices of NAWSA.

111Lafayette Daily Courier, May 17, 1918.
The Changing Allegiances of Women Volunteers

In only ten years Lafayette women's volunteer activity had gained considerable breadth. When Wilson and Alice Stuart were taking the first steps into the civic arena with the failed drive for a police matron in 1908, the core women's activities had been limited to church, club, and charity work. By 1918 they had added municipal housekeeping projects, a successful school board campaign, an active pursuit of women's suffrage; and they were in the thick of the homefront war effort as well. Besides fundraising for the Red Cross, the liberty loan, and thrift stamp campaigns, they headed the Lafayette Library War Council, commissioned to round up reading material for the troop camps; and they ministered directly to the doughboys and their families in groups like the War Mothers and the Civilian Relief group. They led conservation efforts and registered women for war work; they were even in charge of sock-knitting in six of Indiana's counties.14

Was it these additional responsibilities that prevented core women from responding to their old nemesis Durgan when he dropped the police matron issue right back in their laps? One of Durgan's first acts upon his reelection as mayor in January 1918 was to abolish the position of police matron "as unnecessary," claiming that "the work could be handled through the Martha Home and charitable organizations and the results would be better."15 But rather than protesting the elimination of the police matron position, a central concern just five years earlier, the core women chose to ignore this provocative move. Instead, the Martha Home board moved away from services to dependent poor women and aimed at a different population, working women. Their war and suffrage activities still allowed time to implement a new service for working women at Martha Home, day care of children for a fee. Although this service did not prove popular enough to continue, the home's provision of lodging for working women at an affordable price paid half of Martha Home's expenses from February of 1918 to February of 1919.16

It was not the pressure of war work that kept the core women from fighting to reinstate the police matron: the issue had lost its importance. Its ostensible purpose, female representation on the police force to aid women and children in trouble, had never been the sole concern of the core women. If it had been, they would have celebrated the creation of that position in 1915 and condemned its abolition in 1918. The women's disappointment in 1915 had revealed that their primary goals were to secure public funds for Martha Home and to extend their influence into the civic arena, not just to secure a gen-

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14Ibid., January 30, June 19, 1919; Lafayette Morning Journal, July 14, 18, August 8, September 8, 18, 1917, February 8, March 26, May 28, June 13, 1918.
15Tippecanoe County Democrat, January 11, 1918.
16Lafayette Weekly Courier, June 28, 1918; Lafayette Morning Journal, March 5, 1919.
eral municipal improvement to aid distressed women. Their failure brought home their lack of political power in the municipal arena. Their success in getting a woman appointed to the school board in 1917 demonstrated that they had redressed that lack, making the police matron reform a dead issue. For the core women, the goal of women’s suffrage had superseded benevolence.

The demands of war work did not prevent Lafayette’s women leaders from pursuing the vote for women; their suffrage activities continued full throttle in 1918. Nor did war work drain interest from the Woman’s Council community house project; in fact the project benefited from the solidarity women’s war work produced. In April 1918, Alice Stuart, Haywood, Ely, and Shoemaker approached the FKISA board again, requesting financing for the women’s community house from FKISA’s “considerable sum of money.” But FKISA’s vote to spend $2,000 on liberty bonds appeared to end the matter. Six days later, however, Haywood presented the FKISA board with a fait accompli, having purchased property for the building with her personal note for $6,000. Haywood, who was also the Social Service Council’s treasurer, made no such generous action to help that underfinanced organization, which was failing in its mission to support LCOS and the Martha Home. (She did loan Martha Home $50 to make up a shortfall in 1917.) Her decisive move for a community house was immediately backed by Alder, Shoemaker, Ely, and Ada Stuart. These actions not only demonstrated their wholehearted support of a project unrelated to benevolence, but also underlined the autocratic position core women held in the groups they led. When they lost a vote, they found a way to move ahead anyway. The Democrat’s “Man on the Corner” reported that some of the Community House women were “bitterly complaining because one or two women made the purchase without first consulting all interested parties.”

