SETTLEMENT HOUSES, CHANGING NEIGHBORHOODS, AND ADAPTATION FOR SURVIVAL: AN EXAMINATION OF MERRICK HOUSE IN CLEVELAND'S TREMONT NEIGHBORHOOD AND ITS PLACE IN THE WIDER CONTEXT OF THE SOCIAL REFORMS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1919-1961

by

SARA K. MONTAGNO

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of History

CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY

August 2019

CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

We hereby approve the thesis of

Sara K. Montagno

candidate for the degree of **Master of Arts***

Committee Chair

Dr. John Grabowski

Committee Member

Dr. Renee Sentilles

Committee Member

Dr. John Flores

Date of Defense

April 6th, 2019

***We also certify that written approval has been obtained

for any proprietary material contained therein.

Table of Contents

Settlement Houses, Changing Neighborhoods, and Adaptation for Survival:
An Examination of Merrick House in Cleveland's Tremont Neighborhood and Its Place in the Wider Context of the Social Reforms of the United States, 1919-1961

Abstract

by

SARA K. MONTAGNO

Founded in 1919, Merrick House has served the residents of Cleveland's Tremont neighborhood continuously for one hundred years. Despite the longevity of this settlement house, there has been no substantial scholarly works published on its history. This thesis focuses on contextualizing the founding of Merrick House and its operation over roughly forty years in the same neighborhood within the national settlement movement of the early twentieth century. It also explores the significance of Catholicism within the institution and its close association with the Christ Child Society of Greater Cleveland through the examination of manuscript collections held by the Western Reserve Historical Society as well as a variety of published sources.

Introduction

Merrick House in the Tremont neighborhood of Cleveland, Ohio is approaching its centennial in 2019. As a settlement house that remains open to the public in the present day, it sparks a desire to learn about its development and impact in Cleveland's Southside neighborhood since the institution's founding in 1919 by the Christ Child Society of Greater Cleveland (CCSGC). In addition to the necessity of situating the history of Merrick House within the story of the neighborhood that it serves is the need to contextualize the institution's history within the national narrative of the settlement house movement in the United States as its development deviates slightly from what is known about other settlement houses. An essential component to aid in fully understanding the development of Tremont's settlement house is that while Catholicism was central to the founding and the funding of the institution, it provided nonsectarian, even secular, services to residents of the neighborhood. This flexibility is an especially relevant aspect of Merrick House to recognize as the twentieth century progressed and the post-war decline Cleveland experienced forced the settlement house to adapt for survival within a community with changing needs.

In order to accurately demonstrate how the history of Merrick House compares to the wider settlement house movement that unfolded during the early twentieth century, this paper is divided into several sections. The first section examines the mission of the Cleveland chapter of the national Christ Child Society organization and how it propelled the chapter into the founding of Merrick House the same year as the formal founding of the local Cleveland chapter. Section three is also the most central to this study as it concerns the founding, development, and operation of Merrick House from its founding

by the CCSGC in 1919 to roughly around 1961. Spanning approximately a forty-year period, this examination ends in 1961 in order to show the effect of post-war decline in Cleveland. This period of decline had a massive impact on the city and its neighborhoods. The watershed moment of mid-century interstate construction provides a special consideration for the neighborhood. It certainly forced Merrick House to adapt its approach and its services in order to remain relevant. In addition, the influence of Catholicism is a large part of this section as it was an integral facet of the Christ Child Society nationally and locally.

The second section addresses the history of the Tremont neighborhood from early settlement in the nineteenth century through to the mid-twentieth century. It covers the area's transition from a small community into a thriving working-class neighborhood of Cleveland that was centered on industrial growth in just a few decades. This transformation, which started in the last few decades of the nineteenth century, would result in an increase in diversity from the influx of immigrants to Cleveland, individuals and families in search of the opportunities provided by the swift development of industry along the Cuyahoga River. Unfortunately because of such rapid gains, a large variety of social problems ranging from overcrowded houses to an increase in crime began to plague the neighborhood in earnest. These critical transitions within the neighborhood were partially addressed by the CCSGC through their charitable activities driven by their religious values.

The third and final section deals with the Progressive Era and its reforms. Namely, settlement houses on the national level and how the movement was informed not only by the issues of the day, but also by ideas about charity and charitable actions far

older than one may realize. It also seeks to discuss, however briefly, the relatively newly acquired value of social work that brought women recognition for their achievements within these institutions, particularly as they aimed to help solve widespread societal problems. The coverage of the national settlement house movement and the Progressive Era as a whole would not be complete without a discussion of the discrimination that occurred during this time of great reform in the United States as the attitudes of the reformers played a major role in the execution of their work.

There is lack of scholarly work currently in existence on Merrick House and Catholic settlement houses. Many books on Cleveland history, some of them referenced here, mention Merrick House. Generally the institution is mentioned only in passing with a great deal of the limited information repeated from text to text. With the exception of reports like the Welfare Federation of Cleveland's 1936 *Between Spires and Stacks*, a comprehensive account of Tremont including its geography, population, and statistics, and *The Tremont Area: Merrick House*, a limited contemporary study conducted and published by Merrick House in 1961, there is a distinct lack of well-researched, scholarly works on the settlement house. It is here, with this drive for a reliable overview of the institution and its place in American history for future researchers and readers, where the manuscript collections of the research library of the Western Reserve Historical Society and the rare books in the collection of the Cleveland Public Library are of great significance. However, the surviving early records of Merrick House and the CCSGC are piecemeal, so it must be noted that the questions raised by the material may never fully be answered.

Section One: The Christ Child Society of Greater Cleveland and the Founding of Merrick House

The CCSGC, a Catholic non-profit organization whose mission is based on serving underprivileged children, had a major impact on Tremont and the residents of the neighborhood just as religion was the driving force behind the establishment of many of the settlement houses established in Cleveland during the early twentieth century. A chapter of the national Christ Child Society organization, the local organization sought to help provide solutions to the problems of the city and those that dwelled within its confines with particular attention paid to children living in poverty. In 1919, the same year as the incorporation of the Greater Cleveland chapter, Merrick House was founded to serve the neighborhood known as Tremont on the southeast side of Cleveland.[1] An examination of the Constitution, By-laws, membership requirements, and Articles of Incorporation for the CCSGC helps to provide an understanding of the philosophy and goals of the organization that founded Merrick House and which remains, today, closely connected to its operation and its funding.

Organizational Documentation

The members of the Christ Child Society sought to help address the social discontent and inequities caused by industrialization and urbanization. Mary Virginia Merrick founded the national Christ Child Society organization in 1887 in Washington,

[1] John J. Grabowski and David D. Van Tassel, Western Reserve Historical Society, Case Western Reserve University, University Archives, Kelvin Smith Library, and Cleveland Bicentennial Commission (Cleveland, Ohio), *The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History,* Electronic version ed, (Cleveland, Ohio: Case Western Reserve University, 2018).

D. C. The purpose of this organization was to provide clothing for poor children with special attention paid to infants with the distribution of handcrafted layettes, especially around Christmas and other religious holidays.[2] From this original mission, the Christ Child Society expanded into other charity work including the support of settlement houses such as Merrick House in Cleveland. Interestingly, membership in the Cleveland chapter of the Christ Child Society was entirely held by women.[3] This also includes the chapter's leadership roles despite deference to the Bishop of Cleveland during its early history. In order to effectively start aiding the community, the organization needed to have set objectives and rules for its members to follow as well as to outline their mission for the purposes of clarity and incorporation.

