

## Her Fathers' Daughter: Flora Stone Mather and Her Gifts to Cleveland

Cleveland's best-known woman philanthropist took no credit for her generosity: "I feel so strongly that I am one of God's stewards. Large means without effort of mine, have been put into my hands; and I must use them as I know my Heavenly Father would have me, and as my dear earthly father would have me, were he here."<sup>1</sup> So Flora Stone Mather described the inspirations for her giving: her Presbyterian belief in stewardship - serving (and saving) others - and the example of her father, Amasa Stone. But she expanded her role as dutiful daughter, moving beyond conventional philanthropy into political reform and institution-building.

Flora Stone, born in 1852, was the third child of Amasa and Julia Gleason Stone. Her family - parents, brother Adelbert, and sister Clara - moved to Cleveland from Massachusetts in 1851. Her father, a self-taught engineer, built churches, then bridges and railroads, which made his fortune. He arrived in Cleveland as superintendent of the Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati Railroad, which he had built with two partners. He subsequently directed and built other railroad lines and invested in the city's burgeoning industries and banks. Thanks to its railroads and lake shipping, petroleum refineries, and iron and steel mills, Cleveland would become an industrial giant.

In 1858, Stone built an elaborate Italianate mansion on Euclid Avenue, a sign that he had arrived socially and financially. He became an ardent Republican and an enthusiastic supporter of the Union side of the Civil War. The war boosted Cleveland's industries and made Amasa even richer. He kept his son Adelbert out of the Union Army, but lost him anyway when the 20-year-old student at Yale drowned on a school expedition in June 1865.

Julia Gleason had worked as a seamstress before her marriage, but her husband's financial success and social position meant that daughters Flora and Clara were destined for lives of privilege, defined as marriage and family, in keeping with nineteenth-century ideas about woman's nurturing and innately domestic nature.

Flora seemed fitted by personality and upbringing for this role. "Small in stature and fragile in health,"<sup>2</sup> she was above all, modest, self-effacing, and compassionate. She dutifully participated in the conventional social life expected of Euclid Avenue women: dinners, receptions, teas, walks and carriage rides, charity benefits, and visits to her affluent, congenial neighbors. Yet she had a lively intelligence and a keen curiosity, honed by her rigorous education and travels abroad. Her intellect and energy made

---

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Gladys Haddad, *Flora Stone Mather: Daughter of Cleveland's Euclid Avenue and Ohio's Western Reserve* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2007), xi. I am deeply indebted to this sensitive portrait of Flora's private life as daughter, wife, and mother. I have focused instead on her public life. I also want to apologize for referring to Flora Stone Mather by her first name, which I would never do if she were present. However, since her name changes from Flora Stone to Flora Stone Mather after her marriage in 1881, it seems easier - if somewhat disrespectful - to use "Flora" throughout this essay.

<sup>2</sup> Haddad, xi.

her a leader among her peers even as a young adult: “Wait until Flora comes. She will know just how to go ahead,” said her friends.<sup>3</sup>

Amasa Stone valued education for his daughters – perhaps to enhance their (and his) social status, perhaps to enhance their intellects, perhaps to improve their domestic skills – perhaps all three. He was a funder and the builder of the Cleveland Academy, a private girls’ school, which opened in 1866 across from the Stones’ Euclid Avenue home. Both Clara and Flora attended. Their demanding college preparatory education relied on both Biblical texts and current events and emphasized speaking in public as well as writing.<sup>4</sup> Headmistress Linda Thayer Guilford also taught her young students that they had a moral responsibility to the less fortunate around them.

And there were plenty of those in post-Civil War Cleveland. Its population had doubled during the war and continued to grow - 92,829 in 1870 and 160,146 in 1880 - , swelled by immigrants from Ireland, Germany, and soon from all over Europe, as well as by native-born men and women from small towns and villages who saw the possibilities in this bustling city on Lake Erie. Often lacking the skills for urban life or earning a living in the city, however, new arrivals often fell upon hard times. The Cleveland Infirmary (or poorhouse) sheltered – grudgingly - absolutely destitute families. Those who had at least a roof over their heads received an ungenerous supply of food and clothing at the backdoor of the Infirmary. In this almost complete absence of public assistance, private charities, all faith-based, stepped in to help their co-religionists.

