Social Life and Social Services in Indianapolis

Networks During the Gilded Age and Progressive Era

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ABSTRACT: In late nineteenth-century Indianapolis, a group of citizens, united by social networks, dominated the governance and management of the city’s social services for several decades. The tight-knit network of men and women worked together at the center of social and philanthropic life. Since its inception in 1879, the Charity Organization Society of Indianapolis (COS) wielded virtual control over social welfare—making it one of the most progressive and powerful philanthropic organizations in the country. An influential coterie of men and women governed, donated to, and volunteered for the COS and many of its sub-agencies. Then, as now, social networks are as essential for us to understand as social entrepreneurs and charismatic leaders.

KEYWORDS: Charity Organization Society; social networks; social life; Progressive Era; Indianapolis; philanthropy

In nineteenth-century Indianapolis, a group of citizens, united by social networks, dominated the governance and management of the city’s social services for several decades. Social networks build and sustain communities, as groups of citizens solve community problems and work together toward a notion of the common good. Such networks facilitate access to information, enhance individuals’ influence, and create solidarity that
reinforces cultural norms.¹ The organized charity movement of Gilded Age and Progressive Era Indianapolis provide an important example of how social networks established and strengthened the community’s prevailing cultural norms.

Scholars who have studied charity in nineteenth-century Indianapolis have frequently begun with the career of Social Gospel minister Oscar C. McCulloch, who led the city’s powerful and influential Charity Organization Society (COS) from its founding in 1879 until his death in 1891. Little scholarship explores the COS beyond McCulloch’s brief tenure; scholars have also paid scant attention to the volunteers and donors who stood at the heart of the COS throughout its tenure in the city. In fact, the COS, like so many other charitable and social organizations, existed because of a complex and longstanding network of citizens.²

Strong networks in Indianapolis neighborhoods, churches, and charitable societies connected men and women throughout the nineteenth century. When the club movement peaked at the turn of the twentieth century, it made an indelible imprint on philanthropy in the city. The affluent men and women who were active in clubs and social life also controlled the city’s social services. The charitable network they created bound them together in a commitment to morality, civic improvement, duty to community, and public accountability. The social nexus created by these philanthropic leaders undergirded the city’s social service delivery and reinforced the leaders’ own values of industry, thrift, and self-reliance. This paper examines the relationship between social life and social services in Indianapolis during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. The study centers


on the leadership of the Charity Organization Society of Indianapolis and its related agencies.

As Indianapolis developed in the mid-nineteenth century, Protestant churches, Sunday Schools, and Bible and tract societies provided what Jacob Piatt Dunn called “the moral foundation” of the city.3 Much of early Indianapolis life was rooted in the church, as religion provided the community’s spiritual, moral, and social force.4 Indianapolis resident Catharine Merrill observed, “Nearly everybody, indeed every decent person, went to church….There was a sort of magnanimity in the hearts and lives of the first settlers that for long stamped the character of the place with dignity and simplicity.”5 The solid moral foundation of the church network undergirded attitudes toward a balance between poor relief, philanthropy, and public assistance. Community members were bound together by Christian love, not obligation, yet everyone had the possibility to be successful through their own efforts.6 The Protestant ethic demanded benevolence of its wealthier citizens and expected those less fortunate to aspire to work, if at all possible.

Closely connected to religious expression was a culture of voluntary association. Resistance to the authority of large government embedded in early U.S. history, contributed to the formation of civic associations as building blocks of philanthropy. Throughout the country, dedicated men and women formed associations to address a myriad of issues. In the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville saw voluntary associations of “a thousand kinds, religious, moral, serious, futile, very general and very specialized, large and small” as uniquely American. He observed that Americans associated freely to get things done—build churches and hospitals, distribute books, build group consensus, develop opinions, or “highlight a truth.”7

3 Jacob Piatt Dunn, Greater Indianapolis: The History, the Industries, the Institutions, and the People of a City of Homes, vol. 1 (Chicago, Ill., 1910), 82.
5 Catharine Merrill (1824–1900), daughter of Samuel Merrill (state treasurer, bank, railroad, and publishing executive), volunteered as a pioneer schoolmaster in the Merrill home and became Butler University’s first female professor of English. As quoted in George W. Geib, Lives Touched by Faith: Second Presbyterian Church, 150 Years (Indianapolis, Ind., 1987), 30.
Associational life proliferated in Indianapolis in the mid-1800s, just as Tocqueville witnessed during his U.S. tour. In the small and still-developing town, people necessarily helped each other out of need and for mutual benefit. Kate Milner Rabb’s entertaining piece of historical fiction set in 1840 Indianapolis described the city’s culture of civic engagement: “Men are continually engaged in town meetings to promote civil affairs, in debating societies, in Bible classes, and the union Sunday School.”

Neighbors banded together for barn raisings, quilting sessions, assistance with ailing family members, and various other tasks of daily life conducive to mutuality. In classic Tocquevillian fashion, a citizen recalled that when he first met James Blake, one of the Indianapolis Benevolent Society (IBS) co-founders, Blake was lifting a heavy log to help his neighbors build a tavern.

Indianapolis residents readily formed new associations and followed broader social patterns, ranging from Bible societies and cultural and literary societies, to volunteer fire departments and temperance organizations. Teas, church socials (often held at private homes), Bible studies, open-air sermons, barbecues, dances, and Fourth of July celebrations all connected community members with a general sense of fellowship. Early reminiscences recorded social life, religious life, and associational life as almost indistinguishable.

On Thanksgiving Day 1835, James Blake, Calvin Fletcher, and other city fathers formed the Indianapolis Benevolent Society “to relieve the necessities of the poor of the city of Indianapolis . . . by means of voluntary contributions.” The society’s mission also encompassed broader notions of community: to help individuals and families with personal problems and “to strengthen family life.” Volunteers created districts, covered those same areas from year to year, and called upon every house in their districts, so that they became familiar with each donor and recipient.

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8 Indianapolis native Kate Milner Rabb (1866–1937) was a popular magazine editor, writer, and English teacher at Indiana University. She served as president of the Woman’s Press Club of Indiana. Kate Milner Rabb, *A Tour Through Indiana in 1840: The Diary of John Parsons of Petersburg, Virginia* (New York, 1920), 153.


volunteers, from financially secure and respected families, worked in pairs, walking the streets with baskets of supplies. For forty years, the society’s practices remained based on formal social case work, screening according to need, advising on family matters, and coordination with churches and related charities.

By 1880, Indianapolis had evolved from a homogeneous pioneer town to a large, heterogeneous, and prominent capital city. The IBS, however, did not materially change its structure or system of collection and distribution, even as the city’s evolving demographics and needs dictated a fresh approach. Old-fashioned neighborhood benevolence addressed neither the needs of a city of 50,000 nor the effects of recent economic depressions. Indianapolis’s growth, industrialization, and heterogeneous population all challenged traditional neighborhood benevolence as the primary remedy for assisting the needy. Questions over the respective roles of men and women in philanthropy, and the proper place of business and government in assisting the poor, swirled in the press.

The social problems created by late nineteenth-century urban growth and industrialization led to the rise of the scientific philanthropy movement. This fusion of science, business, religion, and charity emerged based on several fundamental concepts: use of businesslike processes to tackle societal problems, emphasis on data and root cause analysis, and development of preventive strategies rather than relief. Scientific philanthropists attempted to purge charity of its sentimentality and organize relief into a comprehensive system of rules.\(^1\) Some historians equate scientific philanthropy with charity organization societies, the institutional embodiment of the movement. Yet the broader movement was signaled more by philosophy than structure and encompassed a range of orderly or systematic approaches to giving. The movement’s methods melded voluntarism, noblesse oblige, religion, social Darwinism, and simultaneous benefit to donor, recipient, and community.\(^2\)

Why did scientific philanthropy take root in Indianapolis? Paul Boyer notes that while organized charity was not a new discovery, the “moment was ripe” for existing ideas to take hold. The change in Indianapolis


from benevolent society to charity organization society exemplified the “moment.” The complexity of poverty, the Indianapolis Benevolent Society’s obsolescence, and the outcry for efficiency led to the logical and obvious solution: the scientific, systematic, city-wide approach soon to be known as organized charity. The scientific philanthropy movement swept across the country and into the city.