Cleveland resident Mabel Higgins Mattingly founded the local chapter of the Christ Child Society in 1916 as a Catholic charity with the express desire to help underserved families.[4] Special attention was paid to homeless children and children living

---

[2] Christ Child Society of Greater Cleveland (CCSGC), MS5093, Papers, (Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio), Box 4, Folder 22.

[3] CCSGC, MS5093, Box 1, Folder 1. A list of the original members of the Cleveland chapter of the Christ Child Society can be found in the first record of meeting minutes within this manuscript collection. According to the handwritten records, the original 1918 leadership (and members) of the organization were all women. Sixteen women were assigned roles of leadership such as Florence Mason as president, Mabel Mattingly as chairperson, Mary Duffy as press representative, and the designation of Norma Brennan in charge of "distribution and relief."

[4] CCSGC, MS5093, Box 1, Folder 1. There seems to be some debate as to the founding year of the Christ Child Society of Greater Cleveland. There are documents that state that Merrick House was founded the same year as the formation of the Cleveland chapter of the Christ Child Society. However, quite a few of the documents contained within the papers of the organization state that it was founded in 1916 by Mattingly. An examination of the minutes of the chapter leads to the understanding that the first formal general meeting of the organization was on September 27th, 1918. The majority of the primary documentation seems to indicate that the chapter was indeed founded three years before Merrick House, although its operation before 1918 seems to be on a more informal level.

in extreme poverty by the women of the organization. This was a lofty aspiration that resulted in the founding of Merrick House three years later.[5]

The original Constitution of the organization that was created in the beginning of June in 1919 is fascinating because it is vague, especially if viewed from the more modern perspective of organizations within the non-profit sector.[6] However, in many ways, it is in keeping with the broad mission statements that remain relatively common throughout the decades. This early document outlining the Constitution and By-laws of the chapter is also interesting for its relaxed statement on the requirements for membership within the chapter. It states that, "Any person who contributes annually one dollar or more shall be eligible to membership in the Christ Child Society of Cleveland."[7] An intriguing change must have occurred sometime between June of 1919 and April of 1958 when the chapter filed the Articles of Incorporation for the organization.[8] Founded as a Catholic organization with strong ties to (and adherence to the wishes of) of the Bishop of Cleveland, the stipulation to belong to the Catholic Church is strangely absent from its original By-laws yet became an important factor in the consideration for membership to the organization. The shift seems to have occurred before or during 1946 when changes to the constitution of the chapter was updated and greatly expanded. One

---

[5] CCSGC, MS5093. Mattingly was a personal friend of the founder and leader of the national organization, Mary Virginia Merrick, whose surname was used for Merrick House as recognition of her influence and the admiration of her work by the members of the new Greater Cleveland chapter of the Christ Child Society.

[6] CCSGC, MS5093, Box 2, Folder 18.

[7] CCSGC, MS5093, Box 2, Folder 18. Quotation is from the copy of the original 1919 constitution contained within the folder.

[8] CCSGC, MS5093, Box 2, Folder 18. This folder includes the 1946 changes to the constitution and by-laws of the chapter.

of the areas of expansion was in the inclusion of direct reference and subtle interjections of Catholic traditions and practices such as the mention of Mass services, Holy Communion, and the inclusion of prayers.[9]

This strong turn into the Catholic tradition of the founders and members of the organization can also be found within the updated by-laws where it is stated that, "It is desired that all members shall be practicing Catholics. However, non-Catholics may become members, but shall have no right to be a member of the Board of Directors or hold office in this Corporation."[10] The wording of Article II of the By-laws seems to state it clearly that while non-Catholics could join the organization, they would have limited influence and potentially a lack of opportunities for advancement within the chapter, especially if the desire is to one day join the Board of Directors.

Merrick House: Religious and Secular

Far from surprising, this trend within religiously oriented organizations was relatively common during the early to mid twentieth century. Particularly with Catholic-run organizations, the desire to keep their membership base within the religious tradition of the organization was seen as a way to protect the mission and operation from outside influence from the older, generally more well-established Protestant institutions along with the newer, more secular organizations that were beginning to flourish with the

[9] CCSGC, MS5093, Box 2, Folder 18.

[10] CCSGC, MS5093, Box 2, Folder 18. Article II of the 1946 by-laws.

growing popularity of scientific philanthropy.[11] It was also a way to take care of fellow Catholics after a significant influx of Catholic immigrants started entering into the United States during the middle of the nineteenth century. In forming these organizations, charity found itself as a cornerstone of Catholic culture and identity within the United States. The added benefit was that more Catholic individuals and organizations were increasingly visible on the local, state, and national levels through the work they were completing in their respective communities.[12] The CCSGC and Merrick House were certainly not an exception to this approach to the founding of Catholic organizations. However, it must be noted that even with the diversity of different traditions of Catholicism (with churches for each Catholic ethnic community) practiced within the confines Tremont, Merrick House did not seek to align the institution with any particular tradition. Perhaps this was a calculated effort to maximize the appeal of Merrick House to the community.

Pilgrim Congregational Church, a prominent Protestant church, could potentially be viewed as competition within the neighborhood. Its location on the corner of West 14th Street and Starkweather Avenue make its physical proximity a challenge for Merrick House, which was located only a block away on Starkweather Avenue near Lincoln Park. When the Protestant church began to offer more community services to residents of Tremont including nutrition education, a library, and even a bowling alley, residents

---

[11] Laura Tuennerman-Kaplan, *Helping Others, Helping Ourselves: Power, Giving, and Community Identity in Cleveland, Ohio, 1880-1930*, (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2001), 71-72.

[12] Dorothy M. Brown and Elizabeth McKeown, *The Poor Belong to Us: Catholic Charities and American Welfare*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 1-12.

began to look to Pilgrim Congregational for neighborhood relief programming.[13] The potential conflict between Merrick House and Pilgrim can be observed, however, direct evidence of any rivalry is not substantial. The insistence of Florence Mason, one of the founders of CCSGC, that Merrick House remains secular in the majority of its programming and outreach for poverty-stricken residents of Tremont makes this connection even harder to make with certainty.[14]

Merrick House remained Catholic with part of the funding for its founding and construction coming from the National Catholic War Council, Catholic federated giving, and fund-raising by the diocese.[15] Also, the settlement house's Board of Directors comprised completely of Catholics.[16] Indeed, the Board of Merrick House and its relationship with the CCSGC was always consciously thought of as only a few members of CCSGC sat on the board of the settlement house and therefore maintained a distance from it despite its assumed close association with Merrick House. It is surprising that

---

[13] W. Dennis Keating, *A Brief History of Tremont: Cleveland's Neighborhood on a Hill*, (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2016), 21-24. A direct connection or rivalry between the Christ Child Society's involvement with Merrick House and the services offered by Pilgrim Congregational (some of which extend back into the late 1880s) is unknown. However, it is interesting to note that while Merrick House was in its early stages of conception and operation, Pilgrim was added the Home Making and Nutrition Center in 1920 and also opened the Community House, which made activities like bowling available to the residents of Tremont.

[14] CCSGC, MS5093, Box 4, Folder 22. Information gathered from a speech given by Florence Mason on May 17th, 1954. It is interesting to note that while the Christ Child Society was instrumental in founding Merrick House and members of the organization worked at the institution, it seems that the society was not ultimately responsible for the financial aspects of the institution. The majority of the burden seems to fall on Merrick House's own fundraising efforts and a reliance on funds from Catholic charities and foundations.

[15] Brown and McKeown, *The Poor Belong to Us,* 60.