Immigrants also turned a small homogeneous town into a prospering city with neighborhoods differentiated by class, ethnicity, or religion. But in the second half of the nineteenth century, before the widespread use of the streetcar and then the automobile allowed the well-to-do to flee the city, these neighborhoods often adjoined one another, so that the less fortunate were not hidden from their more fortunate neighbors.

The population growth that created visible poverty also created great wealth for some: men like Amasa Stone who arrived in Cleveland at the right time with the right skills. And like Stone, a handful became the philanthropists who created Cleveland’s enduring cultural, educational, social welfare, and medical institutions, as well as its recreation facilities. Some of the magnificent gifts of these late nineteenth-century industrialists and bankers still bear their names: Gordon Park, Wade Park Lagoon, Severance Hall, Rockefeller Park, the Mather Pavilion of University Hospitals of Cleveland, Case Western Reserve University.

All these big donors were men. It would have been almost impossible for a nineteenth-century woman to earn this kind of money. Women acquired wealth by inheriting it or marrying it.

Flora Stone Mather did both. Her marriage in 1881 to Euclid Avenue neighbor Samuel Mather was a love match that brought the couple four children – Samuel Livingstone Mather (born in 1882), Amasa Stone Mather (born in 1884), Constance Mather (born in 1889), and Philip Richard Mather (born

---

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Haddad, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Haddad, 20.

in 1894). The Mathers were a more distinguished family than the Stones, dating their American origins back to the famous Puritan ministers, Increase and Cotton Mather. Samuel's father, Samuel Livingston Mather, came to Cleveland in 1843 to take charge of the family's holdings, established by his own grandfather, Samuel Mather Jr., a stockholder in the Connecticut Land Company that settled the region.<sup>5</sup>

Although born into a wealthy family, Flora's husband had made his own fortune. In 1869, he had permanently injured his arm while working in his father's Michigan ore mines and did not attend Harvard as he had planned. Instead, Samuel continued to work for his father's company, Cleveland Iron Mining Company, and then founded Pickands Mather, a rival supplier of iron ore and transportation to the steel industry. When Samuel died in 1931, he was considered the richest man in Ohio although the Great Depression had diminished his wealth.<sup>6</sup>

Amasa Stone's death in 1883 left Flora an independently wealthy young woman. Stone committed suicide, depressed by his own failing health, his son's death, and the tragic collapse in 1876 of one of his railroad bridges, which killed 92 passengers and ruined Stone's reputation.<sup>7</sup> Flora and Clara each inherited \$600,000; their husbands, author-diplomat John Hay and Samuel Mather, \$100,000.<sup>8</sup>

Flora had enough money during her lifetime to make dozens of gifts to local charities ranging from the Visiting Nurse Association and the Humane Society to the YMCA, the Home for Aged Colored People, and Hathaway Brown School. When she died in 1909 of breast cancer, she left money to a wide range of educational institutions, including Lake Erie College and Tuskegee Institute, various Presbyterian missionary groups, Associated Charities, and the Association for the Blind.<sup>9</sup>

Her most compelling interests and her most generous gifts, however, were shaped by her private religious faith that found public expression in serving those in need.

The Stones belonged to First Presbyterian (Old Stone) Church, centrally located on Public Square, close to the Stones' Euclid Avenue home. The church, founded in 1827, boasted a socially and politically prominent congregation. Like most other wealthy Protestant churches, Old Stone sold or rented pews to its members. In 1855, when the Stones were members, almost half of its pews cost more than \$400 a year; eight cost \$1,000.<sup>10</sup> Obviously, this custom discouraged membership by the less wealthy.

Perhaps to compensate for the high price of its pews, the congregation also established a tradition of stewardship. Its members established the Western Seamen's Friend Society in 1830, one of

---

<sup>5</sup> Haddad, vii, viii, 38-39.

<sup>6</sup> David V. Van Tassel and John G. Grabowski, *Dictionary of Cleveland Biography* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1996), 309-10.

