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DENISON HOUSE: WOMEN'S USE OF SPACE IN
THE BOSTON SETTLEMENT

A Thesis Presented

by

HEATHER M. CAPITANIO

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies,
University of Massachusetts Boston,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2010

Historical Archaeology Program

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DENISON HOUSE: WOMEN'S USE OF SPACE IN
THE BOSTON SETTLEMENT

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HEATHER M. CAPITANIO

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ABSTRACT

DENISON HOUSE: WOMEN'S USE OF SPACE IN THE BOSTON SETTLEMENT

August 2010

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Established in 1892, Denison House Settlement in Boston, Massachusetts was the third college settlement of its kind in the United States. Like other settlement houses of the time, Denison House was established as a base for community refurbishment and statistical study. Located at 93 Tyler Street in the rundown South Cove area of Boston, it offered its lower class “neighbors” a variety of activities and facilities within its perimeters. Judging only from late nineteenth-century attitudes and mores, one would assume that the women who worked and lived at Denison House would have been turned away by the poor residents of this area and shunned by their fellow

middle and upper middle-class citizens. This paper explores how the settlement workers, mostly middle to upper-middle class, college-educated women, fashioned a space to help their lower class “neighbors” and, at the same time, maintained connections with their middle- and upper-class peers and benefactors. In particular, it focuses on the women’s use of the space they acquired, domestic versus public spaces, as well as how they chose to decorate their space, in an attempt to place the settlement within its late nineteenth-century historical context. With this thesis, I hope to answer Suzanne Spencer-Woods’ call for more archaeological research on domestic reform. We must come to understand how women actively shaped material culture. In this analysis, I hope to show how the Denison House residents were active participants in creating a space that allowed them to transcend gender roles and class ideologies.

DEDICATION

To my best friend and partner, Marcie, for all of her support throughout the years. I would not be the person I am today without her.

To my grandmother, who passed on her love of history to me.

To my parents and sister, for their love and support.

And, to my brother, whose memory keeps me going until we meet again someday.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Established in 1892, Denison House Settlement was the third college settlement of its kind in the United States. The Settlement Movement, beginning with the establishment of Toynbee Hall in England in 1884, quickly moved across the Atlantic and found its way into many of the major cities in the United States. Most American settlement workers were from the first generation of college-educated women who shared the desire to “break out of their prescribed roles” and find ways to give back (Carson 1990: 27). They had found that visiting charities did not provide a means to break down class barriers or provide direct interaction between rich and poor (Carson 1990). With this in mind, settlement house workers took up residence in the most deprived areas of major cities across the country.

Located at 93 Tyler Street in Boston, Denison House was established in the Old South Cove district of Boston as a base for community refurbishment. The neighborhood around Denison House in the 1890s at first consisted mostly of Irish immigrants, but changed to include more of the newly arrived Jews, Italians, Syrians, Chinese, and Greeks, as the second and third generation Irish found their way into the middle class. By 1910 few Irish remained, and there were still few Chinese immigrants in this area of Boston that would eventually become Chinatown. Judging only from late nineteenth-

century attitudes and mores, one would assume that the women of the settlement would have been turned away by the poor residents of this area and shunned by their fellow middle- and upper middle-class citizens. The “dirty” and “immoral” slums were not a place for “proper” nineteenth-century woman (Deutsch 2000).

This thesis explores how these middle-class women fashioned a space to help their lower-class “neighbors” and at the same time refrained from alienating themselves from their middle- and upper-class peers. It pays particularly close attention to the women’s use of the space they acquired, as well as how they chose to decorate their space in an attempt to place the settlement within the late nineteenth-century framework out from which it evolved. With industrialization, the nineteenth century witnessed the development of distinct classes and their separation into different geographic areas within the city. Gender separation also took place as middle-class women became largely assigned roles within the home and middle-class men became associated with more public roles outside the home. Because of this, particular attention is paid to class attitudes and gender roles.

Objectives and justification of research

Since space is multi-dimensional, this thesis looks at how the women of Denison House fashioned their space from many sides. The first is setting Denison House in a cultural-historical space as it related to the settlement movement as a whole and then more specifically as its founding related to the needs of the neighborhood. Why create a settlement? Why not enter into the neighborhoods for work during the day and return to

their homes in the more “respectable” parts of town? And, why did the women choose the Old South Cove district as a base for their work?

From cultural-historical space, it will be an easy transition into physical space. This is where a shift will take place from looking at space as conceived by the women to looking at actual space use. How did the women utilize the space they chose for themselves? Were living areas separated from activity areas? Were certain areas of the house closed to the public, while others involved a constant flow of people? How was their space similar or different from other middle-class homes in the city and surrounding suburbs? How did the women try to create spaces that were similar to what they were accustomed to? What were they willing to live without or give up in order to live in Denison House? Were there any similarities between the space the women created and those their neighbors occupied in the tenements?

The women’s use of the physical space they chose is critical to my study. Denison House residents were often at odds with their neighbors, who disagreed with the workers’ definitions of appropriate behavior and lifestyles (Deutsch 2000: 16). First seen as outsiders imposing their beliefs about child raising and healthy living on their neighbors, the residents had to be very careful in controlling how they were seen by their neighbors (Deutsch 2000). A close look at their use of physical space allows us to see how they were able to be successful in their work without becoming estranged from their neighbors and their peers.

In his book, *The Production of Space*, French sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1974) provides a framework for relating studies of space to the social and economic situation

that had risen in industrial Boston. Lefebvre argues that “every society in history had shaped a distinctive social space that meets its intertwined requirements for economic production and social reproduction” (Hayden 1995: 19). By studying the social space of the city, one is also studying the reproduction of social relations and by studying the space of a home, one is also studying the reproduction of the labor force.

As Lefebvre suggests, the production of space is essential to the inner workings of any society. In her book, *The Power of Place*, Dolores Hayden (1995: 19) offers examples of what Lefebvre means:

A small factory on a stream near a waterfall, with a boarding house and a couple of workers’ cottages, announces New England in the earlier stages of textile production; a vast aerospace complex next to a suburban tract of ten thousand identical houses exemplifies defense industries and their work force one hundred and fifty years later.

Likewise a street that consists of buildings broken up into tenement apartments, with or without storefronts on the street level, can be attributed to the economic need of the residents as the space was produced. It is not hard to see the social, political, and economic implications for those who lived in these urban “slums.” The overcrowded tenement houses were produced out of the economic necessity of the working-class, mostly immigrant population which called the tenements home.

The women first had to overcome all common preconceptions about race, class, and gender they related to being a white, middle-class, female Bostonian in the 1890s before creating their space within the poor, immigrant South Cove neighborhood. By looking at their motivations as well as how they created a “proper” domestic space in which they could co-exist with the poor and not be alienated by their peers, this study

paints a clearer picture of how these women lived.

With a vast and varied collection of primary sources available, it is surprising that so little scholarship has been written about Denison House. Historian Sarah Deutsch has placed Denison House residents in the wider context of other late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Boston women who began to cross societal boundaries from the private to the public sphere. In her book, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston*, Deutsch (2000: 6) writes, “In a city neither designed for nor controlled by women, women had to reimagine or reconceive the city before they could create female-controlled public and semipublic spaces.”

In the context of historical archaeology, this study answers Suzanne Spencer-Wood’s call for an archaeology of domestic reform. As a leading proponent of feminist archaeology, Spencer-Wood believes that “It is important to archaeologically research domestic reform because it was instrumental in transforming gender ideologies, identities, roles, relationships, and women’s status over the nineteenth and into the twentieth century” (Spencer-Wood 1991: 275). Such studies correct “ungendered constructions of the past,” examine “stereotypical construction of gender,” and critique “construction of historic women as passive victims of male-controlled cultural processes” (Spencer-Wood 1994: 176). A feminist materialist approach, which Spencer-Wood advocates, shows how women actively shape material culture, which in turn shapes cultural behavior (Spencer-Wood 1994: 181). Along these lines this study hopes to show how Denison House residents were active participants in creating a space that allowed

them to transcend gender roles and class identities.

Spencer-Woods' research on women in the reform period has consisted mainly of a systematic survey of 120 reform sites in Boston (Spencer-Wood 1994: 183). She was principally concerned with identifying the sites and "assessing their historic importance in the urban built environment and landscape, and assessing their present condition" (Spencer-Wood 1994: 183). She called for site level-analysis, but at the same time realized that it would be almost impossible to study domestic reform sites by their physical remains alone. Urban institutions, especially those concerned with health and sanitation, leave little behind for study. My study is a way around the lack of onsite physical remains in an urban context. Refining Spencer-Wood's work to the site level, I hope to show how Denison House was conceived and created by women within the working-class, immigrant South Cove neighborhood.

As Deutsch and Spencer-Woods would attest, any study of the reform movement cannot simply be looked at in the context of gender. It must also consist of a systematic study of class ideologies and ethnicity, as well as a look at what the original intentions of the settlement workers were. As such, this study not only looks at how gender prohibited and permitted the Denison House residents' actions, but also at how class consciousness and ethnicity played a role in the residents' decisions about site set-up and use of space. It also looks at how class consciousness and ethnicity influenced the workers attitudes toward the immigrants in the neighborhood in which they chose to live.

Although not in the area of American domestic reform, archaeologists continually

attempt to analyze space, especially as it pertains to domestic areas. Susan Kent proposed that archaeologists would do well to take an “interdisciplinary view of the relationship between use of space and domestic built environments” (Kent 1990: 1). Answering this call, Donald Sanders used behavior-environmental studies in his archaeological research of ancient architecture. He concluded that such studies verify “that the built environment can reinforce or inhibit human behavioral responses and expectations, and that these responses can be explicitly defined in terms” which are “certainly observable in anthropological contexts” (Sanders 1990: 47). As Amos Rapoport (1990: 10) would attest, it is feasible to relate built form to sex roles and status hierarchies.

More recent anthropological studies of domestic space can be found in *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space* (Cieraad 2006), an edited volume which looks at varying aspects of home environment in the West. Not surprisingly, each chapter focuses on the relationship between public and domestic space, as well as the home’s separate spatial identity. In his chapter in this volume, Tim Putnam (2006: 144) attests that, “the home thus organizes not only relations of family, gender, and generation, but also relations of class; it is a principal product of human endeavor. The home is a prime unexcavated site for an archaeology of sociability.”

Gender, class, and race can also be negotiated in larger spatial contexts. According to James A. Delle (2000: 188), “historical archaeological interpretation should take into account that landscapes and buildings, both past and present, help to shape and reinforce the social construction of gender relations.” On this premise, Delle looked at

how “gender relations were negotiated spatially” on coffee plantations in Jamaica (2000: 197). Likewise social characteristics can be examined at a level as small as the household or as large as the city, both of which are important to studying gender, class, and ethnicity at Denison House.

According to J.A. King (2006), it is important for household archaeologists to take a contextual approach. Material and documentary sources, taken together, “provide a basis from which to investigate the household as an assemblage of social actors, capable of making decisions or choices that may be socially structured but that nonetheless are key to understanding the forms households take and how those forms change” (King 2006: 305). Perhaps the most important strength of household archaeology is its practice of switching between the individual lives of those who occupied the space and the wider social contexts, a practice that I strived to follow in my study of Denison House.

Although the women did not build Denison House, they did choose their location within the city, as well as how to set up the settlement and decorate and make use of the built environment they inhabited. But the space may have also confined them. After all, architecture can “effect behavior, guide it, and constrain it” all at once (Rapoport 1990: 11). Likewise the worker’s attitudes toward the neighborhood would have had an effect on their behavior.

Method

The research for this thesis began with an extensive investigation of primary and secondary sources. This included, but was not limited to, sources relating to

industrialization, Boston social history, nineteenth-century immigration, and changes in Boston topography. Each of the sources was used to set the stage for this study. I also read autobiographies, first-hand contemporary accounts, and histories written about the Settlement Movement. Once I had developed a solid knowledge of the changing demographics and social conditions which led to the need for settlement houses, I turned my attention to looking at what made women more likely than men to choose settlement work. This involved looking at the changing role of education for women in the mid-nineteenth century. As women crossed into the traditionally male sphere of higher education, they also began to take on more noticeable roles in the traditionally male public sphere. There has been much literature written about traditional male and female spheres, the female sphere being the home.

My primary sources consisted mostly of the Denison House papers, housed at Radcliffe's Schlesinger Library. The Denison House residents were very proficient at documenting their work and endeavors. In 1892, the year of its inception, the residents and day workers kept a communal diary in which they documented everything from conversations with each other and their parish priest to interactions and conversations with their neighbors. This diary is a key source for learning about the workers' attitudes towards the neighbors they hoped to serve, but gives very little information about the neighbors' attitudes towards the workers. Beginning in 1893, a more business-like daybook was kept with less room for personal thoughts and feelings, but it still attests to the philosophy of these women. Each of these daybooks documents the various classes, activities, and lectures, as well as attendance records for the programming the women

implemented. The women also kept scrapbooks with pictures and brochures that document their time on Tyler Street that are now part of the archival holdings at Radcliffe College. Using daybooks, diaries, and photographs, I looked at how the women chose to make use of and decorate the space they had acquired. The wallpaper, furniture, and art on the wall were no doubt strategically placed by the residents to present a middle-class presence and a message about the proper way to live to their poor immigrant neighbors, as well as their middle-class peers.

In order to make sense of the women's decisions about room use and setup, I compared what I have found to literature that documents contemporary attitudes. *Ladies Home Journal* and other writings on domesticity were very popular in the nineteenth century and gave me a point of comparison to see how these women were fashioning a space that would be acceptable to other middle- and upper-class Bostonians. Comparing the structure and conditions of Denison House to the structures and conditions of the neighboring homes was also important to grasp the cultural and economic differences that the women maintained, even when entering these "foreign" spaces; since these differences could have been a source of tension between the workers and their neighbors. As is often the case, the poor did not have the resources and often lacked the education to document their own lives. This was no different in the tenements of Boston's South Cove and South End, and I was forced to rely on the reports of settlement workers and government officials.

CHAPTER 2

THE PRICE OF INDUSTRIALIZATION

“Having solemnly resolved that all man are created equal and have certain inalienable rights, among them life liberty and the pursuit of happiness, we shut our eyes and waited for the formula to work. It was as if a man with a cold should take the doctor’s prescription to bed with him, expecting it to cure him” (Jacob Riis 1902).

The nineteenth century was a period of transition for America. The United States began the century as a mostly agrarian society and ended it as a highly industrialized society. Beginning in the middle of the century, it became apparent that the process of industrialization that was taking place in American cities would have an immense impact on the topography of those cities, especially those in the Northeast and Midwest. To these cities, industrialization meant overcrowded housing, unsanitary living conditions, uncertain employment, inadequate wages, and an increasing social segregation.

During the late nineteenth century, the populations of the United States Northeastern and Midwestern cities, especially Boston, New York, and Chicago, grew at alarming rates. Although some rural Americans looked to the city for the life that they could not find on their farms, the bulk of those that immigrated to the city were from Europe. Beginning in the 1840s with the Germans and the Irish, and closely followed by the Italians, the Armenians, the Polish, the Hungarians, and the Russians, among others, millions immigrated. Between 1860 and 1900, fourteen million immigrants entered the

country, with another nine million entering from 1900 to 1910 (Trattner 1999). As one *New York Times* journalist wrote, “New York has become the ‘almshouse of the poor of all nations” (*New York Times* July 2, 1881: 8). This same newspaper article estimated that the tenement house and settlement populations numbered at least a half million, a number that continued to increase with each passing year. Chicago, an 1830 military outpost and trading station containing sixty inhabitants, evolved into a city of 1,750,000 by 1900 (Embree 1900). A modest city of 70,000 in 1830, Boston’s population mushroomed to include 1,155,231 souls at the turn of the twentieth century (Gardner and Haines 2006).