[16] Charles E. Hendry, Margaret T. Svendsen, and Welfare Federation of Cleveland, *Between Spires and Stacks*, (Cleveland, OH: Welfare Federation, 1936), 115.

despite being responsible for the planning and founding of Merrick House (along with the aid and instruction of Father Charles H. Le Blond, the director of the Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Cleveland, that the CCSGC did not view their organization as being more involved in the institution's operations. Indeed, there was some concern during the 1940s that the Christ Child Society had stepped away from Merrick House completely. These concerns were even expressed by the national organization's founder Mary Virginia Merrick in her letters to Merrick House workers during 1946 and 1947. These letters went unanswered until Father Le Blond was contacted (while serving in Missouri) about his knowledge of Merrick House.[17] Despite concerns, Merrick House retained its Catholic affiliation even though it operated as a relatively secular institution. This was done, as it needed to appeal to a community of growing diversity and changing needs, especially as the professionalization of social work began to become more commonplace within these organizations and religious distinctions became slightly less important.

Merrick House at Mid Century

To this day, *Between Spires and Stacks* presents the best available overview of Merrick House's operations in the 1930s, particularly in the context of other relief work being undertaken in the Depression-era community. For this reason it remains invaluable in understanding the significance of Merrick House to the people of Tremont, especially

[17] CCSGC, MS5093, Box 2, Folder 9. Mary Merrick wrote two letters, one on May 22nd, 1946 and one over a year later on August 29th, 1947, to Mrs. Edward T Butler, Jr. to inquire about the status of the relationship between the Cleveland chapter of the Christ Child Society and Merrick House. As far as the records indicate, there was no response from Mrs. Butler. Father Le Blond was contacted at his new post in Missouri, however, and he informed Mary Merrick that as far as he knew, Merrick House was still considered an "official organization of the Diocese of Cleveland" and that the information that Merrick House was no longer a Catholic institution was simple misinformation.

the children who where the primary focus of the settlement house's programs and activities throughout the decades.

In 1936, Merrick House was designated as one of only two (Grace Hospital being the second) institutions in the neighborhood offering community programs and services all year long. By comparison, another eighty-six Depression-era outside agencies provided aid to Cleveland residents. The services at Merrick House ranged from educational classes including music lessons to day nursery or daycare programs for residents of the neighborhood. According to individuals such as Ziats, inexpensive craft classes where children could spend their time outside of school and Boy Scout events were more difficult to recall during the 1930s, but such activities still persisted at Merrick House.[18] The growing needs and number of the residents using, or wishing to use, the facilities of Merrick House led to the institution's resources being spread thin during the Great Depression. This was because the existing structure of the settlement house could not deal with the massive increase in the demand for their relief services due to the substantial increase in unemployment.[19]

Merrick House's lack of equipment, cramped spaces, and the decrease in areas reserved for children to play within the neighborhood, particularly around Lincoln Park and Merrick House, were among the complaints reported by area residents in the Welfare

---

[18] Paul Ziats, *Tremont: Cleveland, Ohio's Southside*, (Cincinnati, OH: The Merten Company, 1997), 82-83. In his recollection, Ziats recalls the inferior quality of the materials used at Merrick House for craft projects such as bead bracelets. Such objects would often break soon after they were constructed.

[19] Judith Ann Trolander, *Settlement Houses and the Great Depression*, (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1975), 64-65.

Federation of Cleveland's 1936 report.[20] Although, it must be noted that the issues documented in the report encompass all of the organizations considered as welfare agencies that were operating within the neighborhood at this time, most of which, as noted earlier were not headquartered in Tremont. This thus complicates the accurate assessment of welfare and relief organizations providing aid to the residents of Tremont given that some of the issues with aid provided by outside agencies may have occurred in other areas of the city and through other institutions.[21]

Into the 1940s and 1950s, more personalized reports on Merrick House, commonly written by Merrick House's social workers, provide better details regarding the services offered by the institution as well as the type of residents, particularly youths, that participated in them. From these reports, the role of women can be observed once again; women formed many of the committees that decided on the activities that would be sponsored and carried out by Merrick House. This, of course, did not occur without the input of the children of the neighborhood whose essential role in planning programs becomes evident through an examination of the workers' reports.

An example of this can be found in the proposed organization of a new Merrick House club in 1942 where worker Helen Lewicki detailed her first meeting with a group of children for the purpose of developing a new club for Merrick House. The reticence of many of the children to engage in the beginning of such processes is noted several times throughout her reports, which can serve to demonstrate the mindset and/or shyness of the working-class youth of Tremont as well as the possible unease felt by children during

---

[20] Hendry and Svendsen, *Between Spires and Stacks*, 116-118.

[21] Hendry and Svendsen, *Between Spires and Stacks*, 109-110, 115.

programs led by adults. The reports reveal what can be considered "common" childhood activities and developments experienced by youth in Tremont. Lewicki describes an attempt to lighten the atmosphere after an official club meeting by turning on a record for the members. She used the opportunity to gauge their engagement in the programming as well as their interactions with each other to assess their social progression.[22]

Merrick House hosted several clubs throughout the 1940s including the Eagles Club, which was made up of a handful of boys of various (unspecified) ages. During their meetings, the boys and the workers discussed a wide range of topics. These included learning about the social conditions in Europe, discussing the state of immigration in the United States, contemplating the issues relating to the war, the planning of social engagements including dance parties, and the potential of using the money leftover from such parties being used to buy war bonds for Merrick House.[23]

These types of clubs continued into the 1950s with greater attention paid to group activities, especially for the girls. Settlement worker Shirley Kaprove remarked in 1956 that, "The groups at Merrick House are used to having one specific activity as sewing, cooking, ceramics, or gym. Last year the Silver-Bells did a variety of activities as arts and crafts, trips, cooking, and ceramics, which I feel is very good. In this way they can gain skill and also enjoy doing a variety of activities."[24] While Kaprove considers these

---

[22] Merrick House Settlement House and Day Nursery Records, MS4030, Papers, (Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio), Box 5, Folder 72. This is from Helen Lewicki's report written on February 10th, 1942.

[23] Merrick House, MS4030, Box 5, Folder 72.

[24] Merrick House, MS4030, Box 5, Folder 83. Kaprove's report is from October of 1956. She explains that group activities will be helpful in developing the self-esteem of the girls that patronize Merrick House noting that one girl is frequently "sarcastic" and another is a "lone-wolf." These are issues that Kaprove seeks to address while working with these children. The

activities important, she goes on to explain how developing more group planning strategies and activities will help the children that have behavioral issues, particularly with girls and their perceived levels of self-esteem.

The boys, as reported, exhibited far fewer outward signs than the girls of being uncomfortable while participating in clubs and group sessions with the Merrick House workers, which seemed to encourage the workers. An example of this occurred during the first ever meeting of the Mistairs club in 1957. The male worker, Henk Feuth, remarked that finding common ground was relatively easy with the four boys he met with on February 14th, 1957. After learning that Feuth played the guitar, the boys sparked up a conversation about music, which consisted of a lot of questions for Feuth about Elvis Presley and current music. Through this common interest (in music), the worker was able to expand upon his conversation with the boys and find out more about their lives and their hobbies; something that Feuth remarks is not always as easy as it seems.[25]

The Survival of Merrick House in the Midst of Neighborhood Decline

Tremont, like much of the industrial city, prospered during World War II. Yet, after the War, beginning in the late 1950s, Tremont, like other industrial areas of the city began to experience major demographic and structural changes. In particular, a new

---

group activities like camping and canoeing that took place at Merrick House's cabin at Hinckley Lake can be seen as attempts to get the children to bond with each other and learn to be cooperative in a variety of environments (see Box 5, Folder 89).