<sup>7</sup> C.H. Cramer *Case Western Reserve: A History of the University, 1826-1976* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company), 81-86.

<sup>8</sup> Haddad, 70-71.

<sup>9</sup> Haddad, 108-9.

<sup>10</sup> Michael J. McTighe, *A Measure of Success: Protestants and Public Culture in Antebellum Cleveland* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 29.

the city's first charities, which built a chapel and organized a Sunday school to promote the physical and spiritual needs of the men who worked on the canals and the lake.

Although the leadership – lay and clerical - of Protestant churches was male, women carried on most of the institutions' charitable activities. (They also did most of the fund-raising.) These allowed women a socially sanctioned entrance into the world beyond home and family. Led by Rebecca Rouse, the women of Old Stone founded the city's first orphanage, the Cleveland Protestant Orphan Asylum, in 1852. This is now Beechbrook, a residential treatment center for children. In 1863, the women established a home for "poor and friendless people" - later called the "Protestant Home for Friendless Strangers" - who were so new to town that they were ineligible for the city Infirmary.<sup>11</sup> Amasa Stone became the first in his family to donate money to this institution, which evolved into Lakeside Hospital and eventually University Hospitals.

Like other Protestant churches, Old Stone experienced waves of religious revivalism in the last decades of the nineteenth century that gained the institution new members and new enthusiasm. In 1866, for example, its pastor, Rev. William H. Goodrich, led a "powerful revival" with "marked indications of the presence of the Spirit" in the Young People's Meeting.<sup>12</sup> Flora, then an impressionable 14, may well have felt that Spirit.<sup>13</sup>

In 1867, Flora and Clara joined the newly formed Young Ladies Mission Society. The young women did their missionary work in the working-class neighborhood just to the north of the church where they sewed garments and raised funds for the mission church that became North Presbyterian, originally at E. 41<sup>st</sup> St. and Superior Ave.<sup>14</sup>

This missionary spirit also infused the temperance movement of the 1870s. Temperance was probably the most popular reform of the nineteenth century as American cities grew rapidly. Too much alcohol in a country village was one thing; too much in a congested urban neighborhood was another - obviously more harmful to persons and property. Drinking was also associated with immigrants, especially Irish and Germans, not always welcomed by native-born Clevelanders. To enthusiastic Protestants, conversion to temperance was the first step to finding salvation and true religion, a belief reinforced by the opposition to temperance by some Catholics.

Temperance had particular appeal to women since male abuse of alcohol harmed women and children. In spring 1874, "praying bands" of Cleveland women descended upon local saloons, pleading with saloon keepers and customers to forswear alcohol. Weeks later, the national Woman's Christian

---

<sup>11</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 17, 1863: 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 28, 1866:3.

<sup>13</sup> In October, 1879, the great evangelists Dwight L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey preached to full houses at Old Stone; one sermon was on "The Work and Power of the Holy Spirit." *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 9, 1879: 1; *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 10, 1879: 4.

<sup>14</sup> Jeannette Tuve, *Old Stone Church: In the Heart of the City Since 1820* (Virginia Beach, Virginia: Donning Company, 1994), 42.

Temperance Union (WCTU) was formed in Cleveland; it would become the largest woman's organization in the country.

The local branch of the WCTU founded several institutions intended to save men, women, and children from the evils of alcohol.<sup>15</sup> Two have survived: Rainey Institute and Friendly Inn, both neighborhood centers in inner-city Cleveland.

Temperance provided Flora with her first foray into public life as vice president (1874-1876), then president (1877-1881) of the Young Ladies Temperance League (YLTL). The young women were more decorous than the "praying bands" although equally pious. As president Flora led their formal meetings, held in various Protestant churches, which began with prayers and featured hymns, and Bible readings. Their group's stated goal: to stand "against the use of intoxicating liquors [and] to aid in creating an enlightened Christian public sentiment" on the subject. All members took the pledge of total abstinence.<sup>16</sup>

