

# **THE ADULT EDUCATION TRADITION**

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## **IN GREATER CLEVELAND**

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To the New Englanders who founded and settled Cleveland more than 200 years ago, education was more than a matter of childhood and schoolmasters. That's because the way of life and the manner of politicking that Moses Cleveland and his fellow land speculators knew from Connecticut were practices they aimed to transplant along Lake Erie's south shore.

Upholding those New England ways depended on tutoring newcomers from other regions about the New England outlook. What Greater Clevelanders today describe as adult education may seem as modern as tomorrow—evening classes, say, at Cleveland State University or Cuyahoga Community College, neighborhood workshops at a Cleveland Public Library branch, or learning the Italian language in a class at Alta House, the Murray Hill social settlement. But it was Cleveland's pioneers, late in the 1700s, who promoted such teaching and learning.

Later, in the 1800s, the Connecticut settlers' Cleveland successors promoted lectures, libraries and the like to advance adult education—education to help govern Greater Cleveland; education to give Greater Cleveland a common cultural lingo; and, ultimately, education to promote prosperity—prosperity, to be sure, as the powerful defined it.

Finally, in the 1900s, such builders of modern Cleveland as Mayor Tom L. Johnson and his aide Newton D. Baker made adult education a city priority. Johnson, Baker, Frederic Howe, Linda Eastman and their allies saw lifelong learning as a golden door to better living and a guarantee of cleaner government for every Clevelander, rich or poor, native-born or immigrant. According to historian Kevin Mattson, “The democratic strain within Progressive Era activism ... was to provide citizens with the necessary skills to learn about political issues and become engaged citizens.”<sup>1</sup>

Cleveland's settlers set the new city on a foundation built from their own cultural background. At least during Cleveland's first thirty years or so (1796–1825), “The population of Cleveland was, by a substantial majority, from the Connecticut cultural area.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, an early observer of life on the Western Reserve noted “the [local] tendency to support schools and churches—exceedingly like the parent people from which they sprung.”<sup>3</sup>

True, the New England-in-Ohio perspective was reshaped by the arrival of Americans from other regions of the new nation. But the New England accent remained, according to historian Lois Roseberry:

As in New York, the man from Massachusetts or Connecticut had been forced to compromise [on the Ohio frontier] with his neighbor from Pennsylvania or Virginia whose ideas of institutions differed from those of the Puritan. *But the change had not concealed the original type, nor obscured the ideal* which lay at the foundations of [the school, the church, and the town-meeting].<sup>4</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Thus, the assumptions Greater Cleveland's Connecticut founders made about how life should be lived in community helped determine what Cleveland became politically and culturally, and, for a time—before the arrival of large numbers of Catholics and Jews—religiously.

Consider General Moses Cleaveland, who founded Cleveland in July 1796. He was born (in 1754) and died (in 1806) in the town of Canterbury, in northeast Connecticut's Windham County. Cleaveland was a Yale graduate and one of 36 founders and seven directors of the Connecticut Land Co., which surveyed and sold the Western Reserve's land.<sup>5</sup>

According to the 1790 Census, the population of Canterbury was 1,881 people.<sup>6</sup> (The 2000 Census counted 4,692.) The people of Canterbury, like the people in other New England towns, self-governed themselves by holding periodic, face-to-face town meetings. Any resident could attend the town meeting to speak his or her mind about a local matter. Voting followed. In a town with Canterbury's population, government by town meeting was practical, and it was the rule. It still is, albeit modified for today's circumstances.<sup>7</sup>

But in 1950, 154 years after Moses Cleaveland arrived at the Cuyahoga River's mouth, his namesake city, Cleveland, had 914,808 residents. In contrast, Canterbury, Cleaveland's Connecticut birthplace, had 1,321 residents.

So the dilemma for Clevelanders over that century-and-a-half and even now, in a smaller but still quite large Cleveland, was how people in urban Ohio could find enough in common to speak on political matters in the same language. That is, how could they live the political ideals of their Connecticut founders?