[25] Merrick House, MS4030, Box 5, Folder 83. There are some surprisingly funny sections of these settlement worker reports, such as the comment that the Mistairs boys were surprised that Feuth did not like Elvis Presley. Little comments like this provide popular culture references that further aid in providing context for the time period.

interstate highway bisected the neighborhood during its construction in the 1950s and 1960s. That highway in its own way would allow residents to escape the area's industrial pollution for new homes in the nearby suburbs.

During this time, the influence of settlement houses began to wane, but the need for welfare services and programs did not.[26] This can be observed through the examination of reports, such as the Welfare Federation of Cleveland's report on Tremont as well as the reports written by the workers of Merrick House, on the conditions and happenings of the neighborhood. One such type of report that sheds light on the impact of Merrick House on the neighborhood children are crime reports that seek to understand the issue of gangs and related criminal activity that persisted in the neighborhood. While there was a significant decrease of 124 cases of boys involved in felony crimes in Tremont between 1956 and 1957 and rates of violent crimes (including homicide) remained relatively stable, rates of nonviolent misdemeanors committed by boys increased by almost twenty-four percent. Predictably the ages of the majority of the offenders were between eleven and seventeen; only a small percent of the crimes reported during 1956 and 1957 were committed by young children under the age of ten.[27] This report was part of a larger effort in Cleveland to address the growing concern over the

---

[26] Judith Ann Trolander, *Professionalism and Social Change: From the Settlement House Movement to Neighborhood Centers, 1886 to the Present*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1987), 139-157.

[27] Merrick House, MS4030, Box 6, Folder 97. Statistics taken from the "Report of Cleveland Police – Juvenile Bureau of Number of Boys Coming in Contact With Police Department (In – 1957)" compiled by Captain Arthur V. Roth for Inspector George M. Lucas. Sections referenced are titled "Offenses of Misdemeanor Proportion" and "Offenses," which included the statistics on the rates of felony crime in 1956 and 1957. This report is comprehensive and includes information on fire department calls, police arrests, and criminal activity on the railroad.

number of gangs, particularly youth gangs, within the city and its neighborhoods, including Tremont, between 1954 and 1968. The Welfare Federation of Cleveland, through its United Youth Program, worked with the police to help identify gang members and children that were at-risk of either joining a gang in their area or at-risk of experiencing acts of violence due to run-ins with the gangs of the neighborhood. By studying them, the hope was to prevent the Cleveland gangs from becoming too well organized like they had in other major cities like Chicago.[28]

In 1961, Merrick House conducted a self-study that was revelatory in terms of the changes going on in its community and its own sense of seeking direction. Self-studies were a means for an organization to evaluate its own programs and the effect of their institution on the neighborhood.[29] When Merrick House looked at its own efforts to serve Tremont they found that the utilization of public assistance programs in the neighborhood was actually lower than the rest of the city of Cleveland in 1961. Also, many of the children and young adults surveyed by Merrick House had generally positive attitudes about the community and where it was headed in the coming years.

During the 1960s, Merrick House began to become more heavily involved in federally-funded service programs such as the Economic Opportunities Program and the Food Stamp Program as well as neighborhood and city-wide job training (and retraining) initiatives. Educating the community on what the new federal and state anti-poverty

---

[28] Robert L. Bond, Federation for Community Planning, and Greater Cleveland Neighborhood Centers Association, *Focus on Neighborhoods: A History of Responses by Cleveland's Settlement Houses and Neighborhood Centers to Changing Human Needs*, (Cleveland, OH: Greater Cleveland Neighborhood Centers Association and Federation for Community Planning, 1990), 60-68.

[29] David M. Austin and Merrick House Self-study Committee, *The Tremont Area: Merrick House*, (Cleveland, OH: The Committee, 1961), 37-47.

programs meant was one of the primary ways Merrick House served its neighborhood and constituency.[30] The data provided by the self-study seems promising even with the threat of decline looming over a large number of older Cleveland neighborhoods during the middle of the twentieth century. However, growing concerns over the effect of the interstate highway construction remained a prominent issue in Tremont throughout the late 1950s and into the 1960s while I-90 and its connectors were being built. The plans for the highway effectively bisected the neighborhood and opened the door for symptoms of decline such as the loss of population to the suburbs.

Merrick House workers went door to door between 1959 and 1960 to interview residents about the impact of the highway construction in Tremont. They found that several individuals and families were in danger of losing their homes permanently because of the interstate. A fear of dislocation without possible (or at least easy) relocation was a reality for some neighborhood residents.[31] To add to the fear and confusion, workers at the University Settlement in Cleveland issued a warning in 1959 about fraudsters that were representing themselves as appraisal agents in order to buy property cheap from residents who were to be impacted by the construction.[32]

---

[30] Merrick House, MS4030, Box 7, Folder 116. A variety of reports are included in this folder such as the joint statistical report between the Welfare Federation of Cleveland and the Council for Economic Opportunities in Greater Cleveland from 1964. Educational materials from the Ohio Department of Public Welfare that outlines the new Food Stamp program from 1962 (revised in 1963) are located here as well.

[31] Merrick House, MS4030, Box 7, Folder 117.

[32] Merrick House, MS4030, Box 7, folder 117. See "Freeway Facts" by Elvira Banen, University Settlement, 7310 Fleet Avenue from January 8th, 1959 for information about the interstate, its construction and impact on Cleveland residents.

Yet, the construction of the interstate ended Tremont's isolation. While two bridges had linked Tremont to other inner-city neighborhoods, the interstate provided a link to the city center and, importantly to the expanding western suburbs of Cleveland. People could now more easily move out of Tremont and into the suburbs of Cleveland, which furthered the decline of the neighborhood at mid-century.[33]

Section Two: Cleveland's Tremont Neighborhood

The distinct conditions in individual urban areas make it necessary to zero in on specific institutions: a single, sweeping answer does not completely satisfy inquiries focused on the local level. Therefore, understanding the history of Tremont is central to understanding the operations of Merrick House.[34]

The Origin of the Tremont Neighborhood

Situated above the west bank of the Cuyahoga River with Cleveland located across the valley, the neighborhood remained relatively isolated because of its geography until the construction of the interstate highway during the middle of the twentieth century.[35] Originally a part of Brooklyn Township, New Englanders, mainly from Connecticut, settled the area commonly known as Tremont as early as 1818. During this

---

[33] W. Dennis Keating, Norman Krumholz, and David C. Perry, *Cleveland: A Metropolitan Reader*, (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1995), 248-259.

[34] Cleveland Heights and University Heights were two of the first names that the Tremont area was known by. In addition to these names, Lincoln Heights and then Southside (after the area was annexed by the city of Cleveland in 1867) were used as names for the area before it finally became known as Tremont. For the purposes of clarity and to lessen confusion, Tremont will be the name used to refer to the area discussed throughout this paper.

[35] Keating, *A Brief History of Tremont,* 11.

time, the land remained relatively undeveloped. This is due to many of the first settlers being farmers as well as the large plots of land that a small number of individuals, such as the Branch and Kellogg families, owned.[36] In 1820, only seventy-four individuals paid land taxes.[37] Despite the area's association with and proximity to Ohio City (then a separate city from Cleveland that was founded in the same year that the Tremont area was settled) no significant development took place in Tremont until the founding of Cleveland University in 1850 on the western edge of the neighborhood.[38] This gave the area its first unofficial name, University Heights, and also changed the physical landscape by creating large structures to house the institution as well as reserved green spaces for the campus. The university was short-lived. After the death of one of its founders, Thirza Pelton, the university was permanently closed in 1853.[39] Contemporary street names that evoke the presence of a university (Professor Avenue are just one of several similarly named streets) provide a link to this early educational experiment.