In 1879, McCulloch led a small group of civic leaders to form the Charity Organization Society and incorporated the IBS as a co-operating agency. By February 1880, the Indianapolis COS had thirty founding donors and a well-developed constitution detailing “the objects of the society”:

1. To see that all deserving cases of destitution are properly relieved.
2. To prevent indiscriminate and duplicate giving.
3. To make employment the basis of relief.
4. To secure the community from imposture.
5. To reduce vagrancy and pauperism and ascertain their true causes.

As one of the first such societies in the country, the Indianapolis COS quickly became a leader in the national organized charity movement and the most powerful nonprofit organization in the city, a position it maintained for decades. The change from IBS to COS reenergized civicly engaged men and women and integrated the moral foundation of the city with emerging scientific concepts. The new society expanded rapidly, not only subsuming the Benevolent Society, but creating new agencies, training new volunteer case workers, and establishing a clearing house to eliminate duplicative aid from multiple charities. From its 1879 inception, prominent businessmen and religious leaders governed the COS and several charities in its circle. Participation in the COS created new spaces for interaction among citizens as they strove to address local problems. Men and women, already connected to one another through interrelated community networks, now mobilized behind the organized charity concept.

COS members were a relatively homogenous group: male, white, upper-middle class, well educated, mid-career, well established in their professions and businesses, at least second-generation Indianapolis residents,

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Horace and Martha McKay were leaders among Indianapolis’s social networks. Mr. McKay founded the Unitarian Church in Indianapolis in 1868 and Mrs. McKay was one of the founding members of the Indianapolis Woman’s Club. McKay built this house in 1886 in the city’s Old Northside. Club members often met in each other’s homes and established a tightly-knit network of philanthropy.

Courtesy of Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission Collection, Herron Art Library, Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis

civically active, generous, and often pillars of their churches.\textsuperscript{18} Therefore, as founding members’ socioeconomic status rose, their homes began to concentrate in several beautiful tree-lined neighborhoods and along prominent streets. In the 1880s, Indianapolis was still what Kenneth Jackson calls a “walking city,” with fashionable addresses located close to the center of town.\textsuperscript{19} Neighbors knew one another and routinely strolled by each others’ homes. Extended families lived together or in adjacent properties, almost in compounds, even after adult children married. Many men participated in the same social clubs, all located within the Mile Square, at a time when club membership provided loci for making and deepening connections. COS members’ wives knew each other through the formal institution of

\textsuperscript{18} Women were not allowed COS membership. They appear in COS records as staff and volunteers.

visiting, as well as through women’s social clubs, church membership, and philanthropy. All of these conditions created many opportunities for interactions; intermarriage among this tightly-knit group was not uncommon. The interconnectedness of this group is reflected in Indianapolis’s first installment of its social register, the Red Book of Indianapolis (1895).

Because so many high-profile charter members signed on to the COS concept so quickly, their support lent unmatched credibility to the organization. No other single philanthropic entity in the city garnered equal respect and influence. Business leaders readily embraced COS principles, as business and organized charity shared a common value system—the middle-class virtues of thrift, self-dependence, industry, and good conduct.

The COS inherited a long and deep tradition of the merits of hard work and the value of independence. Literature reinforced this broad cultural belief in self-help, self-sufficiency, and self-worth. Women in benevolent circles cited a phrase attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson: “If a man give me aught, he has done me a low benefit; if he enable me to do aught of myself, he has done me a high benefit.” Emerson’s essay Self-Reliance (1841) advocated for the potential self-worth and genius of the individual versus popular opinion and social pressure. He criticized charitable donations unless one had a wholehearted affinity for the cause, especially the “wicked cause” of uplifting certain poor people espoused by many relief societies. “Do not tell me,” Emerson warned, “of my obligation to put all poor men in good situations. Are they my poor?” Indiana poet Sarah T. Bolton (1814–1893)—perhaps as well-known statewide as Emerson was nationally—captured these same aspirations in her best-known poem, “Paddle Your Own Canoe” (1850). Four words punctuate each stanza to capture the triumph of perseverance over adversity:

Nothing great is lightly won
Nothing won is lost

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20 The institution of visiting, not to be confused with charitable friendly visiting, involved calling on one another at home for social purposes, usually on designated days of the week. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America,” Signs 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1975), 10.

21 The author compared COS member names with individual Red Book entries. Anna McKenzie, comp., Red Book of Indianapolis, 1895–6 (Dallas, Tex., 1895).


23 Third Biennial General Federation of Women’s Clubs (Louisville, Ky., 1896), 138.
Every good deed, nobly done,
Will repay the cost.
Leave to Heaven, in humble trust,
All you will to do:
But if you succeed you must
Paddle your own canoe.24

The sentiment of individual responsibility was so pervasive that Horatio Alger incorporated Bolton’s phrase for the third volume in his “Luck and Pluck” series, titled *Strong and Steady; or, Paddle Your Own Canoe* (1871).

Historian Merle Curti, moreover, has reminded us that American philanthropy emphasized the idea of self-help, as “related to our creed of individual responsibility and achievement.” Curti argues that the historic American character “equated successful achievement with individual freedom, individual effort, individual responsibility.”25 Historian Robert Wiebe extends the notion of individual responsibility to the community, demonstrating that the desire for self-determination encouraged organizations that reinforced and expressed the spirit of community autonomy.26 Andrew Cayton and Susan Gray argue that the midwestern ideology included a “particularly strong commitment to the development of the public good, to the maintenance and expansion of a place for people to think and act.”27 With a philanthropic middle class dedicated to furthering the public good, Indianapolis acted as an ideal incubator in which civic leaders tested the tenets of organized charity. It is not surprising that the ethic of individual self-reliance dominated COS policy—the movement mirrored its environment and reinforced existing societal norms through its programs.28

Although COS leadership was male, women formed and managed many other charitable agencies. Across the array of city charities, women comprised the majority of volunteer labor. The moral foundation of organized

charity in Indianapolis provided a platform from which women launched benevolent initiatives. For many years, religious faith and community values integrated Christian duty, humanitarian compassion, and charity. By 1884, Indianapolis boasted eighty-eight churches representing sixteen major denominations.\textsuperscript{29} Church networks fostered the development of the Indianapolis Orphan Asylum, the Home for Friendless Women, and the Indianapolis Asylum for Friendless Colored Children. The social networks created within churches led women to organize for a wide variety of charitable purposes; now the organized charity movement presented new roles for women as volunteer friendly visitors.

Early on, the Indianapolis COS stated its primary object as the “social and moral elevation of the poor.” This it would achieve “by bringing the richer and poorer classes into closer relations with each other by means of a thorough system of house-to-house visitation.”\textsuperscript{30} Visitation thus became integral to the Indianapolis COS’s mission, as it hoped one-on-one counseling would completely obviate the need for material relief. Friendly visiting, often described as an extension of feminine noblesse oblige, brought women’s value as households’ moral guardians into their communities. Women instilled the service ethic into their daughters, and they, in turn, to their daughters, just as women of privilege learned social and domestic skills in a sort of apprenticeship system.\textsuperscript{31} Female friendly visitors often acted as board members of the women’s and children’s homes that had begun before COS was founded. Referrals back and forth among women of influence were common and collegial. Not surprisingly, then, these asylums adopted approaches to poor relief that remained consistent with the COS’s philosophy. Women, therefore, served as the frontline workers who executed the COS agenda of encouraging self-sufficiency, work, thrift, and order.