Politics-decided-in-debate was the kind of politics the Connecticut founders idealized: Government tethered to the common consent of the people to be governed, after free discussion among them. The romantic portrayal of town meetings by philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson—a Cleveland lecture-platform favorite<sup>8</sup>—helps explain the passion many Greater Clevelanders had for New England's approach to government and to the determination, by a community itself, of its collective goals:

In a town-meeting, the great secret of political science was uncovered, and the problem solved, how to give every individual his fair weight in the government, *without any disorder from numbers*. In a town meeting, the roots of society were reached. Here, the rich gave counsel, but the poor also; and moreover, the just and the unjust. . . . In this open democracy, every opinion had utterance; every objection, every fact . . . its entire weight.<sup>9</sup> (Emphasis added)

Greater Cleveland's geography and heritage encouraged two early and highly successful approaches to adult education in what had been Connecticut's Western Reserve. One approach was known as the "lyceum." The other approach, still popular today, promotes public libraries to diffuse knowledge.

A lyceum, by one dictionary definition, is a place or organization for instruction by lecture. Perhaps predictably, given the New England drive for personal self-improvement, the lyceum movement began in Connecticut. It was devised and promoted by Josiah Holbrook of Derby, Connecticut, a Yale graduate.

In an October 1826 manifesto, Holbrook called for the establishment of lyceums, which he described as "associations for mutual instruction in the sciences, and useful knowledge generally." Holbrook termed his own model of such an association "a Society for Mutual Education ... to procure for youths an economical and practical education ... to diffuse rational and useful information through the community generally ... [and] ... apply the sciences and the various branches of education to the domestic and useful arts, and all the common purposes of life."<sup>10</sup>

Holbrook proposed that annual dues be \$1 (a lump-sum of \$10 would procure life membership) and that besides electing officers, each lyceum should designate five "curators," whose assignment would be to select the lyceum's lecturers.<sup>11</sup>

In Ohio, the lyceum idea flourished, and its lyceums welcomed what today would be called blue-collar workers. In contrast to some lyceums elsewhere, "Ohio [lyceums] still paid some attention to the mechanic [i.e., working] class when it came to making out the [lyceum] programs."<sup>12</sup>

Such Cleveland leaders as Leonard Case established the Cleveland Lyceum in March 1833. The Cleveland Lyceum prospered for ten years.<sup>13</sup> Case and his allies had seeded fertile ground. According to historian David Mead, "The lyceum took root and blossomed in the frontier communities of Ohio and other parts of the West because Eastern settlers, especially those from New England, brought with them a passion for education and morality which greatly influenced the native attitude toward cultural progress."<sup>14</sup>

According to Mead, Greater Cleveland's Berea was for a time the site of a "lyceum village." The Berea project, which lyceum-creator Holbrook promoted, aimed to attract "influential friends of science and [of] the moral enterprises of the age' ... [and would] combine 'a liberal, a practical, and an economical education' with farmwork."<sup>15</sup> The Berea lyceum failed in 1842, but its site became the original home of what is now Baldwin-Wallace College.<sup>16</sup>

Cleveland's location was perfect for the itinerant lecturers on Ohio's lyceum routes, which followed the Lake Shore railroad east-west through Cleveland, and the north-south Cleveland, Columbus & Cincinnati railroad: "These two lines intersected at Cleveland to form a giant 'T' that sprawled across the state."<sup>17</sup> So Cleveland was at the very junction of Ohio lyceums' programming.

The lyceum may well have encouraged the eventual expansion of public education for younger people, but formal public schooling was a side-benefit, not the central aim. "The true purpose of the lyceum ... was to enlighten the people in the community and disseminate useful information at a time when forms of communication, such as books, newspapers, and magazines, were not readily available."<sup>18</sup>

Even after the demise of the Cleveland Lyceum, Ohio lyceums generally found enough success to invite state support. In his 1852 state of the state message, Ohio's governor, Reuben Wood, a Vermont-born Democrat who had become a Cleveland lawyer, called for some state support for lyceums: "Much might, also, be done, by the General Assembly, to encourage literary taste, by small aid, from time to time, for the purchase of books, periodicals and newspapers for permanent literary associations, lyceums and clubs, in our cities and towns."<sup>19</sup>

It is unclear if the General Assembly acted on Reuben Wood's plea. But Wood's sentiments coincided with the rise of the public library, which sprouted from New England ancestors and from private Ohio library associations. Here again, the Connecticut influence was near-paramount.