The Community House project was publically announced in May 1918 as a center for patriotic relief work, a “War House,” in order to obtain the required wartime permission from the County Council of Defense for fundraising. Although the Council of Defense had outlawed Chautauqua meetings as too frivolous and questioned the validity of the Battery C Rainbow Cheer Association, it did authorize a tag day for the new Community House; over one hundred women easily collected $1,500 for the building. Before the armistice

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118Lafayette Weekly Courier, April 12, 1918.
119FKISA Minutes, April 11, 18, 24, 30, 1918; Martha Home Cash Book, 1914–1917, Martha Home Collection. These meetings were taking place right after the third liberty loan campaign and during the Red Cross parade preparations.
120Tippecanoe County Democrat, December 13, 1918.
121Lafayette Morning Journal, November 13, 1918.
Lafayette's Woman's Council acquired the smaller building shown in this photo as the original community house in 1918. Courtesy, Tippecanoe County Historical Association.
the Community House served as a meeting place for three different kinds of groups: war groups, as advertised; women's groups, as first planned; and welfare groups (FKISA and the Social Service Council). 122

As soon as the war was over, war groups and welfare groups disappeared from the Community House, and it reverted to its original and true purpose. As put in 1919's tag day appeal, the community house served "primarily to advance the welfare of women" by offering a "valuable" meeting place for women's organizations.123 After FKISA ceded its kindergarten operations to the public school system, it was absorbed by the Community House Association, which had replaced the Woman's Council and which was governed by Alder, the Stuarts, Ely, Shoemaker, and Haywood.124 The core women could feel a sense of accomplishment on the dissolution of FKISA; its educational services had been replaced by public school classes that were an entitlement for all children. But LCOS and Martha Home had dissolved with their original goals unaccomplished. LCOS vanished in 1919, the same year that Martha Home announced that it would be used solely as a boardinghouse and rooming house. The next year Martha Home was sold, and the Community House inherited its furniture.125 The feelings of the core women on the demise of Martha Home are not recorded, but a retreat from the Home's former residents seems apparent in their report that a possible future Community House outreach to working women would "distinctly" not be a rescue home but was "designed as an attractive meeting place for self-respecting young women."126

Neither LCOS's goal to coordinate the cities' charities nor Martha Home's aim to shelter and train troubled women to be self-sufficient was assumed by any other public or private group. Even so, the loss of these charitable organizations raised no outcry—not from the core women, their clients, or the community at large. Several circumstances helped to mask their exit. A publicly funded employment bureau reduced the number of potential LCOS clients by surveying regional job opportunities and thus lessening the number of unemployed transients "tramping" for work. Private aid to supplement public aid for the indigent was available from the Salvation Army and the Red Cross Home Service Section, which aided ex-service-
The Changing Allegiances of Women Volunteers

men's families. Women's volunteer organizations, like the War Mothers and the Needlework Guild, took up some slack by sewing for poor children. Full employment created by the wartime economic boom minimized the need for LCOS and reduced the population served by Martha Home. The Home's base population may also have been reduced by the Tippecanoe County Board of Children's Guardians more active involvement with dependent mothers.

But prosperity, a reshuffling of private charities, and new government services did not appreciably affect the lives of the most miserable, those whose situation had been improved by a municipal police matron and Martha Home—suicidal women, deranged women, abused women, incorrigible teens, runaway teens, the homeless and destitute. Without Martha Home or a police matron, the only options left for these women were the jail or the poor farm, both miserable places as indicated in December 1918 by the grand jury that reported conditions for women in those facilities as "deplorable." The Community House women responded by going "on record as indignant at the existing conditions and urged that the proper authorities correct them as soon as possible." Their reaction underlined the core women's increasing distance from the local needy population. As managers of charitable organizations they had heard direct accounts of the clients from the professional staff and from McMahan, who in her role as consulting physician had treated such heartrending cases as a mother and child who were severely beaten by a drunken husband and a dazed twenty-nine-year-old woman found crying on the street who did not know who she was. As lobbyists, the core women had fewer opportunities to hear reports about poor women in trouble that might direct their actions to mediate local problems.