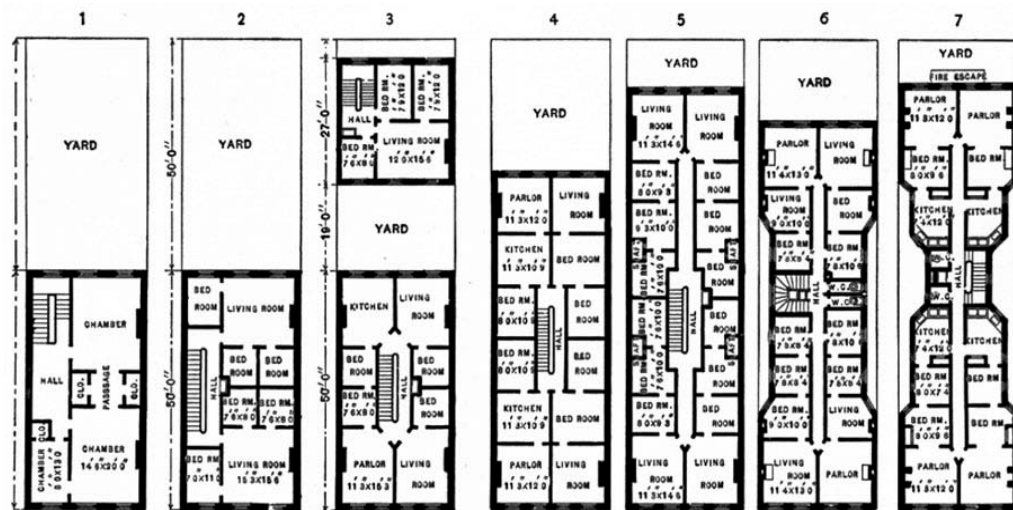
America was the land of opportunity for many of Europe’s poor and most of these immigrants flocked to the cities in hopes of finding work. Often illiterate, from an agrarian background, and with little knowledge of English, most immigrants found their only opportunities were in employment as unskilled laborers (Clinton 2000). It was unlikely that an unskilled immigrant worker would ever leave those ranks. And although having a foreign-born father was a distinct handicap, second generation Americans had a more favorable time in the job world than first generation immigrants. However both were at a disadvantage compared to their Yankee rival who continued to hold the higher positions in the labor force (Therstrom 1999). Historian Sam Warner (1962) theorized that it typically took an unskilled immigrant family two or three generations to break into the middle class. On an individual level, those who began in the higher, professional occupations almost never found themselves in unskilled jobs. However, those at the lower ranks could move up a few rungs on the ladder, but it was very unlikely for them to move into the upper, white-collar stratum. As historian Stephan Therstrom (1999: 73)

concluded, "...the common move was not from rags to riches, but from rags to respectability, and there was much less complementary movement from respectability back to rags." In short, the common experience was that where one entered the labor force was where one would stay.

The great influx of poor European immigrants to the major cities in the Northeast and Midwest became more than the cities could handle respectively. Ethnic neighborhoods quickly became overcrowded and conditions within the tenement houses were deplorable at best. As early as 1871, the *New York Times* began to run articles that attested to the dreadful conditions that would continue to deteriorate through much of the beginning decades of the twentieth century. By 1900 a contemporary of New York City saw the housing question as the "most fundamental of social problems related to the city" (Gould 1900: 393). Robert Woods, Head Resident of the South End Settlement House in Boston, noted that in the architecture of the tenement districts of the South End he could still see what the area once was (Woods 1898). Just a few years before, the area had been an up-and-coming residential area for the elite and middle class, but the sudden influx of immigrants had not allowed that vision to come to fruition. Instead, the South End suffered from overcrowding and deterioration.

When first built, the cheap rent of tenement house apartments was a welcomed change for urban immigrant poor. However this quickly changed in the 1850s when large tenement rooms began to be divided into increasingly smaller spaces. Many of the new rooms were built without any regard to ventilation and light. These center dark rooms had lower rent in proportion to the outer rooms and became very crowded. The illustration

below (fig. 1) shows the evolution of the tenement house in New York City, with the disappearance of the yard and the continued quartering off of rooms. In *The Battle with the Slum*, Jacob Riis (1902: 11) observed that “space became scarce and dear, and when there was no longer room to build in rows where the poor lived, they put the houses on top of one another.” It was estimated that in 1900, as many as three-fourths of New York’s population lived in tenement housing, justly referred to as “cubby-holes” by Riis (1902). At least 120,000 inhabitants were believed to crowd into 30,000 of the city’s tenement apartments (Riis 1902). Stories were also added to buildings; in Boston buildings that were once three stories were altered to become four to six stories in height (Woods 1898).



1. Old Knickerbocker dwelling.
2. The same made over into a tenement.
3. The rear tenement caves.
4. Packing-box tenement built for revenue only.
5. The limit; the air shaft—first concession to tenant.
6. The double-decker, where the civic conscience began to stir in 1879.
7. Evolution of double-decker up to date.

FIGURE 1. The evolution of a New York tenement (Riis 1890: 105)

The increasing number of apartments and tenants unfortunately did not lead to an increase in amenities. During his time in the slums of Boston's South End, Robert Woods observed as many as fifteen to thirty people using one old and insufficient water closet. That coupled with insufficient air and light and poor ventilation allowed germs to flourish. Tenement areas also offered inadequate places to dry clothing and its residents often had no money to buy a change of underclothing (Woods 1896). At this time public garbage removal was also unheard of, leading to dirty alleyways and streets. All this and more added to the unhealthy and unsavory conditions of the slums.

High rents and low wages often caused families to take in lodgers to help pay their rents. Lodgers often shared the same living and sleeping areas as the family they rented from. Writing about her time at Boston's South End House, resident Esther Barrows (1992: 156) spoke of a young girl who told the residents that the man who sleeps in her bed with her and her sister was going to give her a doll for Christmas. When asked who the man was, the girl replied, "I don't know his name, but he is one of our lodgers" In an 1849 report of the Boston Committee of Internal Health (1849: 13), an Irish neighborhood around Broad Street was described as thus:

This whole district is a perfect hive of human beings, without comforts and mostly without common necessities; in many cases, huddles together like brutes, without regard to sex, or age, or sense of decency; grown men and women sleeping together in the same apartment, and sometimes wife and husband, brothers and sisters, in the same bed. Under such circumstances, self-respect, forethought, all high and noble virtues soon die out, and sullen indifferences and despair, or disorder, intemperance and utter degradation reign supreme.

These crowded conditions offered very little privacy for those forced to live five or six to

a room. A whole family and boarders would eat, sleep, and spend their idle hours in one room (Duis 1983). Barrows (1929: 155) remembered a time when a little girl knocked on the front door of the settlement at 2 a.m. The resident who answered told her to go home and get some sleep and the little girl's reply was, "I've been to bed. It ain't my turn no more." Having a bed of one's own was a rare occurrence in the tenement districts.

Writing in 1902, Jacob Riis, a well-known journalist and social commentator of his time, did not have a high opinion of the landlords who allowed their tenants to live in squalor. In *The Battle with the Slums*, Riis points out that the profit of slum landlords was always the highest. According to him, this was because "he spends nothing for repairs and lays the blame on the tenants" (Riis 1902: 90). Riis furthers his strong convictions against the landlords by writing:

No doubt the Roman landlord, like his New York brother of a later day, when called to account, 'urged the filthy habits of his tenants as an excuse for the condition of the property.' It has been the landlord's plea in every age. 'They utterly forgot,' observes the sanitation who was set to clean up, 'that it was the tolerance of those habits which was the real evil, and that for this they themselves were alone responsible' (Riis 1902: 13).

Esther Barrows (1929) observed that landlords were in the habit of only painting and repairing the apartment for new tenants, but would do nothing for those who stayed. This would often cause families to move frequently within the same block as their original home.

When the original buildings still could not hold the growing population, two-story

wooden houses were built in gardens, yard,

and other free patches of land (Riis 1902:

9). The photograph (fig. 2) to the left was

taken in a New York neighborhood and

shows the wooden houses that were built to

sustain the growing population. Stories

were added to these buildings and it was not



FIGURE 2. Rooftops of New York tenements (Riis 1890: 145)

uncommon for ten families to live in a

space that should have only

accommodated two (Riis 1902: 10). Robert Woods (1898) noted the same trend of adding

additional structures in Boston's South End, where residences that were once set back

from the street, with ample air and sunlight, became blocked on all sides by more

dwelling.

Overcrowded conditions, dark middle rooms, and lack of running water plagued the poor of the major cities. E.R.L. Gould described one New York block as being:

made up of 89 tenement houses, containing 605 different apartments, inhabited by 2,781 people, of whom 466 are children under five years of age. There is not a bath in the entire block, and only 40 apartments are supplied with hot water. Water-closets are used in common. There are 441 dark rooms, having no ventilation to the outer air, and no light or air except that derived from outer rooms. 635 rooms get their sole light and air from dark, narrow shafts (Gould 1900: 382).

Blocks in such disarray were not uncommon throughout the city and the passage above is

typical of the conditions in which some of Boston's urban poor found themselves living.

The New York City Tenement House Commission even called the tenements "infant slaughter houses" because one in five babies born in them did not survive (Riis 1902: 37).

The residents of Hull House saw the same pattern in the tenements of Chicago. In a 1885 study they noted:

The filthy and rotten tenements, the dingy courts and tumble-down sheds, the foul stables and dilapidated outhouses, the broken sewer-pipes, the piles of garbage fairly alive with diseased odors, and the number of children filling every nook, working and playing in every room, eating and sleeping in every window-sill, pouring in and out of every door, seeming literally to pave every scrap of 'yard' (Residents of Hull House 1895: 5).

Documenting her first twenty years at Hull House, Jane Addams wrote about what she saw on some of her visits to her poorer neighbors. She wrote that she was appalled to see

that a group of Greeks should be permitted to slaughter sheep in the basement, that Italian women should be allowed to sort over rags collected from the city dumps, not only within the city limits but in court swarming with little children, that immigrant bakers should continue unmolested to bake bread for their neighbors in unspeakable filthy spaces under the pavement (Addams 1910: 193).

That these unsanitary and crowded conditions would lead to the spread of disease is not surprising. According to Addams, one resident of Hull House found that although the ward surrounding Hull House only had one thirty-sixth of the city's population, it registered one-sixth of the total number of deaths that resulted in a typhoid fever epidemic in the summer of 1902 (Addams 1910:194).

The prevalence of kitchen barrooms and saloons in the tenement districts was also alarming. The saloon was often the cleanest place in the neighborhood, offering food,

public toilets, and warmth, all comforts that were hard to come by for the working class in the late nineteenth century. As Boston settlement worker Esther Barrows (1929: 122), wrote, “Bread and cheese and toilet privileges were ‘free with a glass of beer,’ and many a teamster stopped during the day.” Those in the slums often saw liquor “as the only pure and wholesome drink available” (Duis 1983: 95). Water from the common tap was not very sanitary and milk often spoiled from the farm to the table and was delivered in unclean and non-refrigerated wagons. Beer was thought to have a high nutritional value, not spoil like milk, and be cleaner than water. Even when it was not the family’s drink of choice, already inadequate paychecks could be squandered on alcohol on the husband’s way home. Saloons were seen as an evil that kept men away from their families, made them less productive and caused them to lose their jobs. Likewise kitchen barrooms, usually run by women to supplement the family income, brought strangers into the tenements (Duis 1983; Rosenweig 1983).

Despite the evils that became evident with increased industrialization, factory owners continued to invest in more and more endeavors. In 1860 \$1 billion was invested in the U.S. in manufacturing plants with an annual manufactured product totaling \$1.8 billion with 1.3 million workers employed. In 1900 the workforce had jumped to 5.5 million workers with \$12 billion in capital invested to produce a \$11 billion in products (Trattner 1999). For the most part, the conditions of the urban poor did not concern the industrial capitalists who believed in the principle of laissez-faire economics.

The native population that for the most part was able to escape poverty came to believe that poverty was an individual moral matter. Poverty came to be seen as the result

of willful indolence and vice (Lloyd 1981; Trattner 1999). With the growth of industry, “the old Puritan ethic which stressed morality, hard work, and the common welfare was supplemented by the ethic of laissez-faire economics, which emphasized individualism, success, and competition” (Kessler-Harris 1982: 49). This view was strengthened by the teachings of Herbert Spencer who preached Social Darwinism. Social Darwinism was a cross between Darwin’s evolutionary doctrine of “survival of the fittest” and Adam Smith’s laissez-faire economics. Taken to the extreme, this meant that there was no place for regulation of industry, government protection for competition, and public support and assistance for the poor. Helping the poor in their struggle for existence would allow them to multiply and lead to a weakening of the species (Trattner 1999). Although elite and middle-class Americans, for the most part, believed this to varying degrees, Jane Addams (1899) did point out that Americans still did not like to acknowledge that they were divided into “two nations,” or classes. By this time, those in the working class had become segregated into the tenements of the urban slums, where they were out of view of the urban elite and middle class.

As the tenement neighborhoods grew in size and population, native aversion to immigrants also increased. As Sam Warner points out, natives felt that with “their wrongheaded religions, and their inappropriate culture, the new immigrants were the source of all difficulties – unsanitary, overcrowded housing, low wages, shoddy work, vulgar entertainment, ignorance, promiscuity, unruly children, lawlessness, and political corruption” (quoted in Kennedy 1991: 75). The slum areas were off-limits to “respectable” citizens unless they wanted to risk their morality.

Boston: from port city to bustling metropolis

After playing a lead role in the American Revolution in the late eighteenth century, Boston remained small in population and size. Independence had extinguished Boston's free trade with England. And, with the exceptions of a couple of triangular trade enterprises that began during the 1790s, Boston was losing ground against the country's other port cities – New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New Orleans (Handlin 1969).

Throughout this period that lasted from the Revolution until the 1830s, Boston was never more than a middle-man and did not produce any commodities of its own to trade. In 1790, thanks to Captain Robert Gray of the *Columbia*, Boston merchants began to participate in a triangular trade which brought furs from Oregon to Canton. Another trade developed around the same time in which Bostonians traded West Indian sugar for linens and iron in Russia. The trade was successful, however, the commodities were found in off-site ports that were as accessible to others as they were to Boston. But, as Handlin (1969: 5) attests, “A staple product for export, or a wide New England market for imports, alone could firmly ground the roots of trade in Boston's economic life; and both depended on the back country.” Each of the other great Eastern ports, Baltimore, New York, and Philadelphia, had canals and/or railroads to carry in the commodities for trade, both of which Boston lacked. In 1830, Boston was still a port city of 61,000 people on only one thousand acres of land (Kennedy 1992).

As late as 1845, Boston remained a small town of artisans, craftsmen, small traders, and merchant princes. Merchants continued to prosper, but only on what Handlin (1969: 11) calls their “enterprise, intelligence, and frugality” as they used the city as their

base for their activities. At this time, Boston also remained a homogenous city. Those who chose to settle in Boston were from relatively the same ethnic and religious backgrounds as the population already established in the city. They came largely from Britain, Canada, and rural New England in search of opportunities that could not be found on the rural farms whence most had moved (Warner 1962). It is safe to say that the Bostonians of 1845 could still be recognized as the descendants of 1790 (Handlin 1969).

Boston's homogeneous social structure and economy made it unwelcoming to immigrants in the 1840s. Built on a peninsula, land was in short supply. There were very few industries in Boston proper, as Lowell and Lawrence had become the place for factory investment, so unskilled labor jobs were limited. And the Protestant background of most Bostonians made Boston an unwelcoming place for Catholic immigrants (Handlin 1969).