Residents of New England had formed what were termed "social libraries"—"a voluntary association of individuals who had contributed money toward a common fund to be used for the purchase of books."<sup>20</sup> Social libraries "in Connecticut ... evinced a particularly vigorous growth," with more such libraries established in Connecticut (total: 26) than in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire, or Vermont.<sup>21</sup>

The idea of the public (that is, tax-supported) library provided a key piece in the puzzle of how citizens (or at least white males)—legally equal, but intellectually unequal—could govern a community without that "disorder from numbers" Emerson had said town meetings were designed to avoid.

The answer was, or could be, the public library, whose information might help resolve differences of opinion, and thus preserve the ideal of self-government. One historian, Sidney Ditzion, put it this way: "The very fact that all vital political decisions rested with the voters ... made it more urgent that we create a responsible citizenry...."

Differences of opinion, which of necessity must arise in a complex society such as ours, had to be ironed out with intelligence and knowledge, which books could help provide."<sup>22</sup>

The public library as an auxiliary of, or a help to, adult education: that was one of the perspectives that led Greater Cleveland to create, maintain and expand one of the nation's outstanding networks of public libraries.

As previously noted, the New Englanders who initially peopled Greater Cleveland were extremely familiar with the connection between books and self-government and personal advancement.

And so, almost 100 years ago, a study of Greater Cleveland and its libraries revealed two important features. The first feature was the close connection between public schools and the Cleveland Public Library (and other libraries in the region). The other feature was the broad support that libraries enjoyed from taxpayers. In 1916, in a report to the Cleveland Foundation, Leonard Ayres and Adele McKinney said:

Two significant conditions characterize the place of the public library in the community life of Cleveland. The first is that the public library has always been closely connected with the public schools. The second is that the people of Cleveland support their public library more generously and use its facilities more extensively than do the citizens of other cities.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, Ayres and McKinney, citing federal data for 1913, reported that of 19 big American cities, “Cleveland stood first in the percentage of its total municipal expenditures devoted to the support of its public library,” and that, based on Cleveland Public Library statistics for 1914, annual circulation per capita of public library books was 4.7 in Cleveland, 3.0 in New York, 2.7 in Boston and 1.4 in Chicago.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Cleveland’s support of its library was so notable that it drew praise from steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, the Scottish-born Pennsylvania robber baron who tried to salve his conscience by donating libraries to many American localities. In 1907, Carnegie congratulated the head of Cleveland Public Library “upon exceeding even Pittsburgh in proportion to the amount of population in library appropriation [sic], placing Cleveland first of all.”<sup>25</sup>

As always, there was a history there. In 1848, people we might today term civic leaders obtained a charter for the Cleveland Library Association. “By 1858, its library had increased to 3,000 [books] . . . the largest library in Cleveland at that time.”<sup>26</sup> (The association’s collection was eventually consolidated into what is now Case Western Reserve University’s library.)<sup>27</sup>

Library service had also been offered the public by Cleveland’s Central High School (what later became East Technical High School).<sup>28</sup> The Cleveland Public Library itself opened in 1869.<sup>29</sup>

Two people who eventually ran Cleveland Public Library made it what it is today. One was William Howard Brett, the library’s director from 1884 to 1918. Among Brett’s many achievements was the decision to make the Cleveland Public Library an “open shelf library, the first big American public library to do so.”<sup>30</sup> In an open-shelf library, the patron—the reader—is free to browse the shelves. In a closed shelf system, the reader must ask library employees to bring him or her a book selected (unseen) from a catalog (listing) of all the books in that particular library. Brett also established what became the (indispensable) *Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature*:

Brett achieved international renown for his library and himself. . . . Among the new departures which he either initiated or adopted enthusiastically were the open shelf, children’s libraries, extension work in branches and schools and industrial plants, a cumulative index to periodicals, a catalogue that was a marvel, [and] departmentalization of the library.