By 1910, the city’s population had more than doubled during the previous two decades, growing from 105,000 in 1890 to 234,000. The Charity Organization Society evolved as Indianapolis grew and modernized. At the turn of the century, during what some residents called Indiana’s Golden Age, the state was an influential force in American

\textsuperscript{29} Berry R. Sulgrove, History of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana (Philadelphia, Pa., 1884), 389.

\textsuperscript{30} March 12, 1880 Report of the Committee on District Work, BV 1170, FSA Records.

\textsuperscript{31} Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual,” 16–17.
manufacturing, culture, and politics. The city of Indianapolis occupied a central place in American literary culture during the period. As poet John Boyle O’Reilly commented, “A man can rise in Indianapolis a thousand miles from Boston, and strike a literary note that the whole country turns its ear to hear.”

Indianapolis, however, experienced the complications that come with urbanization. Author Meredith Nicholson reluctantly had to admit that growth had wrought a new Indianapolis from the old—“a town is at last a city.” Moreover, even during this Golden Age, many poorer residents of the “most American city” continued to approach the COS for assistance. As the work of the COS and its related agencies remained central to the city’s charitable goals, economic, cultural, and political success allowed the coterie of civic leaders to remain united. This single close-knit, relatively unified group of elite citizens continued to support and control the COS’s agenda. Indianapolis’s unified elite differed from the pattern in other cities. David Hammack argues that New York City’s economic and social elites were concentrated in several smaller interest groups that competed with one another in matters of public interest. Membership patterns in the city’s six largest clubs emphasized wealth, ancestry, politics or culture—but not usually a combination of these factors. Even in small cities, citizens organized around business interests, religion, or philanthropy, creating tension over authority in community decision-making.

In Indianapolis, COS leaders were also active club members. Both men and women participated in the same social clubs at a time when club membership lay at the heart of community building. The club movement built upon trends already in motion: the affinity of Americans toward voluntary association and the related public/private model of civic trusteeship that developed in Indianapolis. Literary clubs formed early. The (men’s) Literary Club, the Indianapolis Woman’s Club, and more than a dozen other men’s, women’s, or mixed-gender literary clubs formed in Indiana between 1875 and 1900. The voluntary associations of the nineteenth century were active in sponsoring organizations.

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33 Eva Draegert, “Cultural History of Indianapolis: Literature, 1875–1890 [II],” Indiana Magazine of History 52 (December 1956), 356.
34 Meredith Nicholson, “Indianapolis: City of Homes,” Atlantic Monthly 93 (June 1904), 840.
century, with churches and neighborhoods at the core, formalized into clubs of all sorts by 1900. Indiana historian Edward Leary asserted: “Almost everyone in Indianapolis belonged to a club” during Indiana’s Golden Age. Mary Merrill Graydon recorded over one hundred literary and social clubs by 1900 in a city of 169,000 people. Many men and women, moreover, belonged to multiple clubs. The Red Book (1895) and annual Blue Books cross-referenced club memberships with households, as club participation signaled socioeconomic status, character, and willingness to participate in a common endeavor. Club men and women commented over and over that they felt a sense of belonging, bonding, and camaraderie with other members.

Indianapolis News founder John Holliday and his wife Evaline exemplified life at the center of both the social scene and philanthropy in Indianapolis. In addition to many civic activities, each served as president of the major philanthropic institutions of their time, John Holliday of the COS and Evaline of the Indianapolis Free Kindergarten Society (IFK). Indianapolis newspapers devoted considerable space to the club scene and covered in detail the weekly club programs and social calendar (parties, receptions, and engagement and wedding announcements). The Hollidays often graced the society pages of the city’s daily newspapers in regular features such as the “Swirl of Society,” “Social Side of Life,” and “Social Side of City.” The IFK gala became the charity ball of the social season. No other social events took place on New Year’s Eve so that everyone could attend the ball. By 1910, most of “the society women” were IFK members, and the ball served as the climax of the holiday season.

The veritable explosion of clubs solidified and intensified existing networks into even denser, interrelated associations that linked gender, religion, business, and philanthropy. Clubs created strong in-group loyalty and solidarity, even more than they connected different groups to one
another. Prominent men and women already supported the COS through donations and service, to pursuing their own visions of the civic ideal. These same men and women simultaneously participated in and led the club movement. As a result, the organized charity model became firmly entrenched. As literary and cultural associations flourished, the COS enjoyed two decades of stability, confidence, and legitimacy.

The trend to organize charity coincided with efforts in other arenas, thus re-validating the COS. As Indiana’s Ida Harper observed, “The spirit of combination, of federation, has seized upon the people. . . . Every profession, every trade, has its organization.” 41 Mary Jameson Judah, married to COS charter member John M. Judah, echoed that “the key of our time is the value of organization.” 42 Men’s public lives naturally centered around business, so many early Indianapolis voluntary associations were business-related, such as the Board of Trade, Bar Association, State Medical Society, and Indiana Manufacturers’ Association. New clubs built upon business connections but did not have to be professional associations, such as the Century Club, Columbia Club, and Country Club. Men turned to their clubs as comfortable social refuges. 43 Male clubs could be noisy or sedate, political or neutral, but always “undefiled by lace and linen”—that is, the presence of women. 44

Wealth alone did not qualify men for club membership. Meredith Nicholson observed that “it was still bad form to display wealth if you had it,” and established citizens regarded 
{nouveau riche} warily. 45 To the men’s Literary Club, for example, education and passion for the pursuit of truth and knowledge surpassed other criteria. Lawyers, ministers, teachers, doctors, and businessmen comprised the majority of members during the club’s founding decades. 46 The Literary Club unapologetically turned away candidates whose character, intellect, or social standing did not pass muster.

42 Indianapolis Woman’s Club, 1875–1940 (Greenfield, Ind., 1944), 76.
43 George W. Geib, Indianapolis: Hoosiers’ Circle City (Tulsa, Okla., 1981), 70.
44 Stephen C. Noland, comp., Indianapolis Literary Club Summarized Record, 1877–1934 (Indianapolis, Ind., 1934), 99.
45 Meredith Nicholson, Zelda Dameron (Indianapolis, Ind., 1904), 206.
INDIANAPOLIS WOMAN'S CLUB.

This club is one of the oldest in the State, and celebrated its twentieth anniversary during the 1894-1895 season. Some of the most distinguished women of the State hold membership in it. Its meetings are held semi-monthly at the Propyleum. The members of the club were the leaders in the effort to have a woman's club building, which resulted in the erection of the Propyleum. It has had for its guests many of the most celebrated women of the world and its fame is national, yes, even international.

MATINEE MUSICALE.

This club was organized in 1877 by a few musicians for the study of musical literature. Its development has been continuous and it now holds the position of the leading musical organization in the city. It secured one of the three certificates of excellence at the Musical Congress of the World's Fair. Its officers are rarely changed. Meetings are held fortnightly from October till May at the Propyleum.

THE DRAMATIC CLUB.

This club was started by a number of young society women, who assumed all the characters in the plays which were presented at the homes of the members. This was about ten years ago. For the past four seasons the entertainments given by the club have been among the social events of the winter. Five or six entertainments are given during the winter, when plays are presented by members before audiences of more than two hundred in the assembly hall of the Propyleum. The performances have been most creditable. The social feature of the evenings is a reception at the beginning and a dance after the play. The Dramatic Club is the most fashionable of all the clubs, and membership in it is equal to an introduction to the best circles.
INDIANAPOLIS LITERARY CLUB.