Like the WCTU, the young women believed that the salvation of the soul was closely connected to the salvation of the body, and like their elders, they established institutions for less fortunate women. The first, in 1875, "for friendless young women dependent upon their own exertions for support," a lodging house that provided "a refuge from temptation" while jobs and permanent housing were sought. "Nearly all" the young women were "either directly or indirectly, sufferers through the crime of intemperance."<sup>17</sup> The home sheltered only Protestants and only "the better class of young women ... seamstresses, housekeepers, clerks, nurses ..." Flora drew up the house rules, which included attending Protestant religious services.<sup>18</sup>

More inclusive and of more lasting importance were the league's institutions for children. The YLTL briefly took responsibility for a "charity kindergarten for "twenty one little waifs." Out of this project in 1880 grew a day nursery. Flora had visited such a nursery in New York City and encouraged the group to start "a similar enterprise" in Cleveland.<sup>19</sup> Here Flora developed personal connections with poor children and their mothers: "[I] had such a sweet time at the Nursery.... I sat by the fire rocking a cradle and singing to a tired little boy. Then the mothers came for their children and I had a little talk with each one."<sup>20</sup> The nursery took all children, regardless of their religious background.

In 1882, the Young Ladies Temperance League became the Young Ladies Branch of the Woman's Christian Association, whose sole purpose was to establish day nurseries for the children of working

---

<sup>15</sup> Marian J. Morton, "Temperance, Benevolence, and the City: The Cleveland Non-Partisan Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1874-1900," *Ohio History*, Vol. 91, Annual 1982: 58-73.

<sup>16</sup> Cleveland Day Nursery Association, Mss. 3667, container I, folder 14, Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS), Cleveland, Ohio. The temperance movement's ultimate success, the passage of the 18th Amendment in 1919, was opposed by Samuel Mather when in 1928, he joined the board of the Association against the Prohibition Amendment: Kathryn L. Makley, *Samuel Mather: First Citizen of Cleveland* (Minneapolis: Kathryn L. Makley, 2013), 46

<sup>17</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 27, 1876: 4.

<sup>18</sup> Mss. 3677, container 1, folder 14, WRHS.

<sup>19</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 18, 1880: 4.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Haddad, 31.

mothers. Flora served as the group's first president. She enlisted the financial support of her former Euclid Avenue neighbor, John D. Rockefeller.<sup>21</sup> In 1888, she herself donated the site of the nursery she named "Bethlehem" to connect it "with the childhood of Christ."<sup>22</sup> This was one of several day nurseries that the group eventually maintained; the others, however, were named for their benefactors like the Hanna and Wade families. A *Cleveland Plain Dealer* reporter painted this charming portrait of the Perkins day nursery: "cool, clean, airy rooms filled with bright-faced, happy children" who received meals and medical attention as well as lessons in good behavior; mothers paid five cents a day or whatever they could afford.<sup>23</sup>

In 1894, Flora's organization became the Cleveland Day Nursery and Kindergarten Association, which operated day nurseries and kindergartens all over the city and trained teachers for public kindergartens. As the Cleveland public school system established its own kindergartens, the association gradually closed theirs but continued to operate day nurseries until it was absorbed into the Center for Families and Children in 1969. Hanna Perkins Center for Child Development is descended from the association.

Although initially inspired by her pious desire to serve the less fortunate, Flora's next project moved her in the direction of changing the society in which they lived. In 1897 Flora founded and funded Goodrich House, the social settlement at E. 6<sup>th</sup> and St. Clair Avenue, around the corner from Old Stone and named for its pastor. Its "object," Flora wrote, "shall be to provide a center for such activities as are commonly associated with Christian Social Settlement work."<sup>24</sup> Although a separate institution, the settlement grew out of Old Stone's clubs and classes for neighborhood children. The first president of the settlement's board of trustees was the current pastor of Old Stone, Hiram C. Hayden. The settlement's first director, Starr Cadwallader, was a graduate of Union Theological Seminary.

Settlement houses often had denominational connections. Cleveland's first settlement, Hiram House, was an offshoot of Hiram College, a Disciples of Christ institution, and was directed by George Bellamy, an ordained minister. The Council Educational Alliance was initiated in 1899 by the National Council of Jewish Women; Merrick House, in 1919 in the Tremont neighborhood by the Catholic Christ Child Society.