When [Brett] became librarian, there was no up-to-date guide to periodicals; Brett developed and published one. As a result it was the Cleveland Public Library that distributed in 1896 the first quarterly issues of the *Cumulative Index to a Selected List of Periodicals* . . . ultimately . . . published, under other auspices, as *Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature*.<sup>31</sup>

The Cleveland Public Library was a trend-setter in adult education as well, a mission further promoted by Brett’s successor as head of the library, Linda Eastman. Eastman led the institution from 1918 to 1938, “the first woman in the world to head a library of that size.”<sup>32</sup>

It seems impossible to overstate Eastman’s positive influence on the library’s offerings of adult education. In 1922, the Cleveland Public Library added to its (K–12) school department an “extension division for adult education . . . a service division for adult education, a bureau of information on adult education, and a general field agency for

contact with groups.”<sup>33</sup> In time, the Cleveland Public Library became the “heart and coordinating center of adult education activities in the community.”<sup>34</sup> Moreover, Cleveland Public Library’s separate decision (also a national first, or close to it) to “divisionalize” its books—by subject, etc.—created a kind of municipal teaching “faculty” to help any and every citizen: “In this group of division heads is the beginning of a true community ‘faculty’ ... Any Clevelander may ‘matriculate’ for life with this array of teacher-librarians, whose chief business it is to study the needs of the city of Cleveland with relation to the printed matter in their charge.”<sup>35</sup> Put another way, the Cleveland Public Library was in the business of what later became known as “lifelong learning.”

Eastman was eloquent in her description of adult education outreach by the Cleveland Public Library not just as a way to help citizens become better informed but also as a route to their economic self-betterment: “In [Cleveland] there are five brothers, who, with the sole aid of public library books, successfully carried on the studies which enabled them all to qualify as licensed engineers.”<sup>36</sup> And Eastman’s description of the quest for and benefits of adult education was near-lyrical:

We realize that any permanent solution of the problems of labor, of technological unemployment, of social and economic change, can come only with more general, more effective, and more continuous education. . . . Perhaps the most far-reaching contribution of the library to vocational guidance and to the whole business of living in an unstable world lies in the facilities offered by it to every individual for filling in the gaps in his education; for rounding out and enriching his experience vicariously through reading; for gaining a background, and possibly, eventually, an ability to think things through to successful adjustments and the real satisfactions of life.<sup>37</sup>

As part of the democratization of learning, Cleveland Public Library also developed a system of “readers’ advisers” among its staff to help Clevelanders thirsting for knowledge find just the right tonic:

We feel sure that publicity is the strategic factor at this stage of adult education in America—and in our experience holds, as well, the secret of getting readers to take advantage of opportunities offered. The ordinary reader in the library is a man lost in an uncharted country; he knows he wants something but its discovery is another story.<sup>38</sup>

That was what the library aimed to be—a navigator for the seeker of knowledge in a city, led by such Progressive politicians as Tom L. Johnson and Newton D. Baker, that aimed to help its residents improve themselves.

Academic education wasn’t the only goal of the adult education movement, nor was “citizenship” education. As adult education evolved, nationally and in Greater Cleveland, it became accented by economic and political movements. That led to technical education—education for a specific craft or job—and what might be called political mobilization.

On the technical (or employment) side, Cleveland was becoming ever-bigger, ever-busier, with new arrivals of people, mainly from Europe, but also the African-American South. New arrivals brought new ideas. And new ideas often required new skills, new technology and new workers to carry them out.

On the political side, a bigger city meant that bigger businesses (and bigger political organizations) developed. But if government were allowed to grow so big as to become anonymous, then the taxpayers' interests would not be recognized.

So there arose, not just in Ohio, but to a great extent in Ohio, what was known as the Progressive movement. Tom L. Johnson, mayor of Cleveland from 1901 to 1909, whose statue sits on Public Square, was perhaps the greatest Ohio Progressive, though hardly the only one. Another was Johnson's lieutenant, Newton D. Baker, later Johnson's successor as mayor of Cleveland, then secretary of war for President Woodrow Wilson, and finally a power in Democratic politics. Baker was also, in Cleveland and nationally, a dynamic proponent of adult education.

Technology had flourished in the hands of the energetic and the adventurous people of Cleveland. For instance, a Clevelander who got in on the ground floor of the telegraph business in 1850—the Microsoft of that era—was a person whose name still resounds in Cleveland: Jephtha Wade.