Another change was soon to occur that would also serve as a major shift in character and use for the area. In 1862, Camp Cleveland, a major military training camp and hospital during the American Civil War, was constructed in Tremont. This choice was a significant indication of the shift away from woods and farmland for the siting of

---

[36] Keating, *A Brief History of Tremont,* 10-14.

[37] Stanley Lasky, "A brief account of 2372 W. 7th Street: from Cleveland University to Inexorable, Inc. 1851-1997," (unpublished, 1997), 2-3. This is a brief history of Cleveland University and the property that it once occupied. It covers the various institutions that were located on the land as well as the changes that the land itself underwent over a period of about one hundred and fifty years.

[38] Lasky, "A brief account of 2372 W. 7th Street," 1-3.

[39] Keating, *A Brief History of Tremont*, 11-14. Despite being open between 1850 and 1853, Cleveland University only conferred between eight and eleven degrees during that period of time.

the camp was based on the location of the main Cleveland to Columbus railroad line in the Walworth valley that formed Tremont's northern border. It thus served to bring large numbers of people, particularly soldiers and individuals working for wartime causes, into the area that has previously remained a rather quiet, small village.[40] This rapid development was a precursor of the accelerated settlement in the neighborhood that would occur after the Industrial Revolution arrived in Cleveland less than a decade later.

The Rise of Industry in Cleveland

Tremont was annexed by the city of Cleveland in August of 1867. This came just over a decade after the annexation of Ohio City in 1854.[41] These changes also indicated other major changes in the region. Principally, Cleveland was becoming an industrial center thanks to its geographic location on the lake and near critical resources such as coal and iron ore. The completion of the Ohio & Erie Canal in 1832 aided in the expansion of commerce, which further set up the neighborhood for industrial success. The development of a railroad network in the 1850s played a major role as well. The Tremont area would be transformed by this shift in transportation and the economy as the Cleveland's closer proximity to the east and ease of access led to an explosion of growth.[42] Wooded land and farms gave way to industry and crowded residential districts

---

[40] David D. Van Tassel, John Vacha, and Western Reserve Historical Society, *"Behind Bayonets": The Civil War in Northern Ohio*, (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2006), 52-66.

[41] Keating, *A Brief History of Tremont*, 11.

[42] George W. Knepper, *Ohio and Its People*, (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1997), 289-290.

and as Cleveland became a nationally significant manufacturing center as the end of the nineteenth century grew nearer.[43]

The combination of location, transportation, and industrial development allowed Cleveland to rise to prominence during the Gilded Age. In Tremont particularly, steel dominated the industrial landscape. Otis Steel and the Corrigan-McKinney Steel Company being two of the largest companies in the Tremont neighborhood built plants situated just down the hill along the changing waterfront of the Cuyahoga River. Other companies such as Lamson and Sessions, and Ferry Cap Screw made products from the steel. All served to attract a large, diverse workforce.[44]

The Increase of Immigration to Cleveland's Tremont Neighborhood

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Cleveland had situated itself on the national scene through its manufacturing prowess. Such rapid development brought a whole host of social problems with it. This is due to the expansion of the city through industrialization and the growing number of workers and their families living in the city that make such growth possible. Population density increased in many areas, Tremont among them. Many of those who came to live in Cleveland's Tremont neighborhood were immigrants from Europe. The mostly New England "American" settlers with large plots of land gave way to the often low-quality, uncomfortably cramped living spaces of

---

[43] Carol Poh Miller and Robert Anthony Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1796-1996*, 2nd ed, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 49-99.

[44] Hendry and Svendsen, *Between Spires and Stacks*, 22-23. *Between Spires and Stacks* provides important socio-cultural information on Tremont.

the working class European immigrants who called Tremont home from the start of industrialization in the 1860s and the 1870s through to the present day.[4546]

Like other major industrial American cities, immigrants were attracted to Cleveland because of the social and economic opportunities that were available within the city that could not be found to the same extent elsewhere.[47] Tremont in particular became home to thousands of mainly European immigrants because of its location proximate to the Cuyahoga River where steel mills and other industry developed heavily all along the waterfront. Tremont's residents were Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, Slovak, Greek, German, Italian, and Syrian. As many as sixteen other European nationalities and ethnicities were counted in a 1934 census of the area. By this time, according to a 1936 comprehensive study by Charles E. Hendry and Margaret T. Svendsen approximately one-third of all residents of Tremont were born outside of the United States and over three-fourths of all familial households were headed by at least one individual (generally a parent) born outside of the country.[48]

The rise of industry and the growth of the population within the neighborhood led to challenging living conditions. The majority of homes (of which there were just over

---

[45] Keating, *A Brief History of Tremont*, 18-19.

[46] Although, after the mid-twentieth century the demographics once again shifted as is quite common in large cities like Cleveland across the United States as suburbanization swept the country and many cities lost large percentages of their residents to new housing and job opportunities as industrial jobs waned.

[47] Keating, Krumholz, and Perry, *Cleveland: A Metropolitan Reader*, 184-185.

[48] Hendry and Svendsen, *Between Spires and Stacks*, 49-51. In this section of the report, aptly titled "People of the Area," census data is used to not only explain the various ethnicities and nationalities of the people of Tremont, but to also show where exactly they resided within the neighborhood and how much they were estimated to pay for their property rentals or purchases.

three thousand by 1936) were rented to the working class families of the neighborhood with monthly rates varying wildly from block to block. The structures themselves were just as diverse with older homes made out of materials like brick among rundown simple shacks. Many were originally intended to be single-family homes, however, they were often home to several individuals and multiple families that pushed past the comfortable capacity of the structure. This situation increased in severity as families brought over more relatives from their respective homelands.[49]

The overcrowding and physical condition of the structures led to other issues. Tremont had the largest population concentration in the city of Cleveland during the 1930s. Unsurprisingly, the Cleveland Fire Department ranked Tremont as having one of the highest risk levels for fires. The risk for hazards was also elevated by the lack of running water (approximately one-fourth of houses had toilets outside with no running water inside of the house), and poorly rigged electric, and gas hook-ups that exacerbated the potential of fires.[50]

Despite the evidence of dangerous living conditions, some writers have chosen to provide a "rosier" view of the community during its industrial heyday. In George E. Condon's *West of the Cuyahoga*, it seems the author idealizes the conditions in which immigrants had to live in, especially those individuals that found work in the mills and the other industrial sites located just a stone's throw away from the dense blocks of

---

[49] Hendry and Svendsen, *Between Spires and Stacks*, 23. It was not uncommon to have at least two different families residing in the same house.

[50] Hendry and Svendsen, *Between Spires and Stacks*, 24-25. Also mentioned in this section is the lack of upkeep on the houses compared to earlier decades. Actions that could seem trivial, such as the painting of houses for appearance as well as utility have been recorded in this report.

housing. He does this by using descriptive language to describe scenes such as the flow of workers down the hillside to go to the mills for work as if it was an idyllic setting.[51] Condon's use of language and imagery can serve to be quite misleading as the workers filing into the mills for the start of their shifts or heading back up the hill to go home after a long, exhausting day of physical labor cannot necessarily live up to the romanticized view of their lives and routines as portrayed by the author. Certainly the residents were not always completely bleak (see other sections), but Condon's work tends to be one of selective memory.[52]

This example serves to highlight the importance of studies such as the Welfare Federation of Cleveland's Tremont report and the personal histories of residents (including written and oral histories) such as Paul Ziats' *Tremont: Cleveland, Ohio's Southside*, a memoir of sorts that provides crucial insight into the day-to-day life of the residents of the Tremont neighborhood during this period the early twentieth century. Ziats recalls Tremont quite differently than Condon. His account of life in Tremont specifies the lack of access to clean running water at the factories where toilets were the only facilities available and when the workers returned home they often had to wash outside with a bucket of water and a bar of soap.[53] Ziats goes on to describe the condition

---

[51] George E. Condon, *West of the Cuyahoga*, (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006), 147.