This club is composed of the shining lights of the professional world, with a few business men who take an exceptional interest in matters literary. Its enrollment has included men of world-wide reputation—Ex President Harrison, Attorney-General W. H. H. Miller, clergymen who have been called from the city's pulpit to fill the leading churches in all directions. Meetings are held every Monday evening in the club room at Plymouth Church, where they have been held ever since the church was built. A paper is read each time and is then discussed. The first Monday evening of each month ladies have the privilege of enjoying its literary feasts.

THE CONTEMPORARY CLUB.

In October this organization will begin its third season. It is unique among the many clubs of the city. Meetings are held the last Wednesday in each month. The members simply enjoy the products of the minds of learned men and women outside the club. A program, or executive committee, arranges for lectures or talks from persons abroad. Professors from the universities have been the star attractions. The membership has the reputation of being the Indianapolis 400, though less than that number are enrolled. It is one of the most exclusive of the city's clubs.

Excerpts from the Red Book of Indianapolis, 1895
During Indiana's Golden Age, clubs catered to all kinds of different interests, and many men and women belonged to multiple clubs. Membership was a sign of intellectual and social status.
Most importantly, it welcomed men who could “write a good paper” and participate effectively.  

Co-educational university literary societies, such as those at Northwestern Christian University (later Butler University), lyceums, and the Plymouth Church lecture series had helped to pave the way for literary clubs. One citizen described Indianapolis as a “city of readers,” playing on Meridith Nicholson’s popular phrase, the “city of homes.” Hester McClung, a member of the Woman’s Sanitary Association, wrote that the “city of homes” had created a “city of readers” because even the poorest families subscribed to a daily newspaper. People borrowed books from the public and private libraries and bought books from the city’s several popular booksellers in the city. On “Magazine Day” each month, eager readers lined up their carriages at storefronts to buy periodicals just as bookshops received deliveries.

Women joined clubs in pursuit of self-improvement, as well as for literary and educational purposes in lieu of higher education that was not yet widely accessible. While literary clubs predominated, clubwomen felt their interests were so varied that each club was unique; the best generalization was “a body of women organized for mental improvement.” Women’s clubs, which Anne Firor Scott has called “organized womanhood,” provided the nucleus around which women could meet, socialize, and discuss a myriad of topics. By 1899, Harper’s Bazar credited women’s clubs with being “the popular custodians of literature in America.”

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47 Noland, Indianapolis Literary Club Summarized Record, 105.
48 Oscar McCulloch instituted the lecture series at Plymouth Church as part of his mission to create an institutional church with programs to meet congregants’ spiritual and intellectual needs. Martha Nicholson McKay, Literary Clubs of Indiana (Indianapolis, Ind., 1894), 13, 24.
50 Nolan, Hoosier City, 215.
51 Blanche Foster Boruff, Kathryn E. Pickett, Mary E. Ramier, Mrs. E. C. Rumpler, and Mrs. Frederick C. Balz, Women of Indiana: A Work for Newspaper and Library Reference (Indianapolis, Ind., 1941), 15.
52 Blanche Foster Boruff, Kathryn E. Pickett, Mary E. Ramier, Mrs. E. C. Rumpler, and Mrs. Frederick C. Balz, Women of Indiana: A Work for Newspaper and Library Reference (Indianapolis, Ind., 1941), 15.
53 Anne Firor Scott, Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History (Urbana, Ill., 1993), 111.
In Indianapolis, as elsewhere, the larger club movement developed around literary clubs. The Indianapolis Woman’s Club (IWC), the earliest women’s literary club in the city, quickly became one of the largest and most prestigious clubs after it formed in 1875. Clubs across the country copied its model.55 It met fortnightly from October through April, conducted formal business, and then offered presentations by two women, the topics agreed on in advance. The IWC served as admirer, critic, competitor, and complement to the men’s Literary Club, as many members were married to one another.56 By 1890, COS members whose spouses belonged to their respective clubs included Harriet Foster, Hannah Haughey, Evaline Holliday, Mary Judah, and Alice McCulloch (see Appendices 1 and 2). The leading men and women in philanthropy and club life, shaping the city all the while, were one and the same.

The interconnected philanthropic, social, and intellectual circles blossomed during Indiana’s Golden Age. Many citizens fancied themselves as budding writers as well as avid readers. In 1899, five of the city’s literary clubs sponsored author William Dean Howells for the Plymouth Church lecture series. When Howells opened his talk, he invited all the authors in the packed house to sit on the platform with him. The entire audience supposedly rose and started for the stage.57 A small group hosted the famous writer for dinner, including writer Booth Tarkington, former President and First Lady Benjamin and Mary Harrison, John and Evaline Holliday, and May Wright Sewall. Howells wrote his wife that he had been “caught up in the silken arms of the aristocracy” from the moment he arrived.58

May Wright Sewall’s presence at Howells’s intimate dinner gathering was most deliberate. She was a nationally known suffragist and

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55 Helen Hooven Santmyer, “… And Ladies of the Club” (New York, 1982), 51, 170, 256, 466, 494, 525, 690, 728, 813. This thinly veiled fictional account of Xenia, Ohio’s, women’s literary club is remarkably close to the IWC in mission, procedures, program content, membership, and formality. Women’s studies scholars have cited this source as representative of the women’s club experience.

56 Indianapolis Woman’s Club, 1875–1940, 68; Indianapolis Woman’s Club, 1875–1975 (Indianapolis, Ind., 1975), 13.

57 James Woodress, Booth Tarkington: Gentleman from Indiana (Philadelphia, Pa., 1935), 16. While Howells’s visit to Indianapolis is factual, the claim regarding the entire audience on its feet may be apocryphal. Other versions of the story exist, such as the author and lecturer Opie Percival Read’s appearance in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Read supposedly asked any author in the audience to stand, and the audience rose en masse. Howard H. Peckman, “Hoosier Authors: Who and Why,” in The Hoosier State: Readings in Indiana History, vol. 2, ed. Ralph Gray (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1980), 250.

Mrs. May Wright Sewall, late President International Council of Women, ca. 1904
Sewall’s legacy in Indianapolis includes the building of the Propylaeum, co-founding
the Indianapolis Woman’s Club, and the formation of the city’s
Woman’s Christian Temperance Union in 1874.
Courtesy of Records of the National Woman’s Party Collection, Manuscript Division,
Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
had helped found several philanthropic organizations both locally and nationally (see Appendix 2). Sewall (1844–1920) came to Indianapolis to teach at Indianapolis High School and then opened the prestigious Classical School for Girls in 1882. In the same year, she and Zerelda Wallace, wife of former Indiana governor David Wallace, co-founded the Equal Suffrage Society of Indianapolis. Sewall chaired the National Woman’s Suffrage Association and worked closely with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

A devoted clubwoman, Sewall believed clubs should have a suitable and permanent home. In 1890, she and seven other women formed and invested in a stock corporation known as the Indianapolis Propylaeum for “literary, artistic, scientific, industrial, musical, mechanical and education purposes.” Only women held stock in the Propylaeum—from the Greek “gateway to higher culture”—one of the few women’s clubhouses in the country at the time.59 Six clubs—the Art Association, Dramatic Club, Indianapolis Literary Club, Indianapolis Woman’s Club, Matinee Muscale, and Portfolio Club—hosted programs within days of the building’s 1891 dedication.60 The Propylaeum remains the home of several social and cultural clubs today.