By getting a license from the patent-owner of the telegraph, Wade won the right to string a telegraph line from Cleveland to (then far bigger) Cincinnati.<sup>39</sup> And that was but an overture for technological investment to come. Over time, “Cleveland ... [became] a center of inventive activity in a remarkable number of important industries, including electric light and power, steel, petroleum, chemicals, and automobiles.”<sup>40</sup> In 1870, Cuyahoga County had been 22nd nationally in manufacturing output; by 1920, it was fourth. In 1900, Cleveland ranked No. 8 of all cities in patents granted and—counting only patents the Patent Office found significant—“*Cleveland was the fifth most technologically important city in the country.*”<sup>41</sup> [emphasis added]

Telegraph technology, the focus of that 1850 investment by Jephtha Wade, helped spawn the later ingenuity of Charles Brush's work.<sup>42</sup> In turn, Brush's work, and the success of those who invested with him, ultimately led to the founding of such behemoths as Linde, and eventually, Union Carbide.<sup>43</sup>

Cleveland was also an “early adopter” of the telephone when it surfaced in the 1870s: The first telephone line in Ohio went live on June 25, 1877—connecting the Rhodes and Co. coal-sales office to the company's coal yard. The first Cleveland telephone exchange opened on September 15, 1879.<sup>44</sup>

By 1920, Cleveland's largest industries were, in order; automobiles; foundry and machine tools; iron and steel; electrical machinery; and women's clothing.<sup>45</sup> What had helped spur Cleveland's leadership in the machine-tool market were the investments and inventions of the White family—Thomas H. White's White Sewing Machine Co. and his son Rollin H. White's White Motor (trucks) and Cletrac (tractors) companies.<sup>46</sup>

The fuel for this industrial rise of Greater Cleveland, what might be called “human capital,” was produced by the flood of newcomers arriving in Cleveland from the Civil War until the 1920s: “The continuous flow of skilled outsiders—European or American—kept Cleveland in touch with a wide range of technical fields ... Cleveland relied upon this continuous influx of talent and combined it with native innovations to create the industrial rise of 1865–1929.”<sup>47</sup>

But it was precisely this influx that raised challenges to the self-government ideal—the Connecticut ideal—that had helped shape Greater Cleveland in its early days. People who didn't share common ideas were unlikely to cooperate well. They could also

be pawns in the game of municipal politics, if uninformed about the ways and means that power was supposed to be used in the United States. That mix of circumstances (the rise of the new, faceless industrial company; the “mass” in mass politics due to city growth; and the blank (political, not cultural) slate of Europeans new to America, helped prompt the Progressive Era. And one of its ideals was civic self-improvement—to which adult education was one crucial approach. The Progressive Era also spawned another vector of adult education—the social settlement or social center.

That said, there is solid evidence that the concern of those already settled in, say, a Cleveland, was that newcomers not only make the right decisions, but also entrust power to the right people. As Robert Carlson observed, “Americanization,” was also essential, to many Progressives, as a topic of adult education: “Progressivism wanted to get the control of government back into the hands of the people—the right people, that is—those who understood American values, i.e., the reformers’ values. And they came to realize as they came in contact with the immigrant that their values were not his values.”<sup>48</sup> But Carlson also found that, while such an endeavor might be aimed (consciously or not) at maintaining the political status quo, in time, adult education did resolve itself into an “educational service station.”<sup>49</sup>

The last thing Mayor Tom L. Johnson aimed to do was maintain that status quo. Even his political campaign techniques were adult education of a kind. According to historian Robert Bremner, Johnson was “a stirring and daring campaigner . . . many of his political appearances were made in a circus tent. He liked the informal atmosphere engendered by the big top and found the tent a convenient and portable auditorium for carrying his ideas to the people.”<sup>50</sup> Hoyt L. Warner, the leading historian of Ohio Progressivism, described Johnson’s technique in 1901 when Johnson campaigned in Cleveland for the Democratic candidate for governor (Ohio gubernatorial elections were then held in odd-numbered years):