The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* in June 1897 waxed ecstatic about Goodrich House, the gift of "Cleveland's most distinguished woman philanthropist, Mrs. Samuel Mather." The activities within the "handsome three-story building of brick with stone trimmings and imposing entrances" were "infused with the Christian spirit although no effort is made to prejudice its members in religious matters."<sup>25</sup>

Settlements sought to solve the pressing problems of urban poverty and social dislocation by easing the transition of immigrants into urban life. Settlements expanded upon the faith-based activities spawned by churches and the temperance movement with secular activities: lectures, services,

---

<sup>21</sup> Haddad, 75.

<sup>22</sup> Mss. 3667, container 1, folder 3, WRHS.

<sup>23</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 30, 1887: 2.

<sup>24</sup> Goodrich House, Mss.3505, container 5, folder 2, WRHS.

<sup>25</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 7, 1897: 6.

and classes for adults as well as for children. Goodrich House, for example, had a gymnasium, a bowling alley, public baths and a laundry, classes in choral singing, several clubs for boys ( the Garfield and Franklin clubs) and for girls (the Sunshine, Rosebud, and Little Women clubs).<sup>26</sup>

Settlement residents were usually single, middle-class, educated men and women who lived in the settlement in return for leading classes or other activities with its working class neighbors. Goodrich House's early residents included future Cleveland mayor and U.S. Secretary of War Newton D. Baker and reformer-author Frederic C. Howe. Howe later recalled: "Residents ... had good food and comfortable rooms; they enjoyed a certain distinction because of their good works."<sup>27</sup>

Settlements launched the careers of many Progressive reformers because what the residents learned first-hand about the difficult lives of the poor often encouraged them to challenge the political and economic status quo. Howe, like Baker, became an advocate of reform through the political system. Cadwallader also left Goodrich House for politics during the administration of reform mayor Tom L. Johnson.

By then married with four small children, Flora did not become a resident of Goodrich but was fully engaged in its activities from its beginnings to the end of her life. Its organizational meetings were held at her Euclid Avenue home. She wrote to well-known reformer Jacob Riis for suggestions for a director. He couldn't help her out, but when Goodrich House opened in April 1897, she invited Riis to its opening; he regretfully declined.<sup>28</sup> She served on the settlement's House Committee that oversaw its residents and on its executive committee. She provided also for the settlement's upkeep. Staff had to insist on sticking to a budget so that she would not simply pay all the bills herself.<sup>29</sup> As the downtown neighborhood commercialized, Flora participated in the discussion to sell the elaborate building in 1907 and to move farther east to E. 31<sup>st</sup> St. Flora's settlement, now located at E. 55<sup>th</sup> St. and St. Clair, has been renamed Goodrich-Gannett Neighborhood Center after Alice P. Gannett, the settlement's director from 1917 to 1947.

Responding to what she too had learned about the urban poor at Goodrich, as well as in her earlier temperance work, in April 1900, Flora urged the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce to "try to improve the conditions of labor." "Mrs. Samuel Mather Will Co-operate Very Substantially," exclaimed the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* on its front page, when Flora promised to pay the salary of someone to take charge of investigating "working people's conditions and surroundings in stores, shops, and factories."<sup>30</sup> Within weeks, however, she decided instead to form at Goodrich House a local chapter of the National Consumers League (CLO). Flora served on the local league's executive committee from its founding until 1907 when she was made an honorary vice-president.

The league's goal was to improve the working conditions of women and children: to limit the hours of work, to guarantee a minimum wage, and to ensure that factories, mills, and offices were safe

---

<sup>26</sup> Mather Family Papers, Mss. 3735, container 8, folder 7, WRHS.

<sup>27</sup> Frederic C. Howe, *Confessions of a Reformer* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1988), 76.

<sup>28</sup> Mather Family Papers, Mss. 3735, container 8, folder 7, WRHS.

<sup>29</sup> Mss. 3735, container 8, folder 1, WRHS.