Lafayette women's minimal response to the grand jury report caught the attention of the Democrat's "Man on the Corner," who wrote, "I notice this Community House is already on record regarding the grand jury's report and I am just wondering if over activity is not the very thing that sooner or later wrecks all women's soci-
eties." He feared that "these women—the same charmed circle of ladies...[who] are also in charge of practically every movement in this city," would make the Community House "a nesting place for ambitious female politicians," and he suggested that the Community House adopt "rules to prohibit political subjects from being discussed within the building." But his fears appear to have been unfounded. After woman suffrage was gained, the core women did not work within political parties but lobbied for legislation from within the new nonpartisan Tippecanoe County League of Women’s Voters, formed from the Lafayette Franchise League. Their first action was to petition Indiana legislators to pass the Sheppard-Towner bill for the protection of mothers and babies. The local League of Women Voters also continued municipal housekeeping-style civic participation. When the league’s first president, Ada Stuart, stepped down in 1930, beautifying the banks of the Wabash was singled out as her greatest achievement.

The core women, who continued to be active in both the league and the Community House Association, remained rooted in their separate upper- and middle-class women’s organizations where they retained their leadership positions. These organizations, while not so rigidly exclusive as the Monday Club, continued to underline the core women’s class identity by using their status to attract middle-class members. The "Stuart name and home [which] were favorably known in Lafayette social circles" were recruiting tools for the Tippecanoe County League of Women’s Voters. In 1921, when the Indiana league held its convention in Lafayette, chaired by Ada Stuart, Earlham was the site of a gala garden party. Lafayette was described as a "royal host" where "beautiful homes" dispensed "lavish hospitality" and the Country Club as "famed for its links...its velvet lawns...its swimming pool." This emphasis on wealth fits in with the fundamental role that the core women’s identity as women of position played in their evolution from benevolent organization managers to civic activists. Their class identity opened the doors necessary for their journey. Membership in women’s clubs as well as leader-

133Tippecanoe County Democrat, December 13, 1918. For the use of hostility, such as the Man on the Corner’s, to maintain the boundaries of separate spheres see Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place,” 27-28.
135Hadley, “History of Tippecanoe League of Women Voters.”
136Indiana League of Women Voters, Third Annual Convention Program, May 9-11, 1922, LWV Collection; The Woman Voter, II (No. 9, May 16, 1921), 1, 3, ibid.
ship positions in franchise groups and homefront efforts were dependent upon high social status. When the thirty-sixth state ratified the Nineteenth Amendment the core women were represented on the front page of the Journal Courier by Ada Stuart, who "was accorded the privilege of being the first local woman to hear the news," and by Alder, who said, "I am very very glad indeed, but will say that which the women have won after so earnest a fight is no more than just and right." Their interaction with important civic leaders, such as the governor and two senators at the 1921 league convention, also emphasized their social standing and reinforced class differences.

The rewards for women's benevolent work did not match those they received for their work for women's issues and the war effort. Although Lafayette’s core of women leaders tried to transfer their responsibility for the faltering charitable organizations to the larger community in the federated Social Service Council, their failure to do so did not energize them to greater effort, but instead marked the end of their crucial support. Their decision to fund the Community House, rather than to try to save the charitable associations, confirmed their commitment to a center for middle- and upper-class volunteer women (with a possible outreach to respectable working women who yearned for the use of a parlor) rather than to organizations devoted to the needy. This decision was reflected in a smaller action of Alice Stuart’s. She completely equipped the Community House’s kitchen, just as she had for the Industrial School two decades earlier, only this time it was to provide refreshments for ladies in gloves and hats, rather than to teach kitchen skills to poor girls.