However by the 1850s, Boston would become home to thousands of immigrants. In 1840, only 3,936 immigrants settled in Boston. In 1845 a potato famine devastated Ireland and lasted for five years. Irish landlords found that it was more economically profitable to turn their land into pasture and evicted their tenants. The evicted wanted to escape Irish and English rule as quickly as possible, so the destination mattered little. As Handlin (1969: 53) writes, "Only among the Irish did the motives and circumstances of emigration necessitate settlement under the unfavorable conditions dictated by Boston's economic and social structure." Sometimes with just enough money in their pockets for the boat fare, the Irish set sail for Boston. In 1849 alone, Boston became home to 28,917 immigrants, most of whom were Irish. In 1850 35,000 Irish lived in Boston, and by 1855

50,000 called Boston home (Warner 1962; Handlin 1969).

With few marketable skills, Boston's Irish immigrants were thrown into unskilled labor jobs. At first, with few industry jobs in Boston, Irish men found work as waiters, horse caretakers, and dockworkers at low wages. Irish women usually found jobs as domestics to supplement the family income (Handlin 1969). The Irish were left with jobs "involving an element of personal service and therefore repugnant and degrading to Americans" (Handlin 1969: 62).

It did not take long for Boston's investors and manufacturers to make use of the steady supply of cheap labor. Irish laborers increasingly replaced the New England farm girls who had worked in the factories of Lowell and Lawrence, but had demanded proper working conditions and often left upon marriage. They then supplied the new shoe factories in towns like Lynn and Quincy. As a whole, they "accelerated the process of industrialization in New England" (Handlin 1969: 73).

The surplus of cheap labor, mostly from Ireland, changed the face of production not just in outlying cities, but in Boston as well. By 1865 Boston became fourth in the nation in manufacturing. The city had become the leader in the manufacture of ready-made clothing (Handlin 1969). Drawing from the cheap labor and the factory system, industries that had been forced out of business before 1850 because of high costs of production, opened back up and began to flourish. For example, Mason & Hamlin Organ Company opened a huge factory in the West End and the number of workers in that industry rose to 1,248 in 1855, up from 368 in 1845. Likewise, in 1845 only 859 men had been employed in copper and brass foundries casting furnaces, but by 1855 the number

had tripled to 2,412. Garment factories, shipyards, foundries, and more sprang up all over East and South Boston (Handlin 1969).

TABLE 1. The population of Boston by year from 1790-1920 (US Census Bureau 1988)

BOSTON POPULATION 1790-1920	
YEAR	POPULATION
1790	18,320
1800	24,934
1810	33,787
1820	43,298
1830	61,392
1840	93,383
1850	136,881
1860	177,840
1870	250,526
1880	362,839
1890	448,477
1900	560,892
1910	670,585
1920	748,060

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Boston's geography had impeded any hopes of expansion. Surrounded on all sides by either rivers, marshes, tidal basins or the harbor, Boston was a hilly peninsula, and its only connection to the mainland was through "the neck" that connected Boston to Roxbury. However, from 1820 to 1880, land was added, seawalls built, and hills leveled. Before 1950 Beacon Hill, among others, had been cut down in size and the earth used to reclaim land in other areas of the city. By

1900 Boston's two most ambitious land reclaiming endeavors, the South End and the Back Bay, had been completed (Warner 1962; Kennedy 1992). Originally intended to be an industrial park, the 580 acres of reclaimed land made the Back Bay "one of the greatest land reclamation projects of America until the twentieth century" and "one of the most beautiful and architecturally important areas of Boston, and indeed the county" (Kennedy 1992: 60). The map on the next page shows the dramatic land reclamation efforts undertaken by Boston. The darker-shaded area shows the original 1630 land, including the neck. The lighter-shaded area is all the land that has been added since, most in the nineteenth century.

By the 1870s Boston had also claimed land in the form of Roxbury, Charlestown, Brighton, Dorchester, and West Roxbury, as it annexed the land and population of each of these cities (Kennedy 1962). In 1830 Boston laid claim to 1,000 acres of land and a population of just over 61,000, but by 1870 the metropolitan area of Boston was now 30,000 acres in area with a population of over 250,000 inhabitants (Kennedy 1992).

The shift from trade to manufacturing directly altered the topography of Boston as well. The plethora of new factories and scores of new immigrants saw to that. The low wages offered to the working class in the factories meant that they would have to find cheap housing close to the factories. Tenement and slum districts began to form in the West and North Ends of Boston to lodge the vast number of workers and their families.

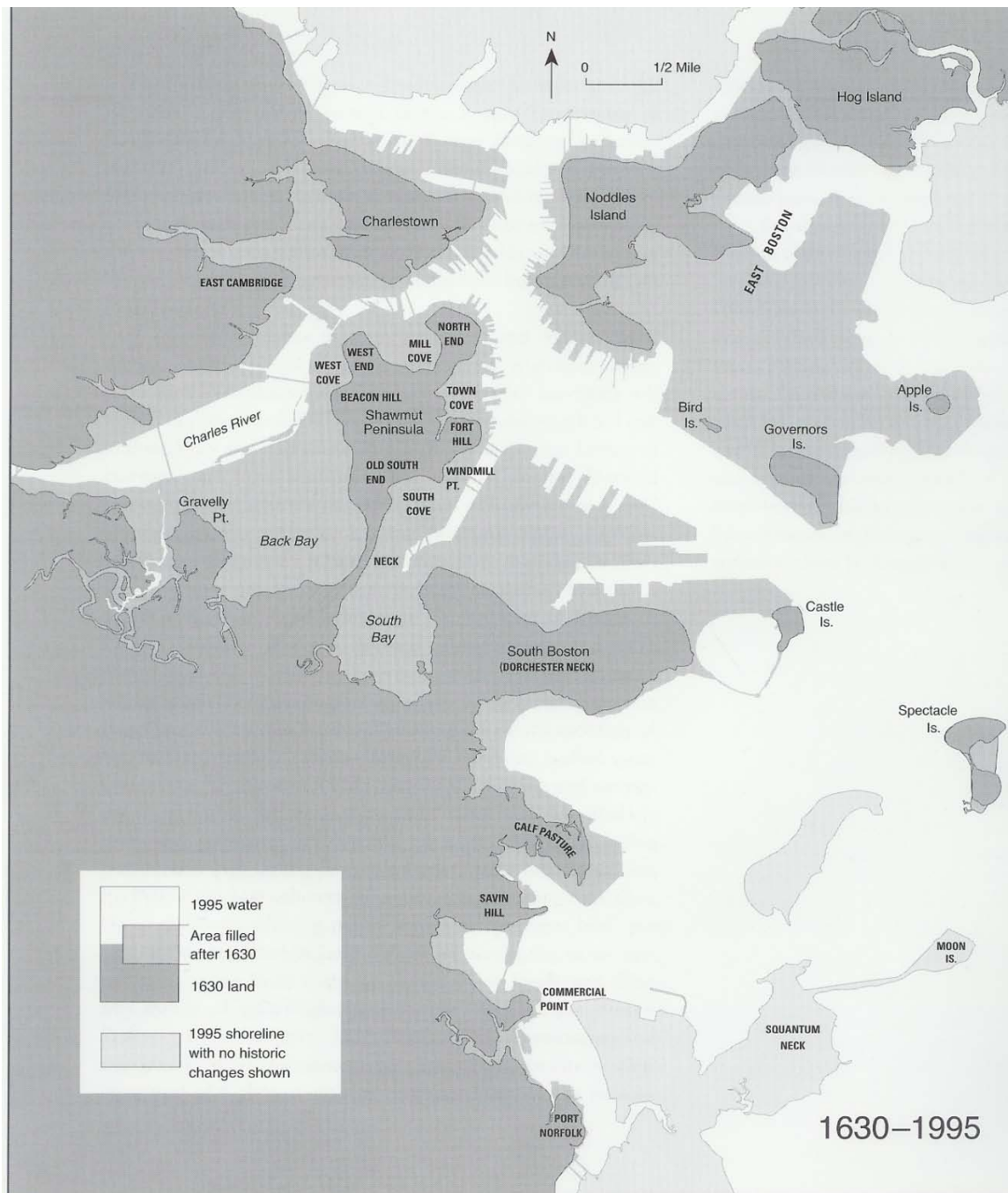


FIGURE 3. Boston shoreline from 1630-1995 (Seasholes 2003: xvi)

Boston did not escape the horrid conditions that were found in other industrial cities. The tenement residents had to contend with dirty and noisy streets, crowded apartments, and poor air quality and drinking water. Outbreaks of tuberculosis, pneumonia, and cholera were common. In 1900 the city of Boston had only 9 carts that picked up garbage every other day between May and October. Prior to that and during the winter months, the garbage piled up on the streets and added to the filth of the city (Spain 2001).

At the same time, those native to America saw their wealth grow and their status increase. From their strongholds they were able to maintain control of manufacturing, and even those in the lower ranks of society saw their class advance. As Handlin (1969: 83) writes, “Since the Irish could not satisfy their own needs, others had to. Irishmen needed doctors and teachers; they consumed dry goods and food, thereby quickening the city’s commercial life.” Yankee merchants, clerks, artisans, and traders all benefitted from the arrival of the Irish who needed their services. The increase in wealth led to new middle-class and elite homes being built in the South End and Back Bay. The only natives who did not benefit were the established domestics and unskilled laborers, who now had the Irish to compete with (Warner 1962; Handlin 1969).

A city divided

The change from merchant city to metropolis that occurred in the last half of the nineteenth century gave rise to what historian Sam Bass Warner (1962) termed the “streetcar suburbs.” As the immigrant population grew, the old residential areas of the

city began to deteriorate. As Warner (1962: 14) writes, “The physical deterioration of the old neighborhoods, the crowding of factory, shop and tenement in the old central city, the unceasing flow of foreigners with ever new languages and habits – there negative pressures tended to drive the middle class from the cities.” To the middle class, the city came to be seen as an immoral wasteland. A sense of sentimental nationalism, or looking back at the “old days,” led many to find homes in the suburbs of the city; others just wanted to escape the dirty and crowded streets.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the streetcar made suburban living possible for many Bostonians. In 1850 Boston’s area of settlement was confined to a 2-mile radius which stretched from the City Hall. Boston was largely a pedestrian city. From 1852 until 1873, horse railroads, which traveled along existing roads, increased the area of dense settlement to a radius of about 2.5 miles. And from 1873 to 1887, horse railroads brought the radius out to 4 miles in land that had before been distant and mostly unsettled. With the electrification of the railroad in the late 1880s, the radius of settlement increased 6 miles from City Hall (Warner 1962). By 1899, Boston had 870.2 miles of streetcar lines (Howard 1976). According to Warner (1962), this brought about a rate of settlement and building that changed the whole plan and scale of Greater Boston.

The streetcar offered those that could afford the fare and a house in the suburbs the opportunity to move beyond the old city boundaries that had been taken over by immigrants. Once linear service was established to a particular area, the area it ran through became a potential building ground for the middle class, who put up one- and two-family dwellings. According to Warner (1962: 33), “Street railway managers, real

estate men, politicians, philanthropists, health officers, school teachers, and the middle class generally all shared the attitude that open country surroundings and small community were beneficent settings for family life.” Prior to the streetcar, two houses had been required to make this possible. Now “a boundary between tenements and row houses on the one hand and the new detached wooden on the other” had formed (Warner 1962: 47). By the 1900s the “streetcar suburbs” left only the newly designed Back Bay as suitable living for Boston’s elite and upper-middle classes.

South Cove/ South End

The Denison House Settlement would eventually be established in the South Cove area of Boston. Once completely under water, the South Cove area was built out of “the neck” which connected Boston to Roxbury. During the time of Denison House, the South Cove was considered the area just north of the South End. It is no longer seen as a district of Boston, and the South Cove is often lumped together with the South End in historical descriptions and accounts. The South Cove is the land bound by East, Tufts, and Beach streets to the north, Washington Street to the west, East Berkeley Street on the South, and Fort Channel on the East. Today it includes the Leather District, ramps of the Massachusetts Turnpike, parts of Chinatown, and the area surrounding the Boston Herald building (Seasholes 2003).

During the Revolution the Neck was a fortification and check-point for everything and everyone entering and exiting Boston. The neck was marshy land only fifty to one-hundred feet long in places. It was awash in storms when the peninsula would only be

accessible by boat (Seasholes 2003). In the early 1800s, the expansion of seawalls and the addition of new streets heading towards Roxbury to the south led to a dramatic widening of the Neck. The South Cove Corporation was formed in January of 1833, made up of lawyers, merchants, and businessmen, with the purpose of filling in the land of the Cove for use of railroad terminals from the Worcester and Providence lines (Seasholes 2003). In all, between 1806 and 1843, eighty-six acres of new land was added to the South Cove with the focus of growth to the south of Boston. And as the business district began to expand further south, Bostonians began to look at the expanded South End as a prime residential area (BSA 1976).

The South End district did not begin to develop rapidly until the 1850s. At this time the area began to attract residents who desired more land around their houses than was offered in the popular, but crowded, Back Bay district. According to Walter Muir Whitehill's topographical history of Boston, the rapid growth of the 1850's turned the South End into a "region of symmetrical blocks of high-shouldered, comfortable red brick or brown stone houses, spacious avenues, intersected by cross streets that occasionally widened the tree-shaped squares and parks, whose central gardens were enclosed by neat cast iron fences" (Whitehill 1959: 122). However the area never reached its full potential and began to slip into the slum district described in detail by Robert Woods in *The City Wilderness* (1898) while it was still relatively new.

It takes some speculation to determine the cause of the South End's downfall. According to Whitehill, the most convincing argument has been set forth by historian Albert B. Wolfe. Wolfe saw the panic of 1873 as the beginning of the South End's

demise. He believed that the deterioration began on Columbus Avenue, where in about 1870 a cheaper style of house began to be built. When the panic of '73 hit the city, most of these houses, which were built with mortgages, ended up in the possession of the bank. The bank then sold them for whatever they could, and the result was a drop in real estate values on Columbus Avenue and the character of the street. And Wolfe (in Whitehill 1959: 137) suggests that “the shock thus felt on Columbus Avenue with such force gradually had the effect of disturbing the equilibrium in the rest of the South End.”

Historian Lawrence Kennedy (1992) has another theory as to why the South End no longer appealed to the upper-class after the early 1870s. Kennedy believed that overall the decline of the South End was caused by its proximity to more appealing residential areas, namely the newly created Back Bay. The Back Bay was more appealing because of its location next to Beacon Hill and greater proximity to the downtown than the South End.

Whatever the reason, by 1885, Wolfe estimates that the South End had become mainly a lodging house section. After the 1860s, the original Yankee owners had given way to Irish immigrants and in the 1880s, the South End also became home to European Jews, Italians, and Armenians (Seasholes 2003). This point is demonstrated by Wolfe’s study of Union Park. Before 1872 the square was made up of only private occupants. In 1872 two lodging houses appeared, and by 1902 only seven of the fifty-three houses were still private residences (Whitehill 1959). Houses that were once occupied by single families now stood as residences to three, four, or more families (BSA 1976).

The South End became the most undesirable place in the city. Historian Sarah

Deutsch (2000: 85) describes it as thus:

Not simply lodging houses, dance halls, restaurants, cafés, and amusements, but the entire South End had, in the eyes of the middle-class and elites, become morally questionable terrain. The building of a streetcar line through the South End to the more affluent suburbs had cemented the South End's image among those who managed or owned the downtown offices (and among social investigators) as a moral no-man's-land, where they could stop on the way to the dry suburbs for a drink and even some illicit sex.