Sewall’s work exemplified women’s quintessential causes—suffrage and temperance—and how these informed solutions to other social issues. Indiana formed its Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in 1874, just as the national organization formed. Women lobbied vigorously for the temperance crusade, wearing white ribbon badges to symbolize their devotion. Women personally called on Indianapolis saloonkeepers, asking them to sign pledges promising to stop selling spirits.61 Indianapolis held such prominence in the temperance movement that local resident Josephine R. Nichols represented the national WCTU at the 1889 Paris Exposition.62

In addition to temperance, Indianapolis WCTU members sought the protection of women and children from poverty and abuse. The WCTU


60 The original Propylaeum building was located on North Street until 1923 when moved to its current location at 1410 N. Delaware St. Ray E. Boomhower, “But I Do Clamor”: May Wright Sewall, *A Life, 1844–1920* (Zionsville, Ind., 2001), 69; *Indianapolis Woman’s Club, 1875–1940*, 124.


and COS, therefore, actively supported one another, as both organizations found that alcohol addiction and poverty often coexisted. In 1893, Luella McWhirter led the Meridian Union WCTU’s opening of the Door of Hope rescue mission in Indianapolis. Door of Hope housed abandoned girls referred by the City Hospital, workhouse, or police station. WCTU women raised funds and directed daily operations; COS members Hugh Hanna and Matthias Haines served on the board of managers. Within months, Reverend William Vincent Wheeler recommended broadening the work to include entire family units, and by 1900 the mission provided the majority of rescue housing in the city.63

As other women’s clubs emerged, many were careful to distinguish themselves from temperance or suffrage causes, as though cultural or literary missions could provide an oasis from those emotionally charged issues. The IWC guarded against becoming “a suffrage society in sheep’s clothing.”64 Some clubs never approached potentially taboo topics such as religion, politics, temperance, or suffrage.65 IWC members May Wright Sewall and Harriet Noble proposed a compromise. The club would devote one meeting annually, with two or three programs, to any topic to stimulate courage, the quest for truth, and ready debate.66 Members agreed. Once a year, women delivered papers on a wide range of topics related to philanthropy and social science, clearly in tandem with issues relevant to the COS (see Appendix 3).67 Most of the club’s discussions, however, surrounded members’ presentations on literary and historic topics. Program agendas regularly indicated “book reviews,” but the authors and titles of reviewed works were not documented. We can assume,


64 *Indianapolis Woman’s Club, 1875–1940*, 29.

65 Erin Kelley focuses on the IWC’s reticence to discuss unladylike and “radical” topics such as suffrage and temperance. Discussion of philanthropic topics or women’s participation in the Local Council of Women is outside the scope of her thesis. Erin K. Kelley, “‘A Worthwhile Existence’: The Conservatism and Consciousness of Indianapolis’s Clubwomen, 1875–1920” (master’s thesis, Indiana University, 2003), chap. 2.

66 *Indianapolis Woman’s Club, 1875–1940*, 54.

67 The men’s Indianapolis Literary Club rarely devoted programs to philanthropy and social science after McCulloch’s death, but members occasionally discussed these issues in their capacities as charities’ trustees. Only eleven papers related to heredity, benevolence, race, immigration, and evolution were presented between 1875 and 1922, other than those presented by McCulloch. Noland, *Indianapolis Literary Club Summarized Record*, 22–76.
but not confirm, that literary club women read benevolence literature by popular female authors. Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Sarah Orne Jewett, and others wrote books and short stories that dealt with themes of charity, generosity, poverty, and women’s rights and opportunities.

Two IWC guest speakers demonstrated members’ willingness to take risks. For its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1900, the IWC retained New York’s Jacob Riis to present “The Battle with the Slums” illustrated with stereopticon views. The IWC hosted members from sixteen other clubs; the program filled Plymouth Church. Its 1902 guest of honor, New England author Alice French, brought yet another perspective on philanthropy. French published dozens of local-color short stories, but also tackled social and political issues. Writing under the pseudonym Octave Thanet, she authored a two-part story in the popular *Atlantic Monthly*, “The Indoor Pauper” (1881), after touring an Illinois almshouse. The stories described squalor and degradation and chastised every American citizen for allowing such institutions to continue.

Not all literary clubs trod lightly around potentially controversial or unladylike topics. Cornelia Fairbanks, wife of future U.S. vice president Charles Fairbanks, founded the women’s Fortnightly Literary Club in 1885 to study “literature, art, and social, political, and domestic science.” Papers in the 1890s addressed temperance, prominent women philanthropists, social science (“Heredity” and “Mental Science”), the Americanization of immigrants, and charity as taught by Moses Maimonides. The Fortnightly’s 1893–1894 season alone featured three programs related to poverty: practical philanthropy, a comparison of Englishwoman Octavia Hill and American Helen Campbell, and a conversation on Salvation Army founder William Booth’s *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890). The IWC’s one

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69 Minutes, 5 Jan. 1900–16 Nov. 1904 (typescript), folder 7, box 1, IWC Records.


73 *The Fortnightly Literary Club, Indianapolis, Indiana 1893/94 Programme*, Pamphlet Collection, Indiana State Library.
Cornelia “Nellie” Cole Fairbanks, pictured here while her husband served as vice-president of the United States, founded the Indianapolis Forthnightly Literary Club in 1885.

Courtesy of Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
hundred members and Fortnightly Literary Club’s seventy-five members networked with several hundred prominent men and women in Indianapolis and clearly stayed in touch with the philanthropic matters of the day.

The spirit of organization seized club members, as the tidal wave of club formation rolled across the country. Literary clubs corresponded with one another, within their home states, and across the country, but the task soon became unwieldy. By 1890, the IWC’s Frances Ross noted with some exasperation, “The very great increase in the number of literary clubs throughout the country has made the work of corresponding secretaries a perplexing one.” All of Indiana’s 179 men’s, women’s, and mixed literary clubs created the Union of Literary Clubs in 1890. The Union served two purposes: to facilitate communication among clubs and to evaluate the state of literacy and education in Indiana.

The Union allowed individual club members to stretch beyond the confines of their particular club’s missions. Evaline Holliday, for example, probably knew of the Fortnightly’s program on Booth’s *In Darkest England*. Mrs. Holliday was always conservative in her IWC papers, but when she chaired the Union’s executive committee in 1894, she led a discussion of “The Submerged Tenth,” the title of Booth’s second chapter. Holliday subtitled her talk “the distinction between the principles of mass charities and the elevation of the individual.” This choice of topic indicates her awareness of one of the principal dilemmas the COS faced—how to deliver relief without increasing aid recipients’ dependence.

Nationwide in 1890, women’s clubs united under the General Federation of Women’s Clubs (GFWC), an umbrella organization, with Indianapolis’s May Wright Sewall elected as the first vice president. Sewall made it abundantly clear that women were a force to be reckoned with: “Women who pursue serious objects, are . . . capable of earnest purpose.” Indianapolis clubwomen and the new federation supported Mrs. Sewall, sending the third largest delegation to the first GFWC convention in New York City.

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74 Annual Report of Corresponding Secretary 1890/91, folder 11, box 4, IWC Records.
76 Arcada Balz, ed. and Grace Gates Courtney, comp., *History Indiana Federation of Clubs* (Fort Wayne, Ind., 1939), 35.
The federation wrestled with finding the proper balance between club life and philanthropy. GFWC historian Jennie Croly observed that most clubwomen were engaged in as many as six charities, and opined that clubs should be a haven from fundraising. The GFWC, however, was unable to maintain boundaries between clubs and charities. Presentations at annual conferences dealt with care of dependent children, sociology, and the efficiency and effectiveness of charities. New York COS's Josephine Shaw Lowell spoke on “Relief and Aid” at the 1896 annual conference.78 Clubs and charities were so naturally intertwined that the GFWC eventually encompassed philanthropy as one of its core purposes.