[52] This is not to assume that happiness could not be found in Tremont, but that the choice of language was questionable when trying to convey the life of a Tremont resident that found employment in the industries of the area.

[53] Ziats, *Tremont*, 15. As mentioned in the text above, this book can be considered a memoir written by Paul Ziats and published in 1997. It reads as a personal history (almost like a transcribed oral history) of growing up and living in Tremont during the first half of the twentieth century with particularly attention paid to the 1920s and 1930s, which would have been his childhood and teenage years.

of the environment, namely the heavy air pollution, in Tremont, which was experienced by all of its residents as "unbearable."[54]

All of these factors, ranging from overcrowding to poverty to language barriers to severe air pollution, contributed greatly to the perceived and actual need for aid for Tremont residents in the first few decades of the twentieth century. As the effects of the Progressive Era began to be felt in Cleveland and its neighborhoods, the founding of settlement houses soon followed. In Tremont, CCSGC founded Merrick House in response to these social issues (see previous section).

Section Three: The Settlement Movement on the National Level

The Progressive Era of the early twentieth century exemplifies a time of great social action. Reformers, with admirable as well as questionable intentions alike, undoubtedly changed the course of American history through their extensive push for reforms united by the aim to increase the quality of life for Americans regardless of race, sex, gender, religion, or class. These reforms were sweeping in their scope. Ranging from labor reforms to care for the poor, the Progressive Era exemplified the desire for positive change after being exposed to the rapid industrialization and urbanization that began in the Gilded Age and which was continuing in the United States at the beginning of the

[54] Ziats, *Tremont*, 61. He details how the air pollution led to the dirty exteriors and interiors of the houses in Tremont, which might help explain why the Welfare Federation of Cleveland report found that many residents stopped painting their houses as frequently as it was a chore just to keep them from appearing completely filthy from the proximity of the factories.

twentieth century. For the purpose of this paper, the latter will be considered as the Progressive Era, covering roughly the time period of 1900 to 1920.[55]

Foundation of Charity Within the United States

The roots of the Progressive Era lie in a long tradition of charity and reform activity. This, of course, includes the expansion of non-profit organizations, specifically charities that deal with providing aid to an underserved, neglected populations that occurred during the Progressive Era. With roots in seventeenth century England, the purposes of charities that exist to offer assistance to the poor are intensely entwined with religious institutions, specifically churches; they have been for centuries and to an extent remain this way throughout the twentieth century.

The Statute of Charitable Uses is a document relatively well known within the world of non-profit organizations for its lasting significance. Written by Queen Elizabeth I and the British Parliament in 1601, the statute outlines uses for charitable funds that were deemed acceptable by the government such as the designation of monies for the poor, the disabled, and the elderly; Uses that are recognizable and quite persistence

[55] A note about the periodization of the Progressive Era is needed to provide clarity. Some scholars link the Progressive Era with the Gilded Age and therefore consider it to extend back into the late nineteenth century. Others consider the Progressive Era to be closely connected to the New Deal and seek to seamlessly blend the era together into the 1930s and 1940s. However, many historians consider the Progressive Era to be the first two decades of the twentieth century marked by the massive effort of individuals and organizations for reform and ending with the entrance of the United States in the First World War.

through the twentieth century (and, indeed, into the present day in some form or another).[56]

Another important document with seemingly limitless application to the development of charity and philanthropy in the United States is *The Elizabethan Poor Law*. It was also released in 1601. The poor law builds upon *The Statute of Charitable Uses* by stating that government monies intended for charity were to be doled out by the local church parishes in order to take this difficult task away from the government by localizing the money for the individuals and families residing in the area. It also introduced a formalized method of dealing with inaccuracies in disbursement with special attention paid to possible noncompliance or acts akin to embezzlement.[57] This can be understood as a precursor to formal and informal church led organizations as well as the modern non-profit organizations. These organizations receive government funds, often in the form of grants, for the purpose of carrying out their respective philanthropic missions to lessen the burden of the government when it comes to disbursing aid to the people that require it for a basic standard of living (or often times, even less than that).

Many of these organizations, including settlement houses, can trace their inspiration and guiding principles to such early documents, as they are the building blocks for charitable causes and organizations in the United States. Using these old ideas as a foundation, whether consciously or otherwise, many charitable and philanthropic

---

[56] David C. Hammack, *Making the Nonprofit Sector in the United States: A Reader*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998), 5-8. *The Statute of Charitable Uses* is quite a short document, but it gets its point across succinctly.

[57] Hammack, *Making the Nonprofit Sector*, 9-13. *The Elizabethan Poor Law* was also written and enacted by Queen Elizabeth I and the British Parliament during 1601. It provides for an even greater insight into the structure of charity during this time in English history as well as its continuing impact.

organizations and institutions have their origins within the radical reforms that characterized the Progressive Era.

The Legacy of the Progressive Era: Settlement Houses

One of the many hallmarks of the Progressive Era is the settlement house.[58] They continued to persist decades after the Progressive Era faded into the collective past of the country and its political, economic, and social history. However, this period of American history characterizes the spirit and the drive for social reform that led to a massive expansion of the settlement house movement through concerted reform efforts as illustrated by the opening of new settlement houses across the United States, including Tremont's Merrick House. Many of these settlement houses were concentrated in the Northeastern and Midwest regions of the United States.[59] The role of these social reform institutions is undeniable as it is difficult to examine reform movements in the first half of the last century without encountering their existence, in addition to their far-reaching influences as well as their intended and unintended consequences.

The Role of Women in Settlement Work

Women were increasingly visible in working conditions during the rise of settlement houses in the late nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century. So

---

[58] Allen Freeman Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1967), 8-14.

[59] Davis, *Spearheads for Reform,* 9-25.

much so that mention of settlement houses conjures up names like Jane Addams who founded Hull House in Chicago in 1889. It is perhaps one of the most well known and well researched settlement houses in the United States because of Addams' own writings on her settlement work.[60] Part of the reason for the ascension of women, including young women, to the positions of philanthropists, directors, educators, and caregivers is due to the lack of professionalization of social work. To some extent the Catholic women of the Christ Child Society and Merrick House fit into this model of feminine activism.

Settlement houses were often seen as a gateway for educated woman to being taken seriously as a professional within the field of welfare.[61] In a time when middle-class women were relegated to the home and had a limited number of options when it came to finding work even with a college education, the settlement movement gave these women a purpose, an outlet, and a voice to advocate for change.[62] This was especially valid within child welfare organizations where women were a driving force for the creation and enforcement of federal and state level reforms and welfare related policies, a tenacity that led to tangible results such as the creation of the Children's Bureau within the Department of Commerce and Labor in 1912. This development can be directly

---

[60] Lawrence Jacob Friedman and Mark D. McGarvie, *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*, (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 227. Many settlement houses, including Merrick House (discussed later) were often considered part of the domain of women along with the organizations that supported their work such as the Christ Child Society.

[61] Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), xiii.