The core women’s social position was the context within which they made profound changes in their relationship to public life and politics. Their journey from charitable work to civic activism was powered chiefly by prompting from outside sources—the Indiana Board of Charities and Corrections, the Indiana Federation of Clubs, and the Indiana Franchise League. Although the women’s responses to these pushes were couched in rhetoric that emphasized the advantages of women’s unique qualities for the positions of police matron and school board member and the importance of a moral city administration for women and children, this rationale was at least in part a strategy to make their civic forays less controversial. The use of this rhetoric cloaked their more practical goals—in the case of

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287 Lafayette Journal Courier, August 18, 1920.
289 An example of the suffragists’ use of maternal images to make women activists more sympathetic was their participation in Baby Week in March 1916, under the joint sponsorship of the National Franchise Movement and the Federation of Women’s Clubs. Under the leadership of Kern and McMahan, the local effort promoted infant health care with events such as an automobile parade of mothers with babies. Lafayette Morning Journal, March 6, 8, 30, 1916.
the police matron, to stabilize their charitable organizations; in the case of the mayoral election, to oust an unsympathetic administration; and in the case of the school board, to take a first step toward women's suffrage.

The women's changing activism does not seem to have been fueled initially by dissatisfaction with their disabilities as women. Although they were female, they were also members of an elite, connected by kinship with powerful men, and they had acted harmoniously with same-class men in the management of charitable organizations. The constraints of their gender had to be revealed to them in interactions with the male establishment outside of the charity arena before women's issues mattered. The cooperation of male city leaders in "municipal housekeeping" projects such as city beautification vanished when the women ventured into the political arena (unless it was to the men's immediate advantage). Without the approval of municipal officials, the core women were stopped in their tracks. Their failures to affect political appointments opened their eyes to the boundaries that delineated the activities permitted to women and awakened them to their powerlessness as disenfranchised women. It was this powerful realization that led to the change of direction away from charitable work toward women's issues. The critical turn of events not only removed charity from the central spot in the core women's interests, it undermined the infrastructure that kept LCOS and Martha Home afloat. The core women increasingly led the complex network of clubs, church societies, and sewing groups assembled under LCOS and its Advisory Council to help the Woman's Council and Franchise League with civic projects and women's rights.

The core women's experience of failure in lobbying the male civic establishment led them to regroup in single-sex organizations. Collective female experiences in the Woman's Council and the Franchise League gave these women a greater sense of their own agency, as well as a sense of pride and public recognition that far exceeded the rewards of managing charitable associations. Their group solidarity was reinforced by shared experiences in wartime activities on the homefront, and it was enhanced by the recognition their work received. The core women's actions first illuminated and then shattered the boundaries that kept women out of civic and political arenas. But at the same time their identity as elite women was reinforced, shutting them inside a community where they were central and remote from the dependent poor whom their defunct charitable organizations had served.

Lafayette's small size makes it possible to follow individual leaders of voluntary organizations in their movement from mixed-sex benevolent endeavors to single-sex organizations that sought the vote. These women's history challenges the idea that Progressive Era women activists journeyed triumphantly from the confines of the
woman's sphere into the open civic arena, one activity leading to another, with new interests crowding out older ones. The experiences of Lafayette's core women reveal in detail the factors that reshaped their efforts and agendas. Their commitment to women's suffrage was not simply an extension of municipal housekeeping. All-women's organizations only emerged when women failed to accomplish their policies in mixed-sex groups; only when separate women's groups also failed to change governmental policies did women make an all-out campaign for the vote. The personal rebuffs the women suffered in mixed-sex civic interactions politicized their goals, and to seek redress the women volunteer leaders shifted political boundaries.

Studies of women activists in Galveston and Tampa show that this pattern was not unique to Lafayette. But few local studies trace the changing agendas and affiliations of individual elite leaders of women volunteers; the case of Lafayette's women leaders helps explain why increasing numbers of white upper- and middle-class women began to support suffrage for women in the early 1900s.