Sewall, through her extensive club participation, observed that women were most interested “in women of their own class or in the legitimate recipients of their own charities.”79 Her assessment was likely accurate. Sewall envisioned an organization that would bring together women of different cultural traditions, wealth, social positions, religions, and political opinions—albeit white and upper-middle class. Sewall cited Alexis de Tocqueville’s claim that Americans easily formed voluntary associations, noting that much of women’s collective work had taken place on a smaller scale than men’s, was usually church-related, and aimed at moral reform. The time had come, she said, for women to organize on a large scale and to address systemic social concerns. Through local, state, national, and international organization, women were equipped to relieve the conditions of the poor and suffering.80

One result of Sewell’s vision was the Indianapolis Local Council of Women (1892), which harnessed the civic engagement of the state’s clubwomen to study a variety of social issues. The Local Council was patterned after the National Council of Women and the International Council of Women, both begun in 1888.81 Forty-three literary, charitable, missionary, and church societies joined immediately.82 The Local Council formed

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78 Mrs. J. C. Croly, The History of the Woman’s Club Movement in America (New York, 1898), 125, 172.
81 The first National Council officers included WCTU’s Frances Willard, Susan B. Anthony, Clara Barton, and May Wright Sewall. These women, as well as Alexandra Grippenberg who visited Indianapolis the same year, helped form the International Council. Sewall, Genesis of the International Council of Women, 16.
82 The Indianapolis Local Council of Women, 1892–1924 (Indianapolis, Ind., 1924), 10, 77–78.
legislative committees related to urban problems far beyond the scope of suffrage and temperance: compulsory school attendance, a separate women’s prison and girls’ reform school, women’s and child labor, a separate juvenile court, housing, smoke abatement, industrial safety, and public health. It advocated for appointment of women on the boards of all state institutions in which women and girls resided.

According to scholars, nationwide by 1900, many women’s clubs had outgrown the emphasis on self-improvement and migrated to advocating for social change and community action. Indianapolis women had expressed interest in social problems, and acted on them, at least ten years prior to this national trend. Literary clubs such as the IWC and Fortnightly dedicated at least one program annually to philanthropy and social science, deemed taboo topics in other settings. In 1891, for example, the IWC petitioned the city to appoint a police matron after a club member reported on “the sad condition of women and girls in the Station House.” IWC founder Martha McKay noted that women throughout Indiana had “turned toward scientific questions or social problems” by 1894. In 1897, the IWC donated funds for a summer school to serve the needs of poor children and publicly supported industrial training for children. Finally, throughout the 1890s, the Local Council operated in full swing with a comprehensive reform agenda.

After 1900, clubs with a purely literary focus were waning and reform was in the air. Women’s clubs developed such a reputation for action and effectiveness that Will Rogers reportedly observed, “If you have a hard job you want done and no one else will undertake it, just get a woman’s club behind it. It will be done with dispatch and well done.” The American Library Association credited women’s clubs with initiating seventy-five percent of the public libraries in the country. In Indianapolis, the city’s

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83 The Indianapolis Local Council of Women, 18–28.
85 Minutes, 5 Jan. 1890–21 Dec. 1898 (typescript), folder 5, box 1, IWC Records.
86 McKay, Literary Clubs of Indiana, 36.
88 Indianapolis Woman’s Club, 1875–1940, 88.
89 Boruff et al., Women of Indiana, 23.
public library arose from the public school system. The public Library Committee of the Board of School Commissioners, however, claimed eight COS members on its roster.90 When the federal Pure Food and Drug Act finally became law in 1906, Indiana research chemist Harvey Wiley, one of the champions of the act, recognized clubwomen’s support as crucial to the bill’s passage.91

The Indianapolis Local Council of Women provided an outlet for those who were keenly interested in reform and were already engaged with the COS, including Hannah Haughey, Lois Hufford, Harriet Noble, and Pauline Merritt. Literary clubs, therefore, could remain abreast of reform legislation while keeping their original purposes—literary, social, and cultural growth—intact. The IWC, for example, officially endorsed the Local Council’s advocacy efforts regarding “problems affecting women and children, resolutions regarding savings banks for the poor, age limit for child labor, industrial training in schools, and an eight-hour workday for women and children.”92 Within a few years, the council believed that it had proven “over and over again its value as a propaganda body.”93

The Local Council hosted speakers with expertise in philanthropy whose programs reflected the changing ideals toward poverty. Speakers captured the gradually liberalizing views of charity leaders, who increasingly recognized the structural causes of poverty, such as unemployment, adverse industrial conditions, and lack of adequate housing and recreation. The COS continued to work to improve individual morality, but gradually recognized that leaders should shape the urban environment to create the ideal city. Some reformers and charity workers, therefore, hoped to create


91 Indiana was the first state to pass a statute that embodied the main principles of the national Pure Food and Drug Law. Balz and Courtney, History Indiana Federation of Clubs, 193; Boruff et al., Women of Indiana, 22.

92 Minutes, 9 Jan.1893–15 Dec. 1899 (typescript), folder 6, box 1, IWC Records; State Board of Health of Indiana, Annual Report of the State Board of Heath of Indiana for the Fiscal Year Ending October 31, 1906 (Indianapolis, Ind., 1907), 11.

93 The Indianapolis Local Council of Women, 21.
healthy moral settings rather than simply repress evils. Sometimes called environmental strategists, they wanted cities to assume the moral role once held by families and the church and expected broad governmental programs to sanction the changes.

Two 1902 speakers to the Local Council exemplify the shifting landscape in which the COS operated. Social work leader Alexander Johnson, then superintendent of the Fort Wayne, Indiana, Home for Feeble-Minded Children, spoke on “Heredity and Environment.” Johnson’s “civic ideal,” he told the council, was that “every child born in the city shall have a chance to live a pure, wholesome life.”94 Two months later, May Wright Sewall and Luella McWhirter hosted Florence Kelley, founder and general secretary of the National Consumers’ League.95 Kelley warned of the prevalence of industrial child labor, citing the alarming statistic that 3,000 children worked in Indiana’s factories. The audience peppered her with questions about how to address child labor, sweat shops, and unsanitary tenements in their home city. Two days later, Indiana’s State Factory Inspector commenced a crusade for better working conditions.96

When the Indiana State Federation of Clubs subsumed the Union of Literary Clubs in 1906, women’s advocacy for social causes found yet another institutional form. Thirteen standing committees covered a range of issues: pure food, industrial and child labor, civil service reform, and legislation. By the peak of the club movement in 1910, when nationwide club membership exceeded one million women, members boasted skills acquired through club participation that ranged from public speaking to problem solving to consensus building.97 Indiana women proudly claimed that they had become “brilliant at parliamentary procedure” through club work and believed they demonstrated decorum, civic engagement, professionalism, expertise, and determination.98 They applied skills they had

98 Boruff et al., Women of Indiana, 22.
acquired in struggles for suffrage and temperance to other causes, and vice versa.99

This article has focused on the social network, male and female, created around the COS of Indianapolis and a variety of other philanthropic organizations and clubs—all racially segregated with white members and all restricted as well to Christians. But club life also flourished outside the confines of upper-middle class, white, Protestant, city leaders. Indianapolis clubs segregated by ethnicity or race followed a similar trajectory, as well-heeled white clubs evolved from church-based and informal voluntary associations. Jewish synagogues and lodges largely filled the club role for Indianapolis's Jewish population. The Workmen’s Circle branch, the Americus Club, and Agiliar Literary Society catered to different Jewish communities in the city.100 Black church-based literary associations included both women and men: the Allen Chapel Literary Society, Bethel Literary Society, Harrison Literary Society, Simpson Epworth League, and Twentieth Century Literary Society. The black, secular Atheneum Literary Society, Demia Debating Club, and Parlour Reading Club all had male and female members.101