The passing streetcars also contributed to the noise and dirt in the district. Police worked to restrict alcohol sale to the more public streets where it could be controlled, but kitchen barrooms plagued the district. According to Woods (1898), liquor represented the largest single trade interest in the district.

South End Settlement's Head Worker, Robert A. Woods (1898: 33-34), described the progression that the South End residences of the wealthy passed through on their way to becoming tenements to the poor, working class:

As the character of the population changed, and the wealthy people left the South End, their old residences, which were much too fine to be used as single dwellings for the poorer classes and not suitable for apartments, were almost of necessity turned into lodging houses. Later, as the houses became old or the neighborhood unattractive, they underwent a second transformation by being broken up into very inconvenient tenements.

In 1895 Wood estimated that 40,406 people lived in the South End. At that time, one-half of the residential area was tenement houses, one-eighth was apartment houses, and the rest was made up of lodging houses. In all fewer than 100 families in the district had a door that opened up to the outside world. The area around Tyler Street, where Denison House was located, contained the oldest houses and had passed through each of the three stages by the 1890s (Woods 1898). The figure (4) on the next page was first published by

Robert Woods. It depicts two different layouts of tenement houses. The top diagram is of 138 Tyler Street – just down the street from Denison House. It shows two- to three-story tenements built up against each other, an 8' 10" alley on one side and a two-foot open area on the other. It shows how builders and landlords worked to use every inch of available space.

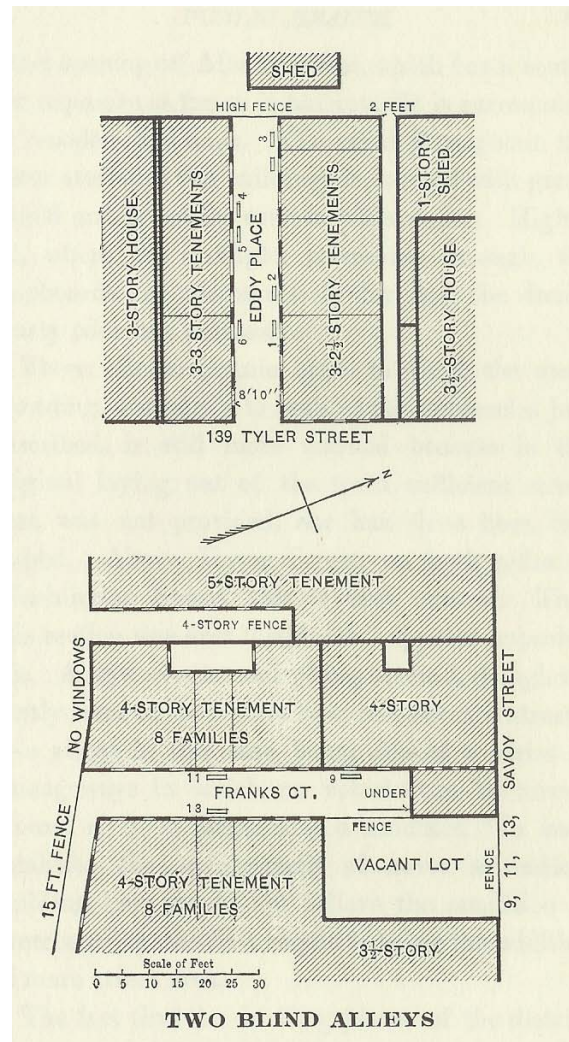


FIGURE 4. The evolution of a Boston tenement at 139 Tyler Street (Woods 1898: 138)

The fact that the South Cove was reclaimed land also posed a problem. The area was damp with a high water table. Basements, which housed tenement families, were constantly damp and wet. They were the breeding ground for disease. When the building of the subway required excavation, “the stench of ‘made land’ was offensive to the nostrils, and there was a comparatively large increase in the amount of malarial disease in the city” (Woods 1898: 58-59).

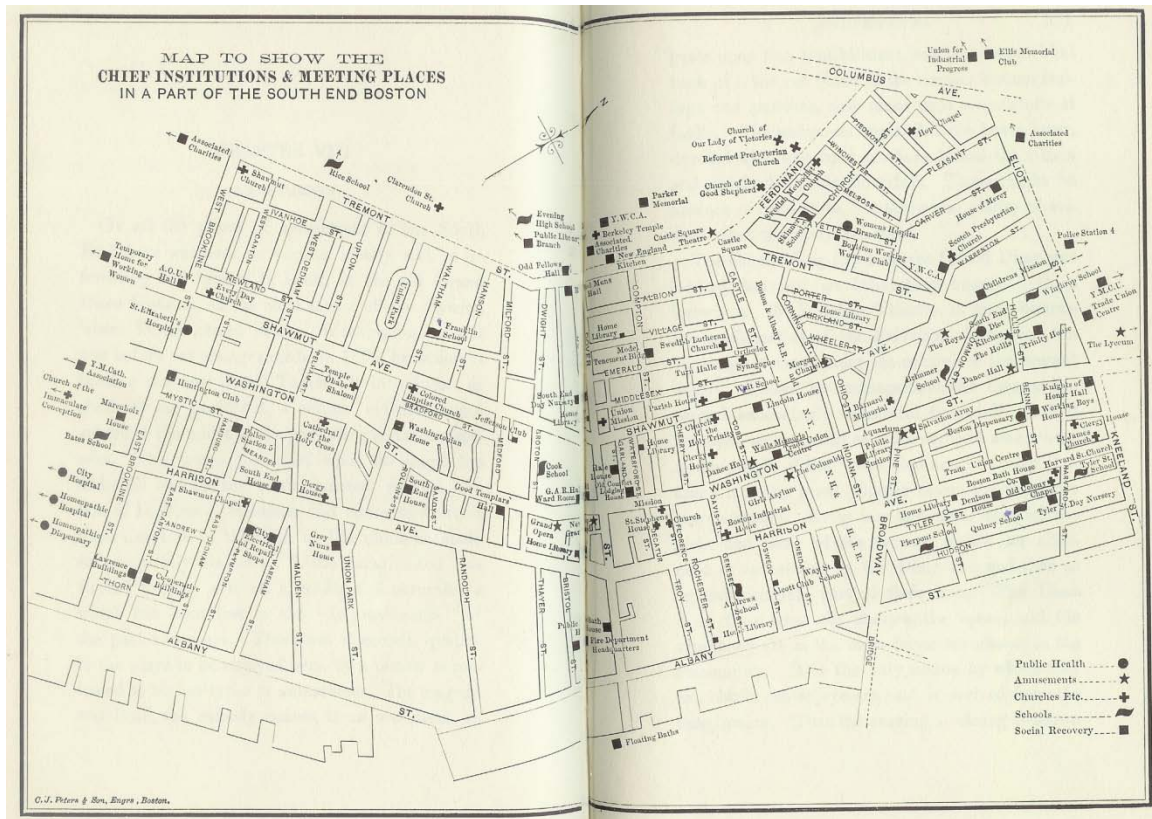


FIGURE 5. Map of South Cove with chief institutions and meeting places (Woods 1898: 89-90)

The South End was home to a large number of different ethnicities. Vida Scudder (1937) remembered the area around Denison House largely consisting of Irish

immigrants in the first years of the settlement. However, many second and third generation Irish were able to move up the social ladder and leave the South Cove for suburbs or nicer sections of town. According to Scudder, they were replaced by Italians, Syrians, and Chinese. In *The City Wilderness*, Robert Woods (1898: 86) of the South End House characterized the South End as a “resort for all nationalities.” He observed this in the schools as well, where he saw that each of the European countries was represented at two of the district’s schools (Woods 1898). Woods (1898: 36-37) described the South End as such:

The Irish, Jews, British Americans, and Negroes are its chief constituents; but the English, Germans, Scotch, French, Swedes, Norwegians, Italians, Greeks, Armenians, Austrians, and a few other nationalities, are represented, though in considerably smaller numbers. And if we add to these Chinatown and the Syrian settlement in Oliver Place, both on the outskirts of the district, we supply an appropriate finishing touch to the group, - a population as complicated as it is inharmonious.

In 1898 the South End House, under the guidance of Robert Woods, conducted and published a study of the people and conditions of the South End. According to the 1895 Massachusetts State Census, the population in the tenement-ridden South End was 40,406 (Woods 1898). In that year the population of the South End was still mainly first- and second-generation Irish, with a strong Jewish population rapidly rising. There were 6300 hundred Irish immigrants and 2700 Jewish immigrants living in the South End. Immigrants who were native speakers of English, and their children, had a much easier time assimilating into American culture. Woods also made note of two good sized African American groups in the district, as well as a group of Italians who appeared to

him to have no connections of the Italians of the North End. Woods observed that the Jews, Italians, and African Americans formed nationality groups and largely kept to themselves. He observed the fifty to seventy-five Greek immigrants as very friendly and mostly all men between the ages of 15 and 30. Woods (1898: 46) saw the Syrian immigrants as peddlers who persistently begged for charity and wrote, "Next to the Chinese, who can never be in any real sense American, they are the most foreign of all our foreigners." Woods (1898: 47) went on to say that "About seventy Chinamen are scattered throughout the district following their accustomed occupation of laundering."

In the 1890s the occupations of the South Ends' inhabitants were as diverse as their nationalities. According to Woods (1898: 83), "...the chief industries are those associated with the coal slips and lumber yards on the water front, and with the factories which depend upon their supplies." Steam laundries and wood-working industries line the docks and six piano factories further inland represented some of the industry in the district. The chief power-house plant of the Boston Elevated Railway, which controlled the electric cars in the city, was also located in the South End near the base of coal supplies (Woods 1898). The South End contained none of the great department stores that began to spring up in other parts of the city, and the South End's installment stores, which sold furniture and clothing on credit, were slowly being put out of business by the department stores. The single largest trade interest in the district was liquor traffic (Woods 1898).

According to Woods, the jobs and wages of those who resided in the district varied greatly; however those that could afford to live elsewhere usually did. The

proportion of skilled laborers in the district was largely “kept up by the younger unattached mechanics and artisans living in lodging houses” (Woods 1898: 86). Besides this exception, few skilled workers were found living near their work. At the end of the day, most would take the streetcar to another district of the city or to the suburbs where they resided with their families away from the crowd. Laborers, from the lack of both time and money needed to live elsewhere, represented the largest contingency in the district. Many of the district’s unemployed would try to find refuge in the district’s hotels and lodging houses during the winter months. There were also a number of people whose income was either barely sufficient or insecure that struggled within the tenements of the South End. This was true within the garment industry, where work rose and fell according to the season. Likewise those in the building trades received a larger wage than most, as high as \$3.50 a day, however they were not afforded job security year-round as some other trades would have afforded a rate of about \$2.25 to \$3.00 a day (Woods 1898). Factory women received only between \$5 and \$6 a week.

In 1898 the City Board of Assessors compiled a list of the names and occupations of all the male inhabitants of the city over the age of twelve. In that year the South End list contained 13,815 names. After classifying each occupation, the Board determined that the number of unskilled laborers was 5201, the number of skilled workmen who received standard wages was 4411, those who were entered without occupation numbered 201, and professional men and downtown merchants numbered 425 (Woods 1899). This gives the reader some idea of the number of unskilled laborers who worked long hours for inadequate amounts of money, however this number did not take into account those

inhabitants who were unemployed at any given time.

Beginning in the 1890s, the South End was home to Boston's most distraught ethnicities. At least one-sixth of the families in the district received some form of material aid each year (Woods 1898). Dr. Edward Everett Hale called the South End the "most charited region in Christendom" (quoted in Spain 2001:189). The map (fig.5) on the previous page was compiled by Robert Woods and the residents of the South End House. It shows the redemptive places that had been created in the South End/ South Cove district by 1900. With the immense poverty and social disparity, it is not surprising that the founders of Denison House would choose the South Cove for the location of their Boston settlement.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIAL REFORMERS

“There are the under crust and the upper crust, but what really matters in the pie is the filling – the great middle class” (Robert Woods in Barrows 1929:191).

In the second half of the nineteenth century, with rapid industrialization and expedited rate of deterioration of social conditions in both English and American cities, it was clear that something had to be done. The middle class, whether through guilt or sense of service, took on the brunt of the charity work. Many of these charity and reform efforts through the nineteenth century were assumed by middle-class women. Middle-class women were in a unique position as keepers of morality, virtue, and domesticity. They would eventually use this perceived handicap to create new roles for themselves within both middle-class and working-class society.

Relief for the poor

Occurring mostly between 1790 and the 1840s, the Second Great Awakening sent a religious fervor through England and America. Preachers, such as Lyman Beecher, Barton Stone, and others, became household names as they spread their “Social Gospel” throughout America. They preached tirelessly about participation in social causes and “defined poverty as a public issue warranting institutional reform” (Spain 2001: 64).

Temperance, prison reform, and abolitionism, among others, were a direct result of the call to service that characterized the Social Gospel movement.

Early American social welfare consisted of three public options for dealing with the poor. The first was the development of poorhouses, sometimes referred to as “poor farms.” The second was boarding the poor out to families who could expect labor in return for supplying a poor person with room and board. And the third, perhaps the most surprising, was the practice of auctioning a poor person off to the lowest bidder; the person who was willing to take the least amount of money for the care of a poor individual was to take care of them for a certain period of time (Wagner 2005). Private charities believed that none of these public options were adequate.

Prior to the 1870s, private charities were wholly unorganized. Private charity-givers were socially and geographically isolated from the recipients and had no way to gauge the level of need. For the most part, aid was awarded haphazardly without any regards to need and prior aid received. This system, or lack of, allowed many poor to receive an abundance of help and others to receive none (Trattner 1999). Accounts abound of husbands and fathers taking the families charity to the corner saloon and coming home with nothing left for food (Trattner 1999). Pauperism also became a problem, as some families or individuals would receive aid from multiple places, leaving others with nothing.

Scientific charity

The hodgepodge way of disseminating charity led to the development of the

charity organization movement, or “scientific charity,” that began in the 1870s. The movement, which first developed in England and spread to the major American cities, aimed at “eliminating fraud, inefficiency, and duplicity in the field” by “devising a constructive method of dealing with or treating poverty” (Trattner 1999: 93). They wanted to find ways of decreasing pauperism and of deciphering between the “deserving” and “undeserving” poor. Charities made it their practice to discern between those that deserved charity, the worthy, and those that did not, the unworthy. Among the unworthy poor would have been those who drank or refused to work. The worthy poor would be those who were not considered hopeless, but instead just needed help until they got back on their feet.

In general scientific charity took a pessimistic view of human nature. Growing out of the Gilded Age, when the priorities of many were capitalism and personal growth, the leaders of the movement believed in the individual moral concept of poverty. This meant that poverty could only be attributed to personal defects.

The Charity Organization Society (COS) was started in England in 1869 with this premise in mind (Henderson 1899, Davis 1967, Trattner 1999). According to one contemporary writer, the COS “sought to introduce order and system in to the defective and conflicting methods of relief, and to send among the people a large number of friendly visitors who might contribute a higher degree of intelligence and devotion to the study of causes and to more adequate methods of help” (Henderson 1899: 29). The COS did develop effective ways to decrease pauperism. They kept records and worked to bring about efficiency in the way charity was distributed.