[62] Trolander, *Professionalism and Social Change*, 12-14.

connected to the decades long push for social reforms that was created out of the "settlement culture" of the time.[63]

Varying Motivations for Involvement and Issues of Discrimination

The Progressive Era was a time of reforms considered to be quite radical by government officials. In order to successfully carry out actions to achieve ambitious goals, reformers generally were upper class with greater social privilege than those that they sought to help. Opinions of these individuals, of their collective motivations, and their actions differ widely among scholars. Some consider their call to action inspired and requiring a tremendous amount of selfless concentration in order to bring innovative solutions to the industrial centers of the United States.[64] This includes the strong desire to understand and aid in the healing of humanity on the individual level of those that were viewed as requiring the most assistance.[65] One of the primary reasons for this line of thinking, is that it takes a special sort of individual to want to dedicate their lives to helping those living in poverty, especially the immigrant populations to which many of the reformers had little to no connection with in their personal lives.[66]

Many scholars recognize the role of privilege and self-service in the decision of reformers to commit to such an exhausting undertaking. The feeling of the need to do something to extend their relative wealth to others much less fortunate than their own

---

[63] Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion*, 38-65.

[64] Clarke A. Chambers, *Seedtime of Reform: American Social Service and Social Action, 1918-1933*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1963), 109-110.

[65] Robert Archey Woods and Albert Joseph Kennedy, *The Settlement Horizon*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 30-39.

[66] Chambers, *Seedtime of Reform*, 109.

families, particularly poverty-stricken immigrants, was also a key motivator for involvement in settlement work. It was thought that participating in charity work of this type would work towards alleviating some of their guilt associated with their class as well as aid in molding the world and its population to their vision of society.[67] The view that the reformers held of themselves and of their peers as being morally superior to those of a lower social status as well as to those of their own class that did not express the same concerns for the growing social problems affecting the country's population played major roles in informing their decisions.[68] Considering themselves and their lifestyles worthy of emulation betrays their bias whether recognized at the time or otherwise.[69] It also helped lessen the fear of the unknown that could be found by some Americans in the influx of immigrants into the United States. By offering programs and services that worked towards Americanizing individuals, particularly children, the perceived threat to what was considered American traditions and customs would be lessened in the supposed interest of the general population.[70] This apparent dichotomy of motivations, the potentially divisive chasm between selfless motivation and being propelled into action through intense feelings of self-reproach or even hatred and bigotry, is not well defined. The fact is that reform and settlement work constitute an incredibly multi-faceted issue with a plethora of sentiments that affected the reformers. Despite their motivations, both

---

[67] Chambers, *Seedtime of Reform*, 111.

[68] Davis, *Spearheads for Reform*, 27.

[69] Mina Julia Carson, *Settlement Folk: Social Thought and the American Settlement Movement, 1885-1930*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 105.

[70] Trolander, *Professionalism and Social Change*, 12.

religious and person, the pioneers of the movement were not perfect. To pretend otherwise would do a disservice to their work and its place in American history.

To elaborate on this concept, it is important to recognize that while the aim of social reform was to provide assistance to the needy and ameliorate the problems caused by economic and industrial advancement it did not always live up to that ideal. Highly questionable theories pervaded the attitudes of some of the reformers. An example of this would be the influence of eugenics during the Progressive Era that contributed detrimental and now discredited ideas about race, ethnicity, work, and poverty that led to widespread stereotypes and discrimination against people who were supposed to be receiving unbiased aid from social reform institutions.[71]

It is also important to address the overt discrimination against African Americans that existed within the settlement movement. A major example of this would be the support given to the continuance of racial segregation by the progressive reformers. At face value this seems counterintuitive to their goal of unity and support. However, Michael McGerr explains that reformers publicly viewed continued racial segregation as a "shield" to protect minorities while the work of the reformers carried on.[72] Therefore it became an acceptable excuse for the continuation of formal and informal segregation.

Issues with racism in settlement houses continued after the end of the Progressive Era. This could be seen as the industrial centers, particularly of northern cities, began to experience a greater influx of African Americans into the urban neighborhoods

---

[71] Thomas C. Leonard, *Illiberal Reformers: Race, Eugenics, and American Economics in the Progressive Era*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 101-128.

[72] Michael E. McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920*, (New York, NY: Free Press, 2003), 183-184.

previously dominated by mostly white, European immigrants. Drastically changing the demographics of communities that settlement workers were used to dealing with on a daily basis. For example, in Cleveland during the 1940s and 1950s, racial issues came to the forefront as African-Americans began moving into predominantly white neighborhoods that were over fifty percent Catholic. This sparked a debate among priests and forced residents to address the issues of segregation and racism within the neighborhood as well as within the Catholic Church.[73]

Further complicating the ability of settlement houses to adapt to the changing neighborhoods of America's cities were the Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924 that drastically limited the number of immigrants legally entering into the United States until the 1960s. This act created a new sort of problem for settlement workers, one that they struggled to address properly for decades.[74] Instead of integrating African American residents into the activities and operations of the settlement houses, individuals and families were generally excluded because of their race; formal and informal segregation played a major role in these occurrences. One such occurrence involved the William Byrd Community House settlement in Richmond, Virginia. In the early 1940s, a report on the usage of the settlement's services concluded that instead of integrating the growing African American community into the population of those served by the settlement house the leadership of the institution should instead chose to open a new facility for white residents and leave the old institution in the hands of African American community

---

[73] John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North*, (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 84-91.

[74] Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Princeton, (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 64-67.

leaders.[75] The expectation for adaptation and inclusion was perhaps never wholly realized or implemented by these institutions. The failure of settlement houses and their workers to address the changing demographics of the neighborhoods they served contributed to the decline of the influence of settlement houses and the effectiveness of their services in their local communities.[76]

Conclusion

Merrick House's Catholic roots and specific focus on Cleveland's Tremont neighborhood makes its history as a settlement house is both part of, and yet somewhat separate from the broader narrative of the settlement houses and the social reform efforts that took place in the United States during the early to mid twentieth century. Catholicism, while leaving its distinctive mark on the founding of Merrick House and its Board of Directors, did not ultimately have a provable or overt influence over the services and programs offered to the diverse community that included individuals and families from different religious traditions. This secular operational model was and remains of paramount importance to the outreach and relief efforts of an organization so central to the health and well being of the residents of the neighborhood. It could not afford to lose members and users of the settlement house due to an uncomfortable religious environment.