Black women, led by Lillian Thomas Fox, organized the Woman’s Improvement Club (WIC) as a literary club in 1903 (see Appendix 2). Within two years, the club redefined its mission, shifting from self-improvement to community assistance and healthcare. African American women’s clubs also federated. Clubs around the country merged into the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs in 1896. Fox organized Indiana’s black women’s clubs into the Indiana State Federation of Women’s Clubs in 1904.102 The state federation invited all clubs working on “religious, moral, educational, or charitable lines” to affiliate; May Wright Sewall shared her organizational experience at the founding meeting.103

99 Barbara Springer concludes that although Indiana women had mixed legislative accomplishments, they became well respected and laid the foundation for the next generation of women to participate in civic affairs. Barbara Springer, “Ladylike Reformers: Indiana Women and Progressive Reform, 1900–1920,” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1985), 250–56.
100 Eva Draegert, “Cultural History of Indianapolis: Literature, 1875–1890 [I],” 243; Judith E. Endelman, The Jewish Community of Indianapolis, 1849 to the Present (Bloomington, Ind., 1984), 71–73.
Black women’s clubs formed for many of the same reasons as white women’s clubs: as forums for self-improvement, social cohesion, and addressing community needs outside of churches. But black and white citizens faced very different problems. Indianapolis was segregated, so blacks had fewer educational, employment, and political opportunities. Although the COS assisted a large percentage of black applicants, charities often expected black citizens to take care of one another.\footnote{COS Annual Reports, folder 8, box 4, FSA Records. For information on segregation and lack of access to social services, see Darlene Clark Hine, *When the Truth is Told: A History of Black Women’s Culture and Community in Indiana, 1875–1950* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1981), 12, 42–43.} The COS did not regularly track the number of black applicants. Review of case records for the 1880s and 1890s indicates frequent intake of black applicants, and the COS did not turn away black families on the basis of race. Its census for three particular years recorded black applicants: 1897, 111 or 15 percent; 1898, 284 or 30 percent; and 1899, 146 or 20 percent.

A COS’s visitor’s notes from 1915 cases listed the familiar refrains, “illness” and “out of work,” as the circumstances that had led families to the organization for help.\footnote{Northwest District Minutes, 1915, folder 6, box 1, FSA Records.} This deceptively simple list of names and needs concealed the primary underlying reason for black poverty: discrimination. Blacks had little to no access to health care and fewer educational opportunities than whites.\footnote{Thornbrough, “The History of Black Women in Indiana,” 75.} White philanthropy could not compensate for an entire social and economic system and did not challenge segregation during this time. Black clubs and churches, therefore, were essential to fill gaps in services. The WIC exemplified black clubwomen’s engagement in public welfare. It undertook several public health initiatives during the early 1900s. The WIC formed an outdoor tuberculosis camp, a nurses’ training camp, and conducted health education for blacks in Indianapolis. The COS made regular donations to the camp and acted as a liaison between white donors and the WIC.\footnote{Ferguson, “The Woman’s Improvement Club of Indianapolis,” 251.}

Mutual aid developed among the black families who settled in Indianapolis as part of the Great Migration. Between 1900 and 1920, black citizenry remained consistent at approximately 10 percent of the city’s population.\footnote{James J. Divita, *Ethnic Settlement Patterns in Indianapolis* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1988) 21, 34, 38.} Black-owned enterprises developed along Indiana Avenue to serve black clientele, producing a core group of professionals
and business leaders. These establishments formed a retail, entertainment, and residential hub, and the district attracted even more blacks of all socioeconomic status. Some poor families moved into houses around the Atlas Engine Works and Christamore Settlement that white families had vacated. Churches, women’s church auxiliaries, men’s fraternal organizations, mutual aid societies, and women’s clubs fostered social capital and sources of support for black citizens, who were largely isolated from white culture and society through de facto segregation. Unlike white clubs, black women’s clubs had to inform the white community of problems faced by blacks, coupled with missions of self-help to adopt white norms of thrift and industry. Black clubwomen, moreover, viewed clubs as sites of racial solidarity that could serve as vital forces for ending discrimination.

Organized charity, club membership, and vibrant social life were inextricably intertwined during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. John Holliday believed that club life “stirred ambition and inspired many of us to work that has enlarged our vision and made us more useful citizens if not better men.” Voluntary associations, now formalized as clubs, recreated small-town intimacy within the growing city, reinforced traditional networks, and selectively vetted newcomers. The tight-knit network of men and women worked together at the center of social and philanthropic

110 Atlas did not employ black workers and Christamore did not serve black families. These families lacked the education or training for skilled occupations and were often headed by single mothers, so they had to look outside their neighborhood for support. L. M. Campbell Adams, “An Investigation of Housing and Living Conditions in Three Districts of Indianapolis,” Indiana University Studies 8, no. 8 (September 1910), 133–39.
112 Ferguson, “The Woman’s Improvement Club of Indianapolis,” 244; Hine, When the Truth is Told, 82.
life. Their value systems undergirded organized charity’s goals of thrift, industry, and self-reliance. Their vision of community service bound together economic prosperity, morality, civic improvement, duty to community, and public accountability.

Since its inception in 1879, the COS wielded virtual control over poor relief, making it one of the most progressive, powerful, and successful charity organizations in the country. The COS in Indianapolis, therefore, was not created, nor did it operate for more than four decades, because of a single individual, Oscar McCulloch. An influential coterie of men and women governed, donated to, and volunteered for the COS and many of its sub-agencies. Then, as now, social networks are as essential for us to understand as social entrepreneurs and charismatic leaders.

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### Appendix 1
Philanthropic Leaders of Indianapolis: Men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Philanthropy &amp; Community Service</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapin Clark Foster</td>
<td>Officer, State Asylum for Deaf and Dumb; Owner, C.C. Foster &amp; Co. (lumber); President, Indiana Lumbermen’s Mutual Insurance Co.</td>
<td>Elder, Treasurer, and Trustee, First Presbyterian Church; President, Indianapolis Board of Trade; President, Indiana Manufacturers’ Association; Grand Army of the Republic; Art Association; Columbia Club; Commercial Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Harrison</td>
<td>Attorney; Supreme Court Reporter; Partner, Porter, Harrison, &amp; Hines, later Harrison, Miller, &amp; Elam; U.S. Senator; U.S. President</td>
<td>Elder, First Presbyterian Church; Grand Army of the Republic; Literary Club; Contemporary Club; Columbia Club; Indiana Bar Association; Young Men’s Republican Club; Virginia Historical Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theodore P. Haughey</td>
<td>Finance Chairman, Indianapolis Common Council; President and Director, Indianapolis National Bank – resigned amid 1893 bank failure scandal and imprisonment for embezzlement and fraud (charities were among those defrauded)</td>
<td>Member, Meridian Street Methodist Episcopal Church; Sunday school teacher; Trustee, Crown Hill Cemetery; Trustee, Asbury (DePauw) University; Trustee, YMCA; Treasurer, Oddfellows Mutual Aid Association; Trustee, Downtown Fire Relief Funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Hampden Holliday</td>
<td>Founder and Editor, Indianapolis News; Founder, President, and Chairman, Union Trust Company; Founder and Editor, Indianapolis Press; Director, Consumers Gas Trust Co. (Citizens Gas Co.)</td>
<td>Elder, Trustee, and Sunday School Superintendent, First Presbyterian Church; President, Literary Club; Art Association; University Club; Trustee, Crown Hill Cemetery; Indianapolis Benevolent Society; President, Charity Organization Society; Member, Indiana Board of State Charities; Commercial Club; Grand Army of the Republic;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>Philanthropy &amp; Community Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Mantle Judah</td>
<td>Lawyer (Judah &amp; Jameson); partner in Caldwell and Judah cotton growers in Memphis</td>
<td>President, Literary Club; Trustee, Northwestern Christian University (Butler University); Art Association; Das Deutsche Haus (Athenaeum); Treasurer, Indianapolis Bar Association; Chair, Marion County Council of Defense during WWI</td>
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<tr>
<td>1848–1936</td>
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<tr>
<td>(son-in-law of Patrick Henry Jameson)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oscar Carleton McCulloch</td>
<td>Minister, Plymouth Congregational Church (1877–1891)</td>
<td>President, Literary Club; Trustee, Indianapolis School Board; Advisory Board, Indianapolis Public Library; Trustee, Home Missionary Society of Indiana; President, Indianapolis Benevolent Society 1879–1891; President, Charity Organization Society 1879–1891; Commercial Club; Member, Indiana Board of State Charities; Member, New York State Charities Aid Association; Officer, National Conference of Charities and Correction 1886–1890; President, National Conference of Charities and Correction 1891</td>
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<td>1843–1891</td>
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## Appendix 2
### Philanthropic Leaders of Indianapolis: Women