The COS members also believed that moral leadership and “friendship” were really all the worthy poor needed. If the charity workers could teach the poor how to live a moral life, similar to their own, they would learn how to uplift themselves from their place at the bottom of society. One of their methods included sending “friendly visitors” into working class neighborhoods to talk with and share their ways with the poor. Not surprisingly, this did not work. The visitors were seen as intervening “in the lives of the poor by virtue of a presumed wisdom and superiority while, at the same time, professing to conceive of their charges as personal friends – an impossibility, for moral uplift is far from friendship” (Trattner 1999: 99). On top of that, Jane Addams, the prototype for the American settlement worker, believed the COS agents to be “cold and unemotional, too impersonal and stingy” (quoted in Trattner 1999: 97). The COS did not understand that poverty was not caused by individual moral perversity, but was instead rooted in social and economic conditions. As they approached the poor with the attitude of moral and social superiority, no amount of talking or friendship would make a difference.

Started in 1870, Boston’s Fragment Society is another example of the charity organizations from which the settlement movement would work to separate themselves. Membership included those in the elite and middle classes of Boston society and was hereditary, passed down from mother to daughter or aunt to niece, to keep its exclusivity. Members considered themselves social reformers who wanted “to bridge the chasm between rich and poor,” however they also believed the poor served a purpose (Deutsch 2000: 140). The poor were there to test the virtue of the rich and the rich’s charity affirmed the “rightness of their social and economic position and class distinction”

(Deutsch 2000: 140). The new brand of reformer, the settlement worker, would work hard to distance herself from the shadow of the charity workers that came before.

The settlement idea

Up until the late nineteenth century, charity efforts tried to alleviate distress but did nothing to remedy the cause of the problem. The settlement movement was started in England largely as a reaction to the perceived failures of organized charity. Especially in the beginning, the first settlement residents worked hard to distance themselves from charity societies. They believed that “traditional relief practices were frequently inefficient, redundant, and wrongheaded” (Carson 1990: 65). They felt that charity workers were sometimes condescending and impolite, disregarding the religious and cultural traditions and customs of those they visited. The settlement workers believed instead that the individual should not be punished for the situation he or she has been put in by society.

The leaders of the settlement movement saw themselves as bringing social justice, not charity. Their efforts were not traditional philanthropy, but an “attempt to heal society by restoring social intercourse between artificially surrendered classes” (Carson 1990: 67). They sought to eliminate the gap between races and classes by eliminating the sources of distress, namely by improving working and living conditions. Unlike the COS, the settlement leaders saw poverty largely a result of the economic and social conditions to which the working class people found themselves vulnerable. “Charity workers emphasized the individual causes of poverty, while settlement workers stressed the social

and economic conditions that made people poor” (Davis 1967: 47). Poverty was not caused by immorality, but by ill health, loss of the family bread winner, low wages, accidents, lack of education, immigrant prejudices, involuntary unemployment, and a whole host of situations beyond personal control. The settlement workers did not decipher between worthy and unworthy as the charity organizations did.

The change in mentality that separated the charity workers from the settlement workers can be traced back to the literature of the time. Many of the early English and American settlement workers were disciples of More, Carlyle, Ruskin, Engels, and Tolstoy, among others (Reason 1898; Henderson 1899; Scudder 1937; Davis 1967; Frederick 1970; Carson 1990). Thomas Carlyle’s *Chartism* (1840) and *Past and Present* (1843) were works ahead of their time. Carlyle was passionately opposed to the rapid industrialization that was occurring in English society and his views show through in his work.

A close friend of Carlyle, John Ruskin’s criticism of the laissez-faire political economy and production for profit was influential among many English and American settlement workers. Ruskin was born in England in 1819, the son of a rich wine-merchant and much of his younger life was sheltered and simple. Starting his career as an art critic, his love of all things beautiful and hatred of the ugly made the industrial city the topic of many of his later writings and lectures. By 1860 the chief interest of Ruskin’s life had become “the effort to understand and solve the problems of human sorrow and need” (Scudder 1890: 7). Vida Scudder, one of the founders of Denison House, writes in her autobiography about having the opportunity to hear some of Ruskin’s last lectures while

studying at Oxford. Like some of Ruskin's other contemporaries, Scudder was at first put off by Ruskin's writings on political economy and social criticism and may have considered him to be too socialistic (Frederick 1970). When he finally won her over, she wrote that, through Ruskin, "it was at Oxford that I woke up to the realities of modern civilization, and decided that I did not like them" (Scudder 1937: 78). In her introduction to his treatise on political economy, *Unto This Last*, Scudder confesses that "the best results of his life are written in the souls he has awakened to the love of beauty and the vision of the right" (Scudder 1890: 18).

Along with these nineteenth-century English minds, the work of Jacob Riis made an impression on American settlement pioneers. Even today, no one is more well-known than Riis as an advocate for the poor of New York. Riis immigrated to New York in 1870 from Denmark, unskilled and poor. By 1880, he became a crusader for the urban poor and began presenting on the evils of tenement living. His first book, *How the Other Half Lives*, introduced millions to the everyday lives of the urban poor (Riis 1997 [c1890]).

First published in 1890, *How the Other Half Lives* is still studied as a portrayal of life in the slums of New York City. Perplexed about how to really show life in the dark "cubby holes" of the tenements, Riis was one of the first in America to use the camera flash to document what he saw. During his lifetime, he was seen as doing more for the poor of New York than any other person alive. As one of his contemporaries wrote, Riis "has done more than anyone else to alleviate the conditions of the poor of New York by revealing their misery to the sympathetic world" (Gilder 1902: 63). Riis painted a vivid portrait of the residential environment and ethnic traits of New York immigrants, the

struggles for subsistence in tenement sweatshops, the dangers confronting tenement children, and the human garbage that was dumped into the workhouses (Riis 1997 [c1902]). Through his photography and writing, he effectively appealed to the “sympathetic world” by revealing the horrid conditions that the poor faced in the slums (Luvobe 1962: 49).

The perceived failures of organized charity, the changing mentality of social justice found in some contemporary writings, and the ever deteriorating conditions in the working class districts were all that the new generation of settlement leaders needed to spur their lives’ work. Convinced that “friendly visitors” would never be able to break across racial and class barriers, the settlements workers felt strongly that in order to create change they would also have to live in the slums. The main goal of the settlement movement became the establishment of settlement houses in working class-neighborhoods by middle-class settlement workers. The settlement houses became a site where the settlement workers could share their knowledge and culture with the working class. As opposed to charities’ “friendly visitors,” settlement workers felt that neighbor-to-neighbor contact was less condescending. Some settlement workers also used their location in the urban slums to their advantage, as they investigated the plight of the working class. Their research findings would often be used to gain public sentiment and in enacting legislation to aid the working class.

As Carson points out, "one of the settlement movement' distinctive contribution to social thought was the promoting of social investigation as the foundation for rational

public policy" (Carson 1990: 43). Settlement workers came to believe that some forms of reform could not take place at the neighborhood level and would frequently appeal to state and federal legislation to change conditions for the poor. The studies that the settlement workers were able to complete from their unique place among the poor, allowed for justification in their many civic campaigns as well as advancing areas of social science within the country's colleges and universities. From their place within the neighborhood, "the settlement workers made the essential initial diagnosis of urban problems and contrived some means to combat them" (Davis 1970: vii). Because of their unique location, settlement houses became important sites for Progressive Era reform. By participating in everything from civic work, the women's suffrage movement and membership in the Women's Trade Union League to conducting sociological studies of immigrants, many prominent settlement workers were able to find their life's work - work that women could not have conceived of just a few decades earlier (Campbell 1979: 123). Helena Dudley, the first headworker of Denison House, echoed fellow settlement workers when she spoke of the settlement "laboratory" which allowed many societies and committees to form in reaction to social conditions (Denison House Residents 1913: 5). However, a closer look at Denison House seems to demonstrate that this is where the settlement may have broken with the larger settlement agenda. Its workers participated in few social investigations and reform efforts, or at least failed to report them in their annual reports and meeting minutes.

It took some time for new settlements to catch on and for workers to gain the

respect of their neighbors, but, once they did, the settlements became the center of neighborhood activity. Settlements often looked to the needs and interests of their neighbors to decide which activities would work best. Some settlements ran camps, kindergartens, libraries, vacation schools, and gymnasiums. They held English classes, formed neighborhood publications, and provided food stamps and low cost food to their neighbors. Being in mostly immigrant neighborhoods, settlements also formed clubs and classes that allowed for the maintenance of their native cultures (Carson 1990).

In his book, *Spearheads for Reform*, Allen Davis (1967) gives his readers some statistics about settlement workers. He writes that most came from families of moderate means. The median age for settlement workers was 25 and the median number of years spent in a settlement was 3. Ninety percent of workers had attended college, eighty percent had bachelor's degrees, and fifty percent had done graduate work of some kind. And, although he does not give an exact number, he says that most settlement workers were unmarried. John Rousmaniere (1970) adds to these numbers when he writes that three-fifths of settlement house workers were women and nine-tenths of those women had been to college.

In general men and women experienced differing personal motives for choosing settlement work. Men typically found "in settlement work a practical field for their essential religious callings" (Carson 1990: 49). Robert Woods, a graduate of Andover Theological Seminary, is one of those men who eventually became Head Resident at Andover House in Boston. As a student at Andover, Woods became increasingly distressed about his future vocational choices. He was a deeply religious man, but could

not fathom a life as a member of the clergy. He became increasingly preoccupied with developing a social philosophy based on his religious teachings. The idea of settlement work became a way for Woods to do something that would feel meaningful and be reconciled with his religious beliefs (Carson 1990: 29).

The women of the settlement movement could also be characterized as searching for fulfillment and purpose, however women were also bringing their newly found liberal education to settlement life. For some, “the decision to live in the slums was somehow related to the desire to apply the Christian idea of service to the new challenges and the new problems of the city” (Davis 1969: 29). As Carson (1990: 49) writes, “social Christianity that commended from the comfortable middle class a vigorous concern with poverty and social inequalities drew inspiration and texts from English Christian Socialism.” Many women workers, such as Vida Scudder and Ellen Starr, were searching for greater fulfillment in their spiritual lives. On top of that, willing workers were being cultivated in newly opened women’s colleges.

In the middle- and late-nineteenth century, there were few careers open to middle-class women (Campbell 1979: 47). Women were expected to marry and wholeheartedly offer themselves to the needs of the family. As Barbara Campbell writes, a “central concept for the nineteenth-century idea of the family was the role of women as the hub, the constant, about which family life evolved” (Campbell 1979: 1). At the same time, they were expected to submit to the male head of the household (Campbell 1979: 11). Settlement work offered them an alternative to marriage.

The pioneers of the settlement movement pledged to break down the increasingly

rigid frontier between the working and middle classes. They sought to find a literal common ground; a meeting place for all classes, where the middle class would live and work among and with the working class to make society a better place for all.

The movement in England

The first English settlements trace their beginnings to the work of three pioneers in personal service: John Richard Green, Edward Denison, and Arnold Toynbee.

Historian John Green (1837-1883) was a man of poor health who devoted his life to writing the *Short History of the English People* (1874). He died at the age of 45, having changed the way historians look at and write about history by including themes such as industrial, social, and moral progress in his work. Edward Denison (1840-1870), after whom Denison House would later be named, was a British philanthropist and educator who devoted his life to living and working in the impoverished East End of London. Denison was a professor at Oxford University. He made frequent trips to working class neighborhoods to learn about how they lived. He died young at the age of 30. Arnold Toynbee (1852-1883) was an economic historian who also devoted his life to improving the conditions of the working class. He lived and worked among the poor and saw it as his duty to do so. Toynbee also died at the age of 30. Their contemporary, Will Reason (1898: 7) noted that all three of these men died young, and not until “after their death did the world understand the nature and importance of their work; not until they had taken their hands from the plough did the world understand how straight and clean and deep was their furrow.” These three men became martyrs to the cause of personal service and

life among the poor.

Toynbee Hall, the world's first settlement house, was started in the tenement district of East London in 1884. Named after Arnold Toynbee, the founders of Toynbee Hall hoped to pick up where the young man had left off after his early passing. The house was opened by Anglican clergyman Samuel Barnett and sixteen Cambridge and Oxford men. Most of the men were Christian socialists who abhorred class differences and believed in the unity of human beings. The men believed that they could wipe out class differences with education (Reason 1898; Henderson 1899; Davis 1967; Carson 1990). Denying their place in middle-class society and choosing their life's work in East London, the Toynbee Hall workers believed that they could "gain fuller lives not by denying their social position, but by reconceiving it" (Carson 1990:8). As Carson (1990:8) attests, the "settlement idea drew heavily on the cultural values of high Victorianism that enthroned 'personal service' as the epitome of philanthropy.

American settlements

It did not take long for the ideas and ideals of the settlement movement to make their way across the Atlantic. Young men and women looked to England for solutions to the problems of urbanization and industrialization that increasingly plagued American cities. By the 1890s settlements had been established in Chicago, New York and Boston. At the forefront of the American settlement movement were a number of pioneering men and women.

In the beginning of 1886, Stanton Coit, an Amherst graduate, spent three months

at Toynbee Hall. Upon returning to the U.S., Coit was joined by Charles B. Stover and Edward King and started the first American settlement in the Lower East Side of New York City. The Neighborhood Guild opened in August of 1886 but closed in 1887, when Coit moved to England. However in 1891 the Neighborhood Guild was revived and renamed the University Settlement by King, Stover, and others (Davis 1967).

Perhaps the most renowned settlement worker is Jane Addams, who started Hull House in Chicago with Ellen Starr in 1889 (Addams 1910). Addams and Starr also spent time in England and visited Toynbee Hall before opening their settlement house on Halsted Street, a predominantly Italian immigrant neighborhood of Chicago. Writing about the first twenty years at Hull House, Addams (1910: 64) contends that the women opened the settlement on the theory that “dependence of classes on each other is reciprocal.” She went on to say that, “the highest moralists have taught that without the advance and improvement of the whole, no man can hope for any lasting improvement in his own moral or material individual conditions” (1910: 87).

Much to the dismay of the women, the university men tended to see the settlement houses as the “sociological laboratory.” Addams believed instead that the needs of the people took precedent over the needs of the researcher. Writing about her first twenty years at Hull House, she portrayed her views on the relationship between research and experience:

I have always objected to the phrase “sociological laboratory” applied to us, because Settlements should be something much more human and spontaneous than such a phrase connotes, and yet it is inevitable that the residents should know their own neighborhoods more thoroughly than any other, and that their experience there should affect their convictions

(Addams 1910: 308).

As much as Addams dismayed the use of the settlement as a social laboratory, both men and women of Hull House could not deny the importance of statistical research in enacting reform. The women and men of Hull House used their base within the community to study the conditions of the immigrants they lived among. Through a collaborative effort, the women produced *Hull House Maps and Papers* (1895), one of the first publications that mapped the plight of the working-class immigrants. The book successfully used statistics to refute the conservative laissez-faire economics that fueled political thinking and thereby successfully blamed the economic system rather than the individual for the social condition in the tenements (Schultz 2007).

In 1891 a minister at the Andover Theological Seminary, William Jewett Tucker, opened the first settlement house in Boston, Andover House. Tucker and his students had begun to preach the social gospel as they successfully “locked Darwinian science out of the spiritual realm” (Tucker quoted in Carson 1990: 13). Tucker deplored the inference that “Christ culled souls from the world as Darwinian nature culled lives” and sought to replace this idea with a “universal gospel centered on Christ’s embracing love of mankind” (Tucker quoted in Carson 1990: 13). With these messages in mind, Tucker opened Andover House and named Robert Woods as the head worker. Woods had spent six months at Toynbee Hall after graduation from Andover (Carson 1990). Andover House would eventually be renamed South End House and be located less than a mile from Denison House. Although the two houses had different agendas, they would work

together to reach their goals, and Robert Woods would even serve on the board of Denison House for a period of time.