<sup>30</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 18, 1900: 1.

and sanitary. In 1900, more than a third of Cleveland's female work force (10,600 women) were factory operatives; they worked in all industries but were concentrated in textiles, cigar factories, and laundries. A study in 1908 provided shocking details: women and girls in laundries got paid less than \$5 a week; work in candy factories was dangerous and filthy (for both workers and consumers); in garment factories, men did the skilled work and got paid twice what women did.<sup>31</sup>

Although the CLO had no connections with organized religion, its concern for women and children was one that Flora had shared for decades. In 1905, league president Marie Jenney Howe maintained that the local CLO grew out of Flora's "friendship" with Florence Kelley, the founder and first general secretary of the national organization.<sup>32</sup> Flora may have met Kelley when she was a resident at Chicago's famous settlement, Hull House, from 1891 to 1899, just as Flora was making her plans for Goodrich House. Kelley, a Socialist, was also an outspoken political activist and reformer. The CLO moved Flora even more decisively from philanthropy into reform politics.

League members used their considerable social status and economic power as middle-class consumers to apply pressure on employers to improve conditions in their shops and factories. For example, in 1901, Flora, with CLO president Belle Sherwin, asked retail store owners to close at noon on Saturday to give their workers an extra half-day off.<sup>33</sup> The league also tried to educate the public about wages and working conditions in factories and shops. Employers who met league standards got the league's "white label"; shoppers were urged to boycott those who did not. Sherwin reported much progress in 1905: "improvement in lunch and toilet rooms for employees, better sanitation in factories, shorter hours for clerks and, best of all, a cultivation of a 'shopping conscience.'" <sup>34</sup>

Department stores like William Taylor & Co. advertised that many of their goods carried the "white label" – meaning "clean, sanitary surroundings [for workers], the absence of child labor, the proper treatment of employees, the absence of sweat shop conditions."<sup>35</sup> But CLO members soon realized that voluntary cooperation of employers with the league "did not prove universally successful ... [and] recognized the need for establishing legal standards."<sup>36</sup> This realization took women like Sherwin and Howe into politics and the suffrage movement.

Flora died before the local suffrage movement was well underway, but in 1905, she ventured again into reform politics when she joined the local committee to work with the National Child Labor Committee. The goal of the committee, established in 1904 and headed by Owen Lovejoy, was to end child labor. Husband Samuel also sat on the committee, as did Rabbi Moses Gries and Belle Sherwin.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Marian J. Morton, *Women in Cleveland: An Illustrated History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana State University Press, 1995), 42-43.

<sup>32</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 7, 1905: 33.

<sup>33</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 11, 1901: 10.

<sup>34</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 19, 1905: 6.

<sup>35</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 27, 1904: 12.

<sup>36</sup> Consumers League of Ohio, Mss 4933, container 1, folder 26, WRHS.

<sup>37</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 13, 1905: 4.



In 1908, Flora joined Marie Jenney Howe and Mrs. Newton D. Baker and others to organize the Municipal School League. Its purpose was “to increase the interest of women in the school ballot ... [and] to maintain the representation of women on the school board.”<sup>38</sup> (Ohio women had gotten right to vote for and serve on local school boards in 1894.)

If Flora’s faith-inspired work for women and children led her into reform and political activism, her gifts that followed in Amasa Stone’s footsteps helped to transform the small men’s college that he had sponsored into a thriving university that educated men and women.

His gift of \$500,000 had persuaded Western Reserve College, founded in 1826, to move in 1882 from the village of Hudson to the city of Cleveland on properties along Euclid Avenue in what is now University Circle. These had been donated by other benefactors for both Western Reserve and Case School of Applied Science, which had been founded in 1881 by Leonard Case Jr., in downtown Cleveland. Western Reserve College was to be re-named Adelbert to honor Stone’s son. Stone stipulated that \$150,000 of this gift was to be spent on buildings and that the remainder would be a permanent endowment. It is not clear whether the gift was inspired by Stone’s grief at the loss of his only son or by his rivalry with Leonard Case Jr. or whether it was intended to atone for the tragic train wreck. In any case, the gift came with strings attached: the college’s new name and a new board of trustees chosen by Stone himself. After his death in 1883, the college received another \$100,000.<sup>39</sup>

Generous as Amasa had been, Flora and husband Samuel would ultimately donate to the college more than ten times that much.<sup>40</sup> When her father died, she and Samuel had been married only two years and still lived in Amasa’s home. (The couple built their summer home Shoreby in Bratenahl in 1890 and a grander home on Euclid Avenue in 1910, completed after Flora’s death.) Flora must have grieved deeply her father’s death and the contempt which many Clevelanders had for him – despite his wealth and social standing. Her gifts to the university – like his - may have been a way of clearing his name and recovering his reputation.