---

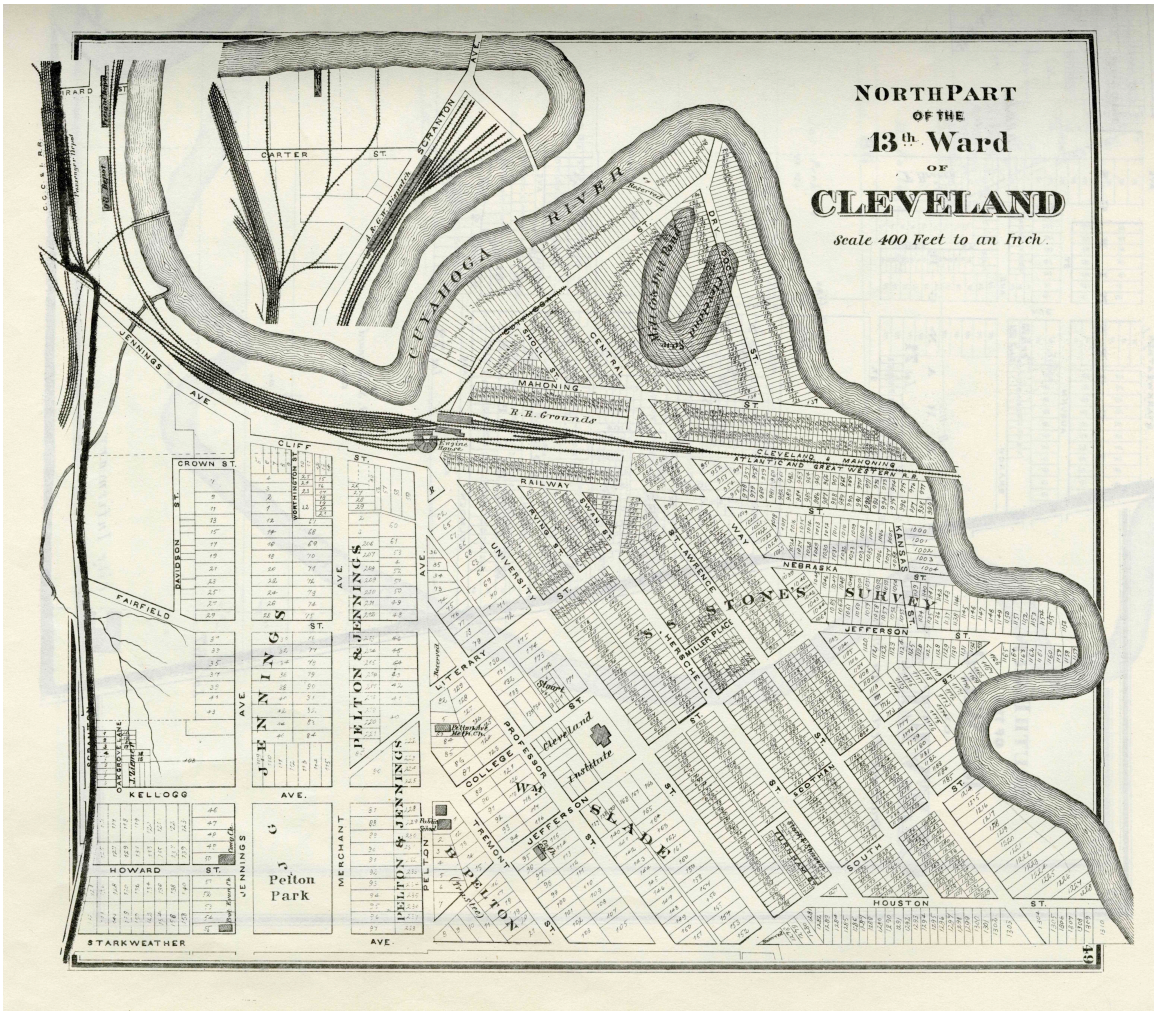
[75] Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, *Black Neighbors: Race and the Limits of Reform in the American Settlement House Movement, 1890-1945*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 9.

[76] Lasch-Quinn, *Black Neighbors*, 151-163. In the conclusion of the book, racism is also discussed on the national and professional level by addressing issues that affected the National Federation of Settlements as well as with individual institutions.

In the end, the success of Merrick House comes down to the institution recognizing the needs of its community and being willing and able to adapt to meet those demands. By offering more literacy classes, GED classes, the continuance of daycare services, retaining their focus of youth programs, and expanding more of their services to low-income adults, Merrick House, as it operates in the early twenty-first century, is well-versed on finding ways to remain relevant in the face of neighborhood decline. This effort continues undeterred a half a century later as Merrick House and Tremont experienced the beginning of gentrification processes that currently (2019) have become a defining characteristic of the area. In its one-hundredth year of uninterrupted community service and programming, Merrick House offers a sense of continuity, reliability, neighborhood history, and permanence to the residents of Tremont and a neighborhood itself in the midst of its transformation.

Appendix

1874 Map of Cleveland's Tremont Neighborhood



Map of the North Part of the 13th Ward of Cleveland. D. J. Lake, *Atlas of Cuyahoga County, Ohio from Actual Surveys by and under the Direction of D. J. Lake*, (Titus, Simmons & Titus, 1975).

Bibliography

Manuscript Collections

Merrick House Settlement. *Merrick House Settlement and Day Nursery Records*. MS4030. Papers. Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio.

Christ Child Society of Greater Cleveland. *Christ Child Society of Greater Cleveland Records*. MS5093. Papers. Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio.

Published Sources

Austin, David M. and Merrick House. Self-study Committee. *The Tremont Area: Merrick House*. Cleveland, OH: The Committee, 1961.

Bond, Robert L., Federation for Community Planning, and Greater Cleveland Neighborhood Centers Association. *Focus on Neighborhoods: A History of Responses by Cleveland's Settlement Houses and Neighborhood Centers to Changing Human Needs*. Cleveland, OH: Greater Cleveland Neighborhood Centers Association and Federation for Community Planning, 1990.

Brown, Dorothy M. and Elizabeth McKeown. *The Poor Belong to Us: Catholic Charities and American Welfare*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Carson, Mina Julia. *Settlement Folk: Social Thought and the American Settlement Movement, 1885-1930*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Chambers, Clarke A. *Seedtime of Reform: American Social Service and Social Action, 1918-1933*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1963.

Condon, George E. *West of the Cuyahoga*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006.

Davis, Allen Freeman. *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Friedman, Lawrence Jacob and Mark D. McGarvie. *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Grabowski, John and David D. Van Tassel, Western Reserve Historical Society, Case Western Reserve University, University Archives, Kelvin Smith Library and Cleveland Bicentennial Commission (Cleveland, Ohio). *The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History.* Electronic version ed. Cleveland, Ohio: Case Western Reserve University, 2018.

Hammack, David C. *Making the Nonprofit Sector in the United States: A Reader*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998.

Hendry, Charles E., Margaret T. Svendsen, and Welfare Federation of Cleveland. *Between Spires and Stacks*. Cleveland, OH: Welfare Federation, 1936.

Keating, W. Dennis. *A Brief History of Tremont: Cleveland's Neighborhood on a Hill*. Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2016.

Keating, W. Dennis, Norman Krumholz, and David C. Perry. *Cleveland: A Metropolitan Reader*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1995.

Knepper, George W. *Ohio and Its People*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1997.

Lasky, Stanley. "A brief account of 2372 W. 7th Street: from Cleveland University to Inexorable, Inc. 1851-1997." Unpublished, 1997.

Lasch-Quinn, Elisabeth. *Black Neighbors: Race and the Limits of Reform in the American Settlement House Movement, 1890-1945*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

Leonard, Thomas C. *Illiberal Reformers: Race, Eugenics, and American Economics in the Progressive Era*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016.

McGerr, Michael E. *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920*. New York, NY: Free Press, 2003.

McGreevy, John T. *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Miller, Carol Poh and Robert Anthony Wheeler. *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1796-1996*. 2nd ed. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997.

Muncy, Robyn. *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Ngai, Mae M. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Trolander, Judith Ann. *Professionalism and Social Change: From the Settlement House Movement to Neighborhood Centers, 1886 to the Present*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1987.

Trolander, Judith Ann. *Settlement Houses and the Great Depression*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1975.

Tuennerman-Kaplan, Laura. *Helping Others, Helping Ourselves: Power, Giving, and Community Identity in Cleveland, Ohio, 1880-1930*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2001.

Van Tassel, David D. John Vacha, and Western Reserve Historical Society. *"Behind Bayonets": The Civil War in Northern Ohio*. Kent: Kent State University Press, 2006.

Woods, Robert Archey and Kennedy, Albert Joseph. *The Settlement Horizon*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990.

Ziats, Paul. *Tremont: Cleveland, Ohio's Southside*. Cincinnati, OH: The Merten Company, 1997.