Like Hull House, South End House residents did some investigation of their own in Boston. By 1892 they were publishing surveys of unemployment issues, educational institutions, political activity, and recreational spaces and in 1894 they presented unemployment statistics to the state legislative board (Strieff 2005). In 1898 Woods and other South End House residents published *The City Wilderness*, their portrayal of the people of Boston's South End (Woods 1898). The book included chapters on the district's history, population, wages and work, education, and public health. The book "was intended to be a graphic rendering of the district's poor living conditions...as well as to provide possible solutions to what the settlement workers perceived to be the community's social problems (Streiff 2005: 139).

Another South End settlement was the Harriet Tubman Settlement House. Harriet Tubman House was founded in 1894 by a group of six African-American women. These women sought to "assist working girls in charitable ways" (Vrabel 2004: 246). They were members of the Harriet Tubman Crusaders, the African-American branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. The residence was open to African-American women who were excluded from the city's other settlement and rooming houses. The brownstone structure in which the women resided was donated to them in 1909 by Julia O. Henson. Harriet Tubman visited Boston several times in the early twentieth century and would stay at the Harriet Tubman House (Deutsch 2000). The settlement remained the only public space created, owned, and run by African-American women in Boston

until after WWI.

The CSA and Denison House

In 1887, at a reunion of Smith College graduates in Northampton, Massachusetts, a small group of women made up their minds to found a settlement. These women, Vida Scudder, Helen Rand, Jean Fine, and others, were drawing on their visits to England when they formed the College Settlement Association (CSA). The CSA would work to “unite all college women, and all those who count themselves our friends, in the trend of a great modern movement; would touch them with a common sympathy and inspire them with a common idea” (CSA 1891: 7). However it was not until two years later, in 1889, that seven women moved into the College Settlement, not far from Neighborhood Guild in New York City (Davis 1967). Jean Fine was named head worker of the college settlement. The first meeting of the CSA officially took place on May 12, 1890 at the New York settlement. There were seven electors present from Wellesley, Smith, Vassar, and Bryn Mawr colleges (CSA 1890).

From the beginning, the CSA believed in the importance of having an association to oversee, fund, and staff their settlements, however, the CSA’s most important function was in uniting college women in a common cause. Reasons for the creation of the CSA were stated in their First Annual Report: “... - that interest in the movement for College Settlement should be extended as widely as possible; that responsibility for the support of the work should be thrown upon the College and the public rather than upon a few

individuals; and that the methods of control should be in harmony with democratic conditions” (CSA 1892: 3). The Second Annual Report made it clear that, although the CSA existed to “furnish financial support,” its highest objective was to “bring all college women within the scope of a common purpose and a common work” (CSA 1992: 7). In this way, the CSA was successful. Membership in the CSA grew quickly and gave many college women a chance to be part of the movement, even if it was only in the giving of a monetary donation.

CSA’s membership was open to all women who could afford the membership fee of five dollars, paid yearly. The money in turn went to running and maintaining the settlements the CSA sponsored. In only its second year of operation, the CSA had 723 members. Of that total 503, or just under seventy percent, were attending college or had graduated (CSA 1891). Membership fees and donations totaled \$6,625 in the fiscal year 1890-1891. However the association was only running one settlement at the time and realized that it would take 1,500 members to have funds for the three houses. Rent for the New York settlement alone cost the women 660 membership fees a year (CSA 1891). Colleges could also have member chapters. In order for a college to be a member of the CSA, it would have to either contribute \$100 a year or have twenty fee-paying members of the CSA. In the first year five colleges were represented (Smith, Wellesley, Vassar, Bryn Myr, and the Harvard Annex), seven in the second (Wells and Packer added), and eleven in the third (Elmira, Cornell, Swarthmore, and Mount Holyoke added) (CSA 1892; Henderson 1899).

The CSA was run democratically. Each member college could elect two

“Electors” to the Elector Board to attend the board’s semi-annual meetings each year. A large number of non-college women also joined the CSA and were represented by two Electors. The Elector Board would appoint three members of the Executive Committee for each settlement. The committee would in turn appoint a Head Worker who was responsible to the Electoral Board for the management of the house (Henderson 1899). The CSA would go on to found a total of three settlement houses in New York, Philadelphia and Boston.

It is interesting to note that in the early years of the CSA, the aim of each of the three settlements were quite different. In its Third Annual Report, the CSA saw the aim of its New York settlement as “social.” In the area around Rivington Street, where the settlement was located, the women believed that pleasure had been “crowded out by the unrelenting round of toil” (CSA 1892: 7). Contrary to the goal in New York, the residents of the Philadelphia settlement aimed to bring work and labor to people who were characterized as “anything, but hardworking” and in need of “employment and the self respect begotten of hard labor” (CSA 1892: 7). At the time the Third Annual Report was written, the work in Boston was too new to characterize, however they did state that “the outlook there is largely toward sociological investigation” (CSA 1892: 7). The Report would later attest to the committee’s belief that the house should not be used for clubs or classes, but the residents should instead plan on working with existing agencies and to live among their neighbors in a useful and friendly way (CSA 1892). These statements would turn out to be false as the only record of anything remotely investigational at Denison House is the descriptions of the women’s visits to their neighbors during the first

couple of months. Also Denison House would quickly become a neighborhood center for clubs and classes for women and children.

CSA's Boston settlement opened at 93 Tyler Street on December 27, 1892, with six workers and one housekeeper. A location on Tyler Street was chosen because of the women's ambitions "...to live together in one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city" (CSA 1892: 34). The settlement's founding residents included a Wellesley College professor and future Noble Peace Prizewinner, Emily Greene Balch (1867-1961). Other key residents from the founding generation are Vida Scudder (1861-1954), Helen Cheever, and Helena Dudley (1858-1932), who served as first headworker from 1893 until 1912 (CSA 1891). The settlement was named Denison House, after Edward Denison. The CSA's Third Annual Report (1892: 40) boasts that Denison, who lived among the poor in East London, became "a pioneer in hand to hand work in the district, and displayed a devotion of heart, and a cool clear-headedness of method which we would be glad to imitate."

One of the founders of the CSA and the first Executive Committee Chairman of Denison House was Vida Scudder. Scudder was born in Madurai, India, in 1861 and returned to Boston with her mother when her father died in 1862. She grew up in Boston's Back Bay, a few blocks from the slums, but was highly ignorant of the conditions that plagued the poor until she started at Smith College (Scudder 1937). Upon graduation she traveled to Oxford for postgraduate study, accompanied by her mother as a chaperone, and "found herself at the storm center of the new credo of religious social service" (Carson 1990: 38).

Although Scudder never personally visited Toynbee Hall, she learned from those who had been influenced by the work they saw there. At Oxford she was also awakened to the work of Ruskin and vowed to dedicate herself to helping those less fortunate than her. These experiences stayed with her once she returned to the U.S., where she eventually became a Wellesley College professor and leader of the College Settlement Association (Carson 1990: 38).

When she first envisioned Denison House, Scudder imagined the women teaching their neighbors “a few of the practical things which the better classes of the poor in our city so desperately needed” (Scudder quoted in Streiff 2005: 141). Scudder never lived at Denison house, but she praised the CSA for enabling many who “were not free to live for long periods of time in the settlement, to share in the movement” (Scudder 1937: 137). She saw the fact that she could draw her students to the settlement compensated a little for the fact she was not able to live in the settlement herself. However Scudder (1937: 67) did spend much of her life outside of teaching in a “class institution” at the settlement. As she would later write in her memoir, “For we are all segregated in the prison of class...and until we escape from such prison, at least through imagination, or better through personal contacts, our culture is bound to remain tragically cramped and incomplete” (Scudder 1937: 68).

Scudder’s expectations of settlement work differed from prominent settlement ideas of the time. She became an ardent socialist in the 1890s, when she turned to the works of Marx and joined the Society of Christian Socialists in Boston. She believed that under socialism, everyone would be economically and morally better off. Perhaps

through her socialist mindset, she came to believe that the purpose of the settlement should not be to study the community, as was the case as Hull House and South End House, but should instead be redemptive. In October of 1892 she wrote that, a settlement stood “not for the application of method, nor for the accumulation of fact, nor for the evolution of theory,” but was instead “a purely spiritual idea” in which a settlement workers life approached “more closely than any other life to the example of the Master” (Scudder quoted in Frederick 1970: 419). Along the same lines, in 1902 she wrote “in order to promote the common life, it is necessary to live the life in common” (Scudder in Frederick 1970: 421). Scudder did not officially join the Socialist Party until 1911.

The first headworker of Denison House was Helena Dudley. Very little is known about Dudley’s early life. At the age of 26, she enrolled at MIT. From there she went to Bryn Mawr, where she was a member of the first graduating class of women in 1889. Dudley resigned from Packer Institute in Brooklyn, where she was a biology teacher, to spend some time as head worker of the CSA’s Philadelphia settlement before moving to Boston (Scudder 1937). Scudder had nothing but praise for Dudley. In her autobiography, Scudder (1937: 142) says this of Dudley: “A glowing warmth of friendliness centered in the great of that Head worker, diffused through that whole neighborhood joy, strength, comfort, and vision. Together Scudder and Dudley were the most active of Denison Houses residents in the women’s labor movement. Possibly out of fear that her pacifist views, socialism, and work in the labor movement would deter more conservative donors to Denison House, Dudley retired as headworker in 1912 after almost 19 years of service. After retiring her post at Denison House, she ardently involved in the world peace

movement. She spent the last decade of her life living with Vida Scudder in Wellesley. She died in 1932 at the age of seventy-four in Geneva, Switzerland after attending the congress of the Women's International League in Grenoble, France.

Emily Greene Balch was another founder of Denison House who, like Dudley and Scudder, was an ardent pacifist and supporter of the labor movement. Balch was born in Jamaica Plains, Massachusetts on January 8, 1867. According to her biographer, Mercedes M. Randall (1964), there was a strong sense of mission in her childhood in post-Civil War Boston. As a child, Balch attended that same school as Robert Woods. She then went on to attend Miss Ireland's school in Beacon Hill until she entered Bryn Mawr, where she became a member of the first graduating class of the college in 1889, along with Helena Dudley. She then spent some time in Europe before becoming acting headworker at Denison House until Dudley was available to step in permanently. In 1896 Balch was offered a position to teach at Wellesley College, where she became a professor of economics and sociology. After securing a leave of absence from teaching, Balch played a prominent role in 1915 in founding the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. When she returned to the U.S. in 1918 to ask the college for an extension in her leave, the board of trustees instead terminated her contract because of her pacifist views (Randall 1964).

The women of Denison House had found their place in the tenement-covered South Cove. Soon 1500 people a week would pass through the Green Room of Denison House. Over time the workers set up clubs for neighborhood children, English classes for immigrant adults, ethnic fairs and clubs, a kindergarten, a vacation school, and other

educational activities and lectures.

The residents of Denison House had to earn their keep. Each resident paid \$5.50 to \$6.50 a week in room and board. On top of that, they were required to devote a certain amount of time to the settlement. Each resident was required to give four hours a day to settlement work, one hour to sociological reading, one-half hour to light housework, and one-half a day a week to helping the head worker (Spain 2001).

Being a community predominately made up of women before suffrage, the residents of Denison House had to be creative in their pursuits. The first characteristic that contributed to the success of life in the settlement was the basic setup and functioning of the settlement itself. By living and working closely with other women who shared the same basic interests and work, the women developed a sense of camaraderie. As Kathryn Kish Sklar (1985: 660) wrote, the settlement “supplied an emotional and economic substitute for traditional family life, linking her with other talented women of her own class and educational and political background and thereby greatly increasing her political and social power.” The camaraderie, no doubt, helped the women carry on in the settlements; however they had to cross into the traditionally male, public sphere before they could even move into the tenement districts.

CHAPTER 4

THE IDEAL WOMAN

If I were asked the mission of the ideal woman, I would reply: it is to make the whole world homelike (Francis Willard 1887 in Meyerowitz 1988: 64).

The women who would eventually make their way into the settlements were children of the Victorian Era. With industrialization and the rise of the middle class, the idea of the “ideal women” also arose. By the 1850s, the American middle class “proudly claimed their right to social distinction” and were “consolidating as a class with social borders clearly defined by detailed criteria of social expertise” (Hulltunen 1982: 197).

According to historian Barbara Welter, there were four cardinal virtues of true womanhood, which all middle-class women were expected to follow. They were purity, piety, domesticity, and submission. Women were often warned not to let intellectual and personal pursuits take them away from the home and God. As author T.S. Arthur wrote in 1847, “Even if we cannot reform the world in a moment, we can begin the work by reforming ourselves and our households. It is women’s mission. Let her not look away from her own little family circle for the means of producing moral and social reform, but begin at home” (Arthur quoted in Welter 1966: 162).

Woman’s literature

By the mid-nineteenth century, dress, etiquette, and homemaking had become

important markings for middle-class status. Novels, magazines, and advice books all began to reflect “a highly positive image of the ‘notable housewife’ in action” (Matthews 1987: 11). A genre of “domestic novel” was created, with books written by and about women that depicted “heroines demonstrating remarkable initiative in creating homes” (Matthews 1987: 11). Between 1830 and 1870, about 70 American etiquette manuals were published. *Godey’s Ladies Book* began publication in 1830, and by 1860 over 150,000 women looked to *Godey’s* to learn how to dress and decorate their homes (Halttunen 1892). The *Household*, *Peterson’s*, and *Godey’s* each included monthly columns with advice on homemaking and decorating (Green 1983). Homemaking, including cooking and home decoration, became a craft that women could take pride in.

Sarah Josepha Buell Hale, editor of *Godey’s Ladies Book*, was a firm believer in the “women’s sphere” and accepted the role of women as mothers and wives (Clinton et al. 2000). She wrote widely about women’s superiority to men in matters of moral and religious issues and in the raising of children. She believed that it was the man’s job to find the means and “it is the duty of the woman to use these means in such a manner as will secure the best interests and the purest enjoyments of the household with which she stands connected” (Hale quotes in Clark 1986: 32). Hale and other writers of advice columns for women believed that women could influence the nation as a whole by setting a moral example for their children in the home.

Advice books that inevitably tied women to the home continued to be published throughout the 1800s. Perhaps the most noteworthy are Catherine E. Beecher’s *Treatise on Domestic Economy, for the Use of Young Ladies at Home and at School* (1841) and

her sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe's, *The American Woman's Home* (1869). Beecher's book was republished in annual editions and widely used in schools. Historian Clifford Clarke (1986: 33) believes that Stowe's book "idealized the family as the 'ablest earthly illustration of the heavenly kingdom,' praised the wife as the 'chief minister' whose mission was to provide an example of service and self-sacrifice, and set forth a vision of family life as the epitome of harmonious social interdependence." But unlike the advice magazines and books written by others, the sisters provided specific advice on how to economize, organize, and improve the efficiency of everyday life in the home. They aimed to make the woman a "professional home expert" by offering meticulous advice on "cleaning, ventilation, heating, storage, laundry, food preparation, and house decoration" (Clarke 1986: 33).

Perhaps the greatest barrier to settlement work for women was the middle-class ideology of "separate spheres" that developed out of the middle class woman's push for importance in the home. Although Beecher, Stowe, and others were putting forth a strong argument for making women the authority in the home, they were also setting up a dichotomy which could be seen as confining them to the home.

Education for women

Higher education was the first male-dominated space into which women made their way. They did this by first providing themselves with single-sex educational opportunities to prove that the females' "delicate disposition" would not suffer from too much mental exertion. Victorian values had constrained women to an inferior position in

society, both physically and mentally.