Johnson [concentrated] on . . . education of the people on the tax question and the election of a Democratic slate of delegates to represent Cuyahoga County in the General Assembly. . . . Nightly, during the final two weeks, [Johnson] pitched his big tent, first used in his congressional campaigns, in different parts of the city, conducting meetings which were more in the nature of forums on taxation than political [sic] rallies.<sup>51</sup>

As it happened, Governor George K. Nash, a Columbus Republican born in Medina County’s York Township, won a second term in 1901 despite the challenge by Columbus Democrat James Kilbourne, the gubernatorial candidate that Tom Johnson supported. But the lesson-by-example Johnson taught stuck with one of his most important aides, Newton D. Baker, later a national leader in promoting adult education: “From his Cleveland government experience [Baker] reminisced about Tom Johnson’s tent meetings which took place in every part of the city, educating people about the issues of the day on which they would have to make decisions.”<sup>52</sup>

While Johnson and his allies strove to hone democracy through public meetings and the like, a parallel development of neighborhood centers or settlements arose and prospered in Greater Cleveland. So, too, did the “evening college”—such as Cleveland College, arguably a forerunner of what is today’s Cuyahoga Community College and Cleveland State University.

Though settlement houses and neighborhood social centers started first in other cities and then spread to Cleveland, the goal was the same: To provide social services in an era when government offered few, and to “Americanize” those newly arrived from Europe or “urbanize” those African-Americans newly arrived from the rural south.

By 1906, Cleveland had seven neighborhood settlements,<sup>53</sup> the first (and perhaps best known) of which was Hiram House, founded in 1896 “as an outgrowth of a Hiram College student project.”<sup>54</sup> The six others were Alta House (founded in 1900; its Web site says 1895); what’s now Goodrich-Gannett Neighborhood Center (founded 1897); Rainey Institute (founded 1904); the Council Educational Alliance (founded in 1899; merged in 1948 into the Jewish Community Center); and the Friendly Inn Settlement (founded in 1874, according to the Cleveland Foundation, but the *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History* says 1897). Allen F. Davis chronicled the way in which, for instance, Hiram House, made an American dream come true for one young new Clevelander:

A young Russian Jew named Manuel Levine stumbled on Hiram House in Cleveland one night a few months after his arrival in America; George Bellamy, the head resident there, helped him to revive some of the hopes and dreams that had been shattered by his initial experiences in America. Levine joined a social reform club, learned English, and worked his way through night school by teaching classes in German at the settlement. With Bellamy’s aid he was admitted to Western Reserve Law School, and in 1903 Newton Baker appointed him assistant police prosecutor.<sup>55</sup>

In both Cleveland and Toledo, historian Robert Bremner wrote, the job of settlement houses “was to instill in the cities’ new residents the ideals of thrift, cleanliness, sobriety, and self-reliance.”<sup>56</sup> The settlement houses in Cleveland were part of a civic-education complex; for example, the Cleveland Public Library established a “sub-branch” at Hiram House in 1898, “a periodically rotating collection of books for circulation that augmented the small circulating library collection maintained by the settlement itself.” Other sub-branches were created at Goodrich House, Alta House and the Young Mens Hebrew Association.<sup>57</sup>

Early advocates of the settlements, or social centers, were frank in their call for recreating the social conditions, if not the physical conditions, that had permitted self-government along the lines of the town meeting—the town meeting of Moses Cleaveland’s time. As Graham Taylor, wrote of the Chicago Commons, a social center in that city:

Our New England forefathers forged three links of association for the common interest. Their “center” church was like the flag staff of the commonwealth which kept floating high over the heads of all, their ideals of life, individual and social. Closely allied with it was the free school, the bulwark of the state and the buckler to the citizen, in being a common possession to which all had more equal right than to anything except the village green. Under-girding both and representing the whole community was the Town Meeting, where freemen met on an equality never realized before.

But our populations no sooner became diverse in race and religion and subdivided in industrial occupations and interests, than they began to lose these centers of association.<sup>58</sup>

No surprise, then, that by the 1930s, Hiram House was so respectably “mainstreaming” newcomers that its board was peopled with members of the Greater Cleveland

Establishment. According to Judith Trolander, “In 1936, half of [the] board was listed in the *Social Register*. Eight appeared in *Who’s Who in Ohio*, four appeared in both.”<sup>59</sup> That is, settlement house work, such as Hiram’s, had the full backing of Greater Cleveland’s leaders. That may well have betrayed a quest for social control—but it also ensured support for Hiram House’s practical operation.