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Husband’s Name</th>
<th>Philanthropy &amp; Community Service</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harriett McIntire Newell</td>
<td>Chapin C. Foster</td>
<td>First Presbyterian Church; Organizing Regent, Indiana Daughters of the American Revolution; Manager, Widows’ &amp; Orphans’ Friends Society; Board of Managers, Flower Mission; Contemporary Club; Indianapolis Woman's Club; Propylaeum; Social Science Association; Free Kindergarten Society; Indiana Historical Society; Red Cross volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lillian Thomas Fox</td>
<td>James E. Fox</td>
<td>Afro-American Council; Congress of Colored Women; National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs; Founder, Woman’s Improvement Club; Indiana State Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs; Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Literary Society; Alpha Home Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline Lavinia Scott Harrison</td>
<td>Benjamin Harrison</td>
<td>First Presbyterian Church; Ladies Sanitary Commission (Civil War); Indianapolis Benevolent Society; Manager, Widows’ &amp; Orphans’ Friends Society; Free Kindergarten Society; Manager, Home for Friendless Women; President General, Daughters of the American Revolution; Aid Society of Garfield Hospital (Washington, D.C.); Washington City Orphan Asylum</td>
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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hannah Moore Haughey</td>
<td>Theodore P. Haughey</td>
<td>Meridian Street Methodist Episcopal Church; Manager, Home for Friendless Women; Indianapolis Woman’s Club; Board of Managers, Flower Mission; Social Science Association; Charity Organization Society visitor; Indianapolis Local Council of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaline MacFarlane</td>
<td>John Hampden Holliday</td>
<td>First Presbyterian Church; President, Church Women United; Art Association; Indianapolis Woman’s Club; Propylaeum; Manager, Widows’ &amp; Orphans’ Friends Society; Daughters of the American Revolution; Flower Mission; Board of Children’s Guardians; President, Free Kindergarten Society; Trustee, Indianapolis Teachers College; Trustee, Butler College Settlement Association (Christamore House); Society of Colonial Dames; Co-founder, Society of Indiana Pioneers; Over the Teacups Club; Red Cross volunteer; Indianapolis Advisory Committee of the Social Service Department of Indiana University; Land donor for Holliday Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Sanders Jameson Judah</td>
<td>John Mantle Judah</td>
<td>Founder and President, Memphis Woman’s Club; Flower Mission; Art Association; Contemporary Club; Dramatic Club; Indianapolis Woman’s Club; Propylaeum; Indianapolis Suffrage Society; Woman’s Sanitary Association; Society of Colonial Dames; Red Cross volunteer</td>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<th>Philanthropy &amp; Community Service</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alice Charlotte</td>
<td>Oscar Carlton McCulloch, Orange Scott Runnels</td>
<td>Plymouth Congregational Church; Indianapolis Woman’s Club; Trustee, Free Kindergarten Society; [Marion] County Board of Charities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barteau</td>
<td>McCulloch, Orange Scott Runnels</td>
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<tr>
<td>McCulloch [Runnels]</td>
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<tr>
<td>1854–1948</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>May Wright</td>
<td>Theodore Lovett Sewall</td>
<td>Founder, Girls’ Classical School; Co-founder, Indianapolis Woman’s Club; Art Association; Co-founder, Contemporary Club; Founder, Propylaeum; Co-founder, Indianapolis Equal Suffrage Society; Local Council of Women of Indianapolis; President, National Council of Women; International Council of Women; Western Association of Collegiate Alumnae; delegate on Henry Ford Peace Ship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewall</td>
<td>1853–1895</td>
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<tr>
<td>1844–1920</td>
<td>Founder, Classical School for Boys</td>
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Appendix 3:
Indianapolis Woman’s Club
Selected Programs Related to Philanthropy and Reform, 1879–1914

Source: Indianapolis Woman’s Club, 1875–1925, A Gift, folder 3, box 8, IWC Records.

1879
“The Street Children of New York, Their Lodgings and Schools” – Emma Gear

1880
“Charities, Their Direction and Misdirection” – Sarah Wallace plus conversation led by Hannah Haughey
“Reforms in English Hospitals and Prisons, 1760–1838” – Evaline Holliday

1882
“The Charities of Today” – Mary Coburn plus conversation led by Jane T. Hendricks

1888
“Institutions for the Physically Defective” – Mary Coburn Allen
“Institutions for the Mentally Defective” – Jane T. Hendricks
“Am I My Brother’s Keeper?” – Mary Stewart Carey

1890
“Herbert Spencer’s Sociology” – Anna Nicholas
“Herbert Spencer on Education” – Evaline Holliday
“American Philanthropy” – Mary B. Chislett

1891
“Working People’s Homes” – Mary A. R. Stuart
“Working Girls’ Clubs” – Alice C. McCulloch
“A Study in Heredity” – Anna Nicholas

1892
“The Children of our State” – Alice C. McCulloch
“Out-door Relief” – Hannah Haughey
“Development of Almsgiving” – Mary Newman Carey
“Conversation on Immigration” – Belle M. Sharpe

1896
“Child Saving” – Mary A. R. Stewart
“An Altruistic Experiment” – Eliza C. Bell
“Conversation on the Limits of Self-sacrifice” – Elizabeth M. Fletcher
1897
“Maud Ballington Booth” – Julia Graydon Jameson
“The Law of Service” – Margaret V. Marshall

1899
“Poverty” – Kate M. Bowles
“If I had a Million Dollars” – M. V. Marshall

1900
Twenty-fifth Anniversary – Lecture by Guest of Honor Jacob Riis

1902
Guest of Honor Miss Alice French (pseudonym Octave Thanet) – no title available

1903
“Functions of the State” – Marcia Hoagland
“My Neighbor” – Alice Runnels
“Modern Stewardship” – Evaline Holliday

1907 – Social Betterment Day
“Radical Experiments in Self-government” – Mary Allen Evans Woollen
“Indiana Pure Food Law” – M. Martindale

1910
“Professions for Women” – Merica Hoagland
“The Blazed Trail” – Harriet Noble

1911
“Poverty – A Crime” – Dr. Sarah S. Stockton (Central State Hospital)

1911 – Guest Day, Our Philanthropies:
“The City Charities” – Mr. Grout (Charity Organization Society)
“The County Institutions” – Alice Runnels
“The State Board of Charities” – Mr. Demarchus C. Brown

1912
“Comparative Philanthropy” – Corinne Goddard

1912 – Guest Day
“The Spirit of Modern Science” – Dr. Charles P. Emerson (Indiana University)

1914
“Eight Hours for Work” – Merica Hoagland
“Child Labor, a Phase of Child Life” – Frances MacIntire Ross