Following the American Revolution, the idea of “Republican motherhood” made a small degree of education important for women. Republican motherhood meant that women, as mothers of the Republic, became bearers of culture and education. They were nourishing future citizens and were expected to be a source of moral, political, and cultural guidance (Horowitz 1984). This especially stood true for mothers of sons. Writing about early education for women, Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz (1984: 11) writes, “through them, sons imbibed the milk of citizenship and virtue.”

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, advanced education for women was rare. The only opportunities available before the 1820s were academies and seminaries, which were largely finishing schools for middle-class and elite daughters. As many as 400 of these academies and seminaries were founded between 1790 and 1830. However women’s education continually reflected the idea that women were not being trained for professional positions, but instead would retreat back to the domestic sphere (Solomon 1985). In essence the academies and seminaries trained women either for teaching or for Republican motherhood (Horowitz 1984).

The first opportunities for female higher education grew out of these academies and seminaries. In 1820 Emma Willard opened her seminary in Troy, NY as the first institute of advanced learning for women. In 1837, Mary Lyon, a Willard student, opened Mount Holyoke Seminary. Although not officially a college until 1888, Mount Holyoke offered higher education opportunities for women (Clinton 2000). Lyon wanted to give her students not only the highest education, but also a heightened state of consciousness

about service to God and the community. She also wanted to create the mother-daughter bond in the student-teacher relationship (Horowitz 1984).

The women's colleges and seminaries that followed opened largely on the Mount Holyoke model. Rockford Female Seminary, the college from which Jane Addams graduated, opened in Illinois in 1847. Rockford was a sister college to the all-male Beloit College, which had been founded the year before. Rockford Seminary, like other early female educational institutions, encouraged their students to become missionaries. Addams, who struggled with her religious beliefs her whole life, refused to consider this vocation. Mills College in California was founded in 1852 as a seminary and became a college in 1885 under the leadership of Susan Tolman Mills, a graduate of Mount Holyoke Seminary. Oberlin College, founded in Ohio in 1833, began admitting women students in 1837. Vassar, the first all-women's "college," opened in New York in 1865 and offered a full liberal arts curriculum. It was followed by Wellesley and Smith in Massachusetts in 1875 and Bryn Mawr in Pennsylvania 1884. Women's colleges provided constant supervision, structured time, and rules governing the actions of the students. Like Mount Holyoke they strove to create a homelike bond between students and teachers. At Wellesley College Henry Fowle Durant hired only women as teachers and school president. The faculty lived among the students and sat at the head of the table at dinner. Vassar had the same practice of placing teachers among students; however they hired male instructors who lived separately from the students (Horowitz 1984).

Critics saw boarding colleges and seminaries as disastrous. They took women away from the family and "undermined women's ability to serve as wives and mothers"

(Rosenberg 1982: 22). Some believed that the women should at least live with another family if they were to go away to school. Possibly in reaction to this sentiment, Smith College developed cottage houses for their students, in which they would eat and sleep. Each cottage would also include a faculty member as a substitute parent. As Horowitz (1984: 87) writes, “Like the home in the same period, the cottage served as the repository of values, a feminine refuge from the challenges of contemporary life.” The system created a domestic environment with a female influence. As a result of the cottage houses, the women developed bonds that would last beyond college and take many into settlement work together (Horowitz 1984).

After the Civil War, critics also believed that education for women would affect both their mind and body. First there was the commonly held belief that colleges were helping women develop their manly side. Colleges and education in general were seen as making women more masculine. Horowitz (1984) believes that the colleges understood this belief and took actions to keep it from happening. As she writes, “Vassar’s location, Wellesley’s beauty, Smith’s much-copied cottages, and Radcliffe’s boarding houses were planned to insure that higher education did not unsex women students” (Horowitz 1984: 167).

A contemporary, Dr. Edward Clarke believed that “masculinized” women disrupted the sexual division which was society’s stabilizing force. Educated women would only break that down. In his book, *Sex in Education or, A Fair Chance for Girls* (1873: 114-115), Dr. Clarke wrote:

While woman preserves her sex, she will necessarily be feebler than men,

and having her special bodily and mental characters, will have, to a certain extent, her own sphere of activity; where she has become thoroughly masculine in nature, or hermaphrodite in mind, - when, in fact, she has pretty well divested herself of her sex, - then she may take his ground, and do his work, but will have lost her feminine attractions, and probably also her chief feminine functions.

In other words, an educated woman would be more masculine than feminine in nature.

Dr. Clarke also accepted the Spencerian idea of human evolution and used it to argue that the mental strain of college would have adverse effects on female reproductive organs. This, coupled with the fact that female college graduates were less likely to get married, and even those that married tended to have few children, led Clarke and others to cry fears of “race suicide” (Clarke 1973, Rosenberg 1982, Solomon 1985). The marriage and birth rates for college educated women were lower than they were for the general public (Kessler- Harris 1982: 113).

The first generation of college women was typically from similar backgrounds. Most were from middle-class families. Many had fathers who were successful in professional and business careers and mothers who had graduated from academies or seminaries. For many their parents believed that education for both sexes would help to lead fuller lives (Solomon 1985).

Even among those who advocated for female higher education, there was some question about what college was preparing young women for. Some believed that college for women should involve only preparation for motherhood. With this mentality, education that went beyond this was considered a challenge to the “cult of true womanhood” (Carson 1990: 23). However, although many agreed that “women bore a

special burden in the progress and refinement of civilization,” some also believed more strongly that “she was to be prepared not by shielding her from the harsh realities of public life, but by educating her about them” (Carson 1990: 23).

Smith College’s first president, Reverend Lawrence Clarke Seelye, believed college made women more valuable to society and enlarged their capacities and morality. Along the same lines, but on a more practical note, Wellesley College founder, Henry Fowle Durant, saw education as a way to build moral strength and answer God’s call to women to fight for reforms in social life (Rousmaniere 1970).

No matter what the goals in educating young women, female education continued to grow throughout the nineteenth century. By 1870, 11,000 women were enrolled in colleges and seminaries. Of those 2,200 attended women’s colleges, 600 attended coeducational colleges, and 20 attended state universities (Horowitz 1984: 56).

The first leaders and workers of Denison House were graduates of the first women’s colleges. Emily Green Balch and Helena Stuart Dudley were both members of the first graduating class at Bryn Mawr. Dudley was a biology student and older than the rest of her classmates at 31 years of age. After graduating in 1889, Balch was awarded a Bryn Mawr fellowship to study in Europe. Vida Scudder attended Smith College, and she and three fellow alumnae went on to found the CSA. Scudder and Balch both spent their subsequent careers as professors at Wellesley College (Scudder 1937, Randall 1964)

After college

The women were often stereotyped once they returned home from college.

Whether they gave off an air of superiority or not, some women found themselves ostracized by their peers. They often had to be “resocialized” into middle-class America. Some even began to doubt the value of their education because they could not find friends or a place in society. With all this in mind, it is not hard to see why the women tended to stay in their peer groups and came to find comfort in the settlements (Rousmaniere 1970).

Upon graduating, the college-educated women struggled with exactly what college had trained them for (Addams 1910; Solomon 1985; Muncy 1991; Trattner 1999). As Addams (1910) wrote, “We have in America a fast-growing number of cultivated young people who have no recognized outlet for their active faculties.” Fresh from college, the women had few options available to them. An unmarried adult woman’s first obligation was to her parents. Most were expected to return home until they were married. Middle-class attitudes also implied that being a lady meant staying out of the workforce (Solomon 1985). With that in mind, volunteerism “remained the unifying principle in the activities of all educated women” (Solomon 1985: 124).

Those that needed to work for financial reasons had very few options available to them. As Trattner (1999: 172) observed, “unwilling or unable to either return home, get married, and settle down as wives and mothers or to perform work for which they were vastly overqualified, the women had difficulty finding suitable employment.”

Jane Addams is just one example of a settlement resident who was conflicted after college. Addams wanted to go to Smith College, however her father forced her to attend Rockford Seminary like her sister, which was closer to home. At Rockford Addams met

Starr, who spent one year at Rockford before being forced to leave because of family finances (Carson 1990). After college both Addams and Starr became depressed because of their lack of options. It was not until they visited Toynbee Hall that they found their life's work (Muncy 1991). Addams believed that "the work in the slums was important not so much for the slum dwellers as for the women college graduates who worked there whose education had cut them off so completely from conventional Victorian culture" (Rosenberg 1982: 33). To Addams and Starr, Hull House was a sanctuary from the "family claim" and a "purpose that satisfied their desire for independence and accomplishment without undermining their sense of womanhood" (Rosenberg 1982: 33). Settlements offered the women a role in public life and personal freedom.

Settlement work also offered a sense of belonging that the women had become accustomed to in college (Carson 1990). At the all-female liberal arts schools especially, small, independent peer groups had been emphasized. Schools also spoke to the superiority of their students to other non-college educated women (Rousmaniere 1970). With this mentality, the women looked to their college peers to form kinship groups within the settlements. As Rousmaniere (1970: 60) writes, "perhaps the life was so satisfying because it was so familiar."

Settlement life also satisfied the service norm which made the settlement at least socially approved by society (Rousmaniere 1970). Between 1889 and 1914, nine-tenths of the female settlement workers had been to college. As Solomon (1985: 110) wrote, "The first generation gave it continuous leadership, while women undergraduates of the second and third generations turned to the settlements for enlightening field work." In

fact Vassar, Smith, and Wellesley gave birth to all sixteen of the first-year residents of the CSA (Rousmaniere1970).

CHAPTER 5

TRANSCENDING SPHERES

For we are all segregated in the prison of class...and until we escape from such prison, at least through imagination, or far better through personal contacts, our culture is bound to remain tragically cramped and incomplete (Scudder 1937: 68).

By the mid-nineteenth century, Boston had seen the emergence of a new cultural-historical space. The colonial household was once a microcosm of society, with home and workplace, one and the same. But the modern city saw an increasing separation of the home and the outside world. This restructuring of the social landscape of the city was the result of the creation of industrial and commercial areas separate from residential areas.

Of course the city landscape had to be navigated differently, according to one's gender, class, and ethnicity. For what became an urban middle class, the change involved shifting from a family economy, where the family is a unit of production, to a place where the family is a unit of consumption. Middle-class dwellings become increasingly geographically separated from political and manufacturing centers. For the individual family members, this meant changes as well. The middle-class wife, mother, and daughter went from having production as their primary goal to becoming managers of the home, responsible for maintaining social ties and supervising domestic servants. For the males in the household, this change meant that their main responsibility became the

household's economic wellbeing, one goal being to maintain their middle-class status. Those who were once masters were no longer directly involved in manufacturing, but became managers instead. For the middle class, the home became a haven from the increasingly scary outside world; a world that a proper middle-class woman had to navigate very carefully if she was to enter it (Wall 1994).

For the lower class, or working class, life also changed. Before the mid-nineteenth century, many employees lived with their employers, but they now found themselves living in separate parts of the city. Often needing to work long hours and unable to afford transportation to work, the working class found themselves segregated in areas close to centers of production. Because they could only afford the most meager dwellings, many tenement apartments were located above storefronts with little of the separation of home and public life that the middle class worked so hard to preserve. Men, women, and children of the lower classes were often expected, and needed, to work to support the family. Women sometimes took in piecework in an attempt to work from home, however they could usually be found in the factory, working alongside the children (Wall 1994).

Entering working-class space

In Boston, as well as other major U.S. cities, the first generation of middle-class, college-educated women were forced to reconceive their world. Born from the same mission-oriented traditions as their male counterparts, women had the added obstacle of crossing the boundary from private into the public sphere of society (Deutsch 2000). At the time the residents chose 93 Tyler Street, the South End was the most undesirable

place in the city. It was a “morally questionable terrain” and much of the “debate over women’s moral behavior was centered” around the district (Deutsch 2000: 85). By purchasing a home in the South End and opening up their doors to union and neighborhood meetings and activities, these women were blurring the lines between public and private, middle and working class, immigrant and American, and male and female spheres.

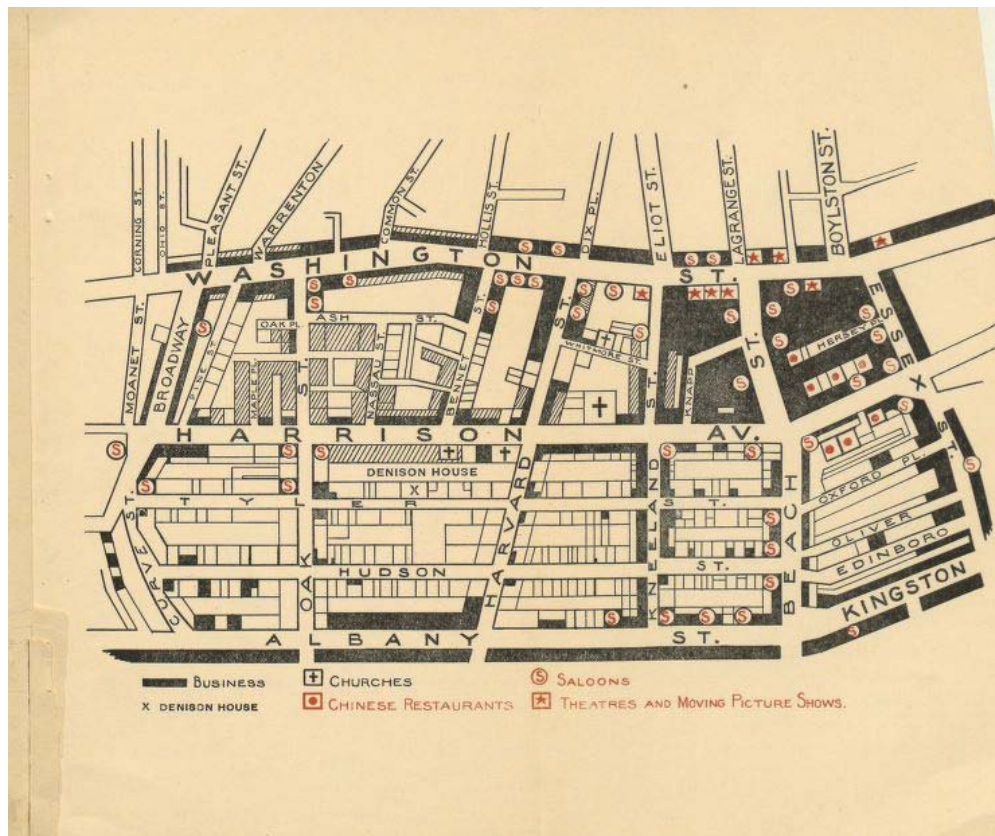


FIGURE 6. Map of area around Denison House c1913 (CSA 1913, Courtesy of Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University)

When the residents of Denison House first chose their location at 93 Tyler Street in Boston, they were also acting contrary to what they had been taught about gender,

class, and ethnicity. Historian Dolores Hayden (1995: 22) wrote, “One of the consistent ways to limit the economic and political rights of groups had been to constrain social reproduction by limiting access to space.” Women had many spacial barriers to overcome because of gender; forbidden activities included voting, forbidden establishments included men’s clubs and some higher education, and forbidden public spaces included the slums for middle-class women (Hayden 1995). As middle-class women, they had been immersed in literature about domesticity and the predominant ideology about a woman’s proper place in the urban landscape, the home. The personification of nineteenth-century women in public spaces, mostly as streetwalkers, dangerous women, or those in danger of becoming morally corrupt by spending too much time on the streets, was an idea of which the women were all too aware (Ryan 1990).