Frederic Howe, one of Tom L. Johnson’s lieutenants, praised the idea of diversifying the use of public facilities, such as public school buildings, for bolstering civic life: “School buildings are open but six hours a day and for nine months in the year. Let us open them all the year round and for sixteen hours a day. Here is the natural forum for the discussion of political questions, for concerts and dramatic performances. Here the people of the neighborhood can gather.”<sup>60</sup> Howe himself had assisted in “a regular [Tom Johnson] tent campaign in the days immediately preceding [a 1908 Cleveland traction] referendum.” Howe sometimes provided a lantern slide presentation “describing the financial condition of the [streetcar] company in some detail.”<sup>61</sup>

Experiences such as these evidently helped inform Newton D. Baker’s perspective on the need for adult education. He had seen Tom L. Johnson, with varying degrees of success, mobilize public opinion through what amounted to the roving classroom of a pitched tent. Baker, too, had seen the results of settlement house work in Greater Cleveland—and Cleveland Public Library’s extraordinary outreach.

And surely Baker’s service in Woodrow Wilson’s Cabinet added to Baker’s commitment to adult education. While Baker was still mayor, Wilson—early in his presidential administration—signed the Smith-Lever Act, which created agricultural extension services, in effect a nationwide and specialized form of adult education. Theodore Roosevelt’s Country Life Commission had called for “[projecting] the work beyond the schools for youth into continuation schools for adults.”<sup>62</sup> Wilson himself, signing Smith-Lever on May 8, 1914, said it was more than an agriculture-extension measure; Wilson called the measure “one of the most significant and far-reaching measures for the education of adults ever adopted by the government.”<sup>63</sup>

So not only did Baker’s presidential patron embrace adult education, but Baker also became aware of mass education among the men drafted into the Army when he was secretary of war:

From his Cleveland government experience [Baker] reminisced about Tom Johnson’s tent meetings which took place in every part of the city, educating people about the issues of the day on which they would have to make decisions. From his war experience Baker lauded a variety of camp educational and recreation programs, especially the amazing American Expeditionary Force University. The latter became a symbol to him of the general population’s thirst for education.<sup>64</sup>

As a result, Baker, once back in Cleveland after World War I, was a sparkplug in the creation of Cleveland College:

The outcome was the incorporation, on July 29, 1925, of Cleveland College, in affiliation with Western Reserve University and Case School of Applied Science. Situated downtown, several miles away from its two parent institutions, Cleveland College offered late afternoon and evening classes to working adults and morning classes to recent high school graduates who either could not afford to attend residential colleges or did

not quite meet their admissions requirements. Baker served on this Board of Trustees until his death.<sup>65</sup>

This exemplified a key tenet of Baker's civic creed: "If the people were to be self-determining, they had to have opportunities for education. . . . In a democracy, every step forward is that of educating an effective majority of the entire electorate to change their minds."<sup>66</sup>

Before Cleveland College opened, Cleveland didn't have a municipal or quasi-municipal institution of higher education. In contrast, in 1925, when Baker and others created Cleveland College, there were 11 municipal colleges or universities already established long before in the United States—including Ohio's Akron, Cincinnati, and Toledo universities, and what's now Detroit's Wayne State.<sup>67</sup>

By 1930, "Cleveland College . . . enrolled over seven thousand students in 559 classes [from] every social and occupational class in Cleveland. A full-time day college and Division of Informal Adult Education were later added [the latter offering] short courses on parent education and health and general education courses on art, literature, and music."<sup>68</sup>

Today, thousands of Greater Clevelanders trek to classes to prepare for a General Educational Development diploma; or to earn degrees from Greater Cleveland's community colleges and public universities; or to take practical classes in a technology or pastime, offered by the Cleveland Municipal School District or Greater Cleveland's neighborhood centers.

That army of seekers is following trails blazed more than 200 years ago by men and women who wanted Greater Cleveland to be a self-governing community peopled by citizens who knew their own minds—and how to speak them.

## ENDNOTES

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