Her first gifts were to Adelbert College: an endowment in 1888 of \$50,000 and \$2,500 to the library fund, to which Samuel also contributed. In 1889, she endowed a chair in history. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* hailed the “MUNICIPAL GIFT,” but Flora, always modest, “treated the subject lightly and impatiently said the sum was so small she didn’t care to speak of it.”<sup>41</sup>

The endowed chair was named for Haydn, then both the college president and Flora’s pastor at Old Stone. Almost all private colleges had financial and other connections to religious denominations, and it was common for college presidents to be clergymen.

Haydn had ended coeducation at the college. Women had been admitted, beginning in the 1870s. Although their numbers were small, most were excellent students, and they had a champion in

---

<sup>38</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 5, 1908: 7.

<sup>39</sup> C.H. Cramer, *Case Western Reserve: A History of the University, 1826-1976* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1976), 78-86.

<sup>40</sup> Cramer, 85.

<sup>41</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 3, 1889: 8.

then-college president Carroll Cutler, whose daughter Susan was valedictorian of her class. But the women also enemies among the faculty and trustees, who blamed the college's low enrollment on its female students and feared that the college would become "over-feminized" if it continued to admit women. Cutler resigned, weary of the battle over coeducation. Haydn assumed the presidency in November 1887 and terminated the admission of women shortly afterwards. This decision generated local and national controversy over the virtues of educating women. Haydn responded by establishing a separate College for Women under the aegis of Western Reserve College in 1888.<sup>42</sup>

The first significant gifts to the new College for Women came from Flora's mother (\$5,000) and her brother-in-law, John Hay (\$3,000). The first academic building was the gift of Anna M. Harkness, who also donated Harkness Chapel to honor the memory of her daughter Florence. Flora donated \$75,000 for the first dormitory, named for Linda Thayer Guilford, and in 1891, she gave another \$75,000, most of which was to go into an endowment for the college. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* called this "A Princely Gift."<sup>43</sup> In 1901, she donated, (not very) anonymously, the funds for Haydn Hall, a classroom building. She also gave small gifts "from books to ... [and] boating permits ... making it possible for the young women of the college to enjoy healthful exercise by rowing on the pond in Wade Park."<sup>44</sup> She and Samuel in 1898 gave \$12,000 to the university library.<sup>45</sup>

Adelbert Stone had gone to Yale, but it apparently did not occur to his father that Clara or Flora should go to college. They might have attended Mount Holyoke, for example, where Guilford had gone, or nearby Oberlin College. Instead, Clara married John Hay when she was 24. Flora devoted the decade between her high school graduation and marriage to her temperance and day nursery work.

The College for Women gave Flora her long-delayed chance to go to college. Even though she was a wife, the mother of four young children, with a demanding social and civic life, she visited the college almost every day, getting to know the students and bringing gifts or visiting lecturers. She invited the graduating class to her home every spring.<sup>46</sup> And sometimes as a guest, sometimes as a hostess, she, and often Samuel, attended formal parties, dances, and receptions at the college. She also served on the college's Advisory Committee.

In 1907, she and Clara donated a chapel to Adelbert College, a memorial to their father's memory and a commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the college's move to Cleveland that he had engineered. Amasa Stone Chapel was completed in 1911, two years after Flora's death.

On January 21, 1909, students from both the College for Women and Adelbert College lined Euclid Avenue to pay tribute to Flora as her funeral procession passed the campus on its way to Lakeview Cemetery. Although during her lifetime, she did not permit the name change, in 1931, the College for Women became Flora Stone Mather College, acknowledging her gifts of time, energy, and

---

<sup>42</sup> Cramer, 94-95.

<sup>43</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 23, 1891:8.

<sup>44</sup> Cramer, 103.

<sup>45</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 20, 1898: 5.

<sup>46</sup> Cramer, 103.

money. (She had also rejected the suggestion that Hathaway Brown School, another beneficiary of her generosity, be named after her.<sup>47</sup>)

Amasa Stone had built a high school for his daughters, the Cleveland Academy, and a college named after his son Adelbert. Flora (and Samuel) not only gave generously to Adelbert College but helped to assure the survival of the controversial college for young women. Adelbert and Flora Stone Mather Colleges, perhaps the only coordinate colleges in the country named after siblings, were consolidated in 1971, along with Cleveland College. The three were renamed Western Reserve College in 1973 after the merger with Case Institute of Technology that produced Case Western Reserve University.<sup>48</sup> Flora's name lives on in the Flora Stone Mather Center for Women.

After her death, Samuel – who himself had missed out on college - continued her tradition of giving to the university. He and his children gave Flora Stone Mather Memorial Building in 1914, and in 1930, a \$500,000 addition to the building.<sup>49</sup> Samuel also donated \$400,000 to the university in 1923 and made gifts to various programs within the university.<sup>50</sup>

Like her father, Flora gave generously to Lakeside Hospital, originally the Protestant Home for Friendless Strangers, during her life and at her death.<sup>51</sup> Samuel was also a major benefactor of the hospital, instrumental in its move to University Circle and serving as president and chairman of its board of trustees from 1899 to 1931. Mather Pavilion honors his memory.<sup>52</sup>

Other women have also given generously to Cleveland. Among them are Frances Payne Bolton and Elizabeth Severance Allen Prentiss. Like Flora, both women inherited and married money, and both became important public figures.

Prentiss (1865-1944) was the daughter of Louis H. Severance. Her first husband, Dr. Dudley P. Allen, was on the faculty of the Western Reserve University Medical School; he died in 1915. She married industrialist Francis F. Prentiss in 1917. She donated the Allen Memorial Medical Library to Case Western Reserve University, made significant gifts to the Cleveland Museum of Art, and established the Elizabeth Severance Prentiss Foundation to promote medical research. She also became the first woman to receive the Chamber of Commerce distinguished service medal in 1928.<sup>53</sup>

Bolton (1885-1977) was the daughter of banker-industrialist Charles W. Payne. Volunteer work with the Visiting Nurse Association in New York City inspired her interest in professional nursing, and she funded a school of nursing at Western Reserve University in 1923. This was named the Frances P. Bolton

---

<sup>47</sup> Haddad, 87.

<sup>48</sup> Richard E. Baznik, *Beyond the Fence: A Social History of Case Western Reserve University* (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University, 2014), 355.

<sup>49</sup> Haddad, 109.

<sup>50</sup> Baznik, 86.

<sup>51</sup> Haddad, 79-80, 108.

<sup>52</sup> David D. Van Tassel and John J. Grabowski, *The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 1034.

<sup>53</sup> Van Tassel and Grabowski, *Dictionary of Cleveland Biography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 359.

School of Nursing in 1935. In 1939, she finished the unexpired term in the U.S. House of Representatives of her late husband Chester Castle Bolton and held that office until 1968. <sup>54</sup>

Yet Flora stands out because of the breadth and depth of her commitment to the city and its people. She would be thrilled that her husband was named “first citizen”<sup>55</sup> for his role as founder and funder of Cleveland’s Community Chest, the forerunner of United Appeal, as well as his other gifts and his leadership of many institutions. She would probably be embarrassed that she and Samuel were named the second most influential people in the city’s history in 2010. <sup>56</sup>

Always modest, she acknowledged her debts to her heavenly and earthly fathers, but ultimately Flora became her own woman.

---

<sup>54</sup> Van Tassel and Grabowski, *Dictionary*, 53.

<sup>55</sup> Makley, 25.

<sup>56</sup> *Plain Dealer*, December 26, 2010: H2.