Emily Greene Balch was just one example of a nineteenth-century woman who was aware of the impact entering the slums might have on her reputation. Balch’s biographer wrote, “Though it was her fate to be reared among proper Bostonians, it was her choice to mingle with many improper Bostonians, prisoners, prostitutes, paupers, neglected children, juvenile offenders and , worst of all for her later professional reputation, labor leaders, strikers, and pacifists, with whom she made common cause” (Randall 1964: 16). It is not a surprise that women like Balch decided to rewrite the rules of historical-cultural space that kept most middle-class women confined to the home. Throughout her life, Balch felt the strain of her birthright (Randall 1964). In her autobiography, Vida Scudder (1937: 67) expressed her regret that colleges were “class institutions” and that she did not have “free contact with industrial workers.” Both of

these women, and others of the first generation of settlement workers, worked their whole lives to free themselves and others from the confines of class. Balch and her peers found a way to enter those spaces with relatively little criticism – Denison House.

In 1893 the CSA reported that there were no rules as to the length of residency at Denison House. However they did distinguish between visitors, those who spent less than two consecutive months at Denison House, and residents, who spent more than two consecutive months in the house (fig. 7). From the month of its opening in December of 1892 until October of 1893, Denison House had thirty-five visitors and fifteen residents (CSA 1893). With fifty women moving in and out over an eleven month period, it was hard for the residents to build trust with their neighbors. Few of the workers remained in the city during the summer months and when Denison House was up and running again in September, only one resident from the previous winter returned.

Over time a core group of longtime residents was formed. Headworker Helena Dudley, who entered the house in September of 1893, would stay until July of 1912, giving almost twenty years of service to Denison House. Her Assistant Headworker, Miss E. Mackintosh, also left in 1912, after twelve years at the settlement. Other long-time residents included Katherine Morse, who moved to Denison House in 1899 and remained until sometime after 1912, and E. W. Buckingham, a cooking instructor, who resided at Denison House between 1901 and 1912. Mary Robinson, Bernice Mann, M. E. Guillet, and G. L. Tebutt each give over four years to Denison House (DH 1912). These were the women who made settlement work their life's work. Many of them had to make the choice between Denison House and marriage.

RESIDENTS.

Miss Helen Cheever	{ Dec. 27 to May 2, June 15 to July 17, Oct. 10—
Mrs. I. G. Hartwell	Dec. 27 to June 15.
Miss Laurette Cate	Dec. 27 to June 15.
Miss Carol Dresser	Dec. 28 to June 15.
Miss Susan W. Peabody	Jan. 16 to June 15.
Miss Maude Mason (Fellow)	Jan. 23 to April 3.
Miss Hannah M. Todd	Mar. 27 to May 31.
Miss Rollins	June 21 to Aug. 11.
Miss Ellen S. Ward	{ July 3 to Sept. 19, Oct. 4—
Miss Cora Stewart	July 17 to Aug. 28.
Miss Nina Brown	Aug. 11 to Oct. 26..
Miss Helena S. Dudley (Head Worker)	Sept. 5—
Miss V. D. Scudder	Sept. 5—
Miss K. P. Woods (Fellow)	Oct. 17—
Miss C. L. Williamson	Oct. 15—

VISITORS.

Miss Jane Addams.	Miss C. I. Ireland.
Miss Lucy Adams.	Miss Anna Lathrop.
Mrs. C. G. Ames.	Miss Jean Loomis.
Miss E. G. Balch.	Miss Lucy A. Morse.
Miss Edith Bancroft.	Miss Mason.
Miss Buffington.	Miss Myrick.
Misses Cheever.	Miss Pope.
Miss Coatsworth.	Miss Shepherd.
Miss Katharine Coman.	Miss Sherwin.
Miss Florence Converse.	Miss Simrall.
Miss Ida M. Davis.	Miss Smith.
Miss Dillingham.	Miss Zilpha D. Smith.
Miss L. R. Elder.	Miss Very.
Miss Frear.	Miss Winifred Watson..
Miss J. Freeman.	Miss Irene Weir.
Miss Julia George.	Miss White.
Miss Hancock.	Miss Young.
Misses Hartwell.	

FIGURE 7. Denison House visitors and residents 1892-1893 (CSA 1893)

Headworker Dudley constantly expressed the importance of finding workers who were willing to stay for longer periods of time. In the 1896 Report of the Headworker she wrote:

It is desirable, for the sake of continuity in the work, that candidates should, whenever possible, plan to remain in the Settlement at least one season. All are welcome, even those who can stay only two or three months, and those who can give time in the summer are particularly values; but it is obvious that the short term of residence is as inadequate here as it would be elsewhere to establish lasting and helpful friendships or even to gain thorough insight into

neighborhood conditions.... Much stimulus and some wisdom, on the other hand, may be acquired by the resident in a short time, but her gain and usefulness both increase in geometrical ratio as she remains (Dudley 1896: 42).

Although she welcomed those who could only stay a short period of time, she did warn that short stays would not allow the visitor to gain insight into the neighborhood or allow for any lasting connections.

RESIDENTS (Three Months or More)			
NAME	COLLEGE	DATE OF ENTRANCE	DATE OF LEAVING
Miss H. S. Dudley..... (Head Worker)	Bryn Mawr..	Sept., 1893	July, 1912
Miss E. Mackintosh..... (Assistant Headworker)	.....	Sept., 1900	June, 1912
Miss Geraldine Gordon... (Associate)	Wellesley....	Sept., 1911	.....
Miss Katherine Morse....	Wellesley....	Nov., 1899	.....
Miss E. W. Buckingham... (Teacher of Cooking)	.....	Sept., 1901	May, 1912
Mrs. G. L. Tebutt..... (Syrian Work)	.....	June, 1904	.....
Miss M. E. Guillet.....	.....	July, 1906	.....
Miss Bernice Mann..... (Nurse)	.....	April, 1907	Dec., 1911
Miss Mary Robinson.....	Wellesley....	Oct., 1908	May, 1912
Miss Louise Lovejoy..... (Nurse)	.....	Dec., 1911	.....
Mrs. Bertha P. Burke.... (Housekeeper)	.....	Nov., 1911	.....
Miss Helen Lord..... (C. S. A. Fellow)	Smith.....	Nov., 1911	June, 1912
Miss Ethel Ramsey.....	.....	Oct., 1911	May, 1912
Miss Harriet Hilton.....	.....	Oct., 1911	Jan., 1912
Miss Jennie Haxton.....	.....	Sept., 1911	.....
Mr. Chester Ellinwood...	Harvard....	Oct., 1911	May, 1912
Mr. Rowan Parker.....	Harvard....	Oct., 1910	June, 1912
(One to Three Months)			
Miss Julia Drury, Miss Sarah Shaw, Mrs. Grace Stratton, Miss Elizabeth Huber, Miss Mary Rice, Miss Faneal Harrison, Miss Marie Lundberg, Miss Bertha Terrace, Miss Alice Correll, Miss Mary Boyd, Miss Grace Young, Mrs. R. R. Parke, Miss J. C. Davis, Miss M. A. C. Neill, Miss Katherine Bill.			

FIGURE 8. Residents of Denison House 1911-1912 (DH 1912)

As late as 1912, there were still those that chose to make settlement work only a brief stopover on their way to marriage and family life. In that year there were five workers who moved into Denison House in September or October and had moved on by May or June of the following year. In addition, the winter of 1911 to 1912 saw fifteen visitors moving in and out of Denison House after staying a period of one to three months. It is also interesting to note that by 1912 Denison House had accumulated over 150 outside workers and volunteers. These were women who would give a period of time to the settlement on a weekly or monthly basis, but not actually reside at Denison House (DH 1912).

Physical space

When the women first chose 93 Tyler Street for the site of Denison House, it was considered the worst house on a street full of dirty and broken-down tenements. Vida Scudder (1937) reported that 40 or 50 people had lived in the lower floor of the tenement house that was remodeled to become Denison House. After years of subletting and wear and tear, it cost the CSA \$2000 to “bring the place up to a good sanitary condition,” a hefty sum in 1893 (CSA 1894). Most of the work was done to the interior, living and activity areas. The photograph (fig. 9) below shows the exterior of 93 Tyler Street. It would have looked similar to the other tenement building on the outside.

The bedrooms were located on the upper levels of the house. There were nine in total and the women paid a board of \$5.50 to \$6.50 per month depending on the room. At its conception, seven women called Denison House home. Through much of the early

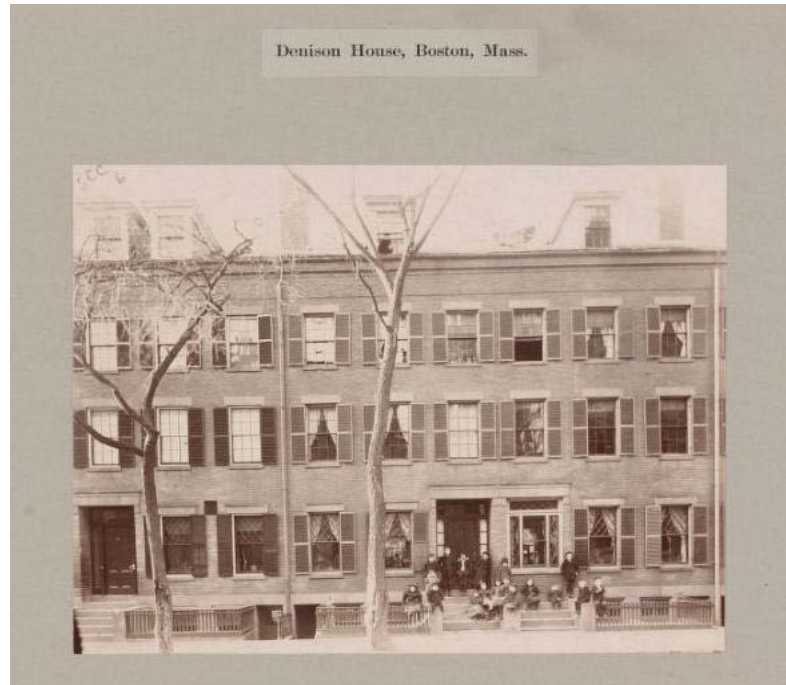


FIGURE 9. Exterior of Denison House at 93 Tyler Street (Denison House Papers, Courtesy of Schlessinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard Library)

years of Denison Houses existence, at any given time, about half of the residents were college women. Each resident had her own room, and there were often open rooms available for visitors to spend the night. Jane Addams of Hull House was a guest at Denison House more than once. By organizing their bedrooms on the second floor, they were able to restrict neighborhood activities to the first floor. Of course, that still meant opening their parlor, dining room, and kitchen areas to visitors of all classes.

The residents of Denison House were continually looking to expand their physical space. As the number of activities and services they provided to their neighbors expanded, so did their need for more room. In 1896 the women enlarged their space by accumulating 91 Tyler Street, giving the settlement a larger activity area on the first floor

and five more rooms for residents on the upper levels. A reading room was added at 95 Tyler Street in 1898, with another floor of the building added in 1902 to support a boys' club, and by 1903 they were utilizing all of 95 Tyler Street. By 1911 Denison House could boast ownership of 91, 93, 95, and 98 Tyler Street (CSA 1913).

In addition the residents were able to obtain a gymnasium in 1900 when a nearby chapel was donated to Denison House. After raising the money for refurbishment and equipment, it was open for use by Denison House classes and clubs. The next year they turned the gymnasium over to the city and, in return, received \$500 a year for its use. It became the first public gymnasium in the South End.

Denison House depended largely on donations for everything from rent and wages to furnishing and repairing the space. Unlike other local settlements, CSA settlements had the added benefit of collecting donations and membership fees from women's colleges all over the country. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, CSA membership fees and donations totaled between five and seven thousand dollars a year (fig. 10). Membership fees were recorded according to one's college, as each colleges' CSA chapter worked to increase their membership numbers within the association.

There were clearly pros and cons to being associated with the CSA. The CSA allowed Denison House access to women resident workers from member colleges throughout the country. The association also helped to promote the settlement and raise funds for settlement use. Vida Scudder (1937) believed that another strength of the CSA was that it allowed women who did not have the opportunity to live in a settlement to

play a part in the work of the settlement, either by making financial contributions or serving on electoral boards and committees. However the patrons to the CSA and Denison House may have restricted the activities and work of the residents. Usually on the more conservative side and less likely to have spent time in the settlement, donors appear to have constrained the work of Denison House to activities more acceptable to the middle class.

SUMMARY.			
Wellesley	College Subscription.....	\$280 50	
	Alumnæ ".....	628 00	
			\$908 50
Smith	College Subscription.....	\$367 00	
	Alumnæ ".....	473 18	
			840 18
Vassar	College Subscription.....	\$163 25	
	Alumnæ ".....	359 66	
			522 91
Bryn Mawr	College Subscription.....	\$231 50	
	Alumnæ ".....	214 00	
			445 50
Radcliffe	College Subscription.....	\$48 25	
	Alumnæ ".....	105 50	
			153 75
Wells	College Subscription.....	\$76 00	
	Alumnæ ".....	92 00	
			168 00
Packer Collegiate Institute	College Subscription.....	\$20 00	
	Alumnæ ".....	160 00	
			180 00
Cornell	Alumnæ Subscription.....		100 00
Swarthmore	College Subscription.....	\$46 00	
	Alumnæ ".....	65 00	
			111 00
Elmira	College Subscription.....	\$36 00	
	Alumnæ ".....	89 00	
			125 00
Mt. Holyoke	College Subscription.....	\$75 00	
	Alumnæ ".....	25 00	
			100 00
Woman's College of Baltimore	College Subscription.....	\$85 00	
	Alumnæ ".....	15 00	
			100 00
Barnard	College Subscription.....	\$92 75	
	Alumnæ ".....	20 00	
			112 75
Barnard Sub Chapter.....			16 00
Other Colleges.....			120 00
Non-Collegiate.....			982 00
Donations.....			166 00
			\$5,151 59

FIGURE 10. CSA donations and membership fees for 1895 (CSA 1895)

The CSA budget for 1895 gives an example of how the parent organization chose to allocate its money (fig. 11). In that year, \$4,200 was given directly to the settlements. New York Settlement, most likely because it was the most established, was given \$3000, with the Philadelphia and Boston Settlements each receiving \$600. On top of that, Boston received an extra \$90 in "Donations over paid." Just over \$500 dollars went to association expenses, including the printing of annual reports, postage fees, and travel expenses. At the end of the year, the CSA ended up with a \$1048.94 surplus, with most of this going into the bank (CSA 1895).

REPORT OF THE GENERAL TREASURER.		RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES, SEPTEMBER 1, 1894 TO SEPTEMBER 1, 1895.	
RECEIPTS.		EXPENDITURES.	
On hand September 1, 1894.....	\$1,188 35	Appropriations :	
Membership fees received during year :		New York Settlement, Oct. 1, '94 to Oct. 1, '95.....	\$3,000 00
For '92-'93.....	\$1 00	Philadelphia Settlement, Oct. 1, '94 to Oct. 1, '95.....	600 00
For past year, '93-'94.....	77 85	Boston Settlement, Sept. 1, '94 to Sept. 1, '95....	600 00
For current year, '94-'95.....	4,533 59		\$4,200 00
For coming year, '95-'96.....	195 75	Donations paid over :	
	4,808 19	New York Settlement.....	\$27 00
Donations received during year :		Boston Settlement.....	90 00
To the Association.....	\$166 00	Fellow for current year.....	117 00
To the New York Settlement.....	27 00	Association expenses :	
To the Boston Settlement.....	90 00	Printing 5,000 annual reports.....	\$180 00
	283 00	2,000 lists of subscribers.....	53 00
Interest on bank balance.....	25 66	5,000 subscription blanks.....	7 50
		1,000 reprints of Fellow's report.....	66 00
		2,000 by-laws.....	25 00
		Small printing.....	22 75
			\$354 25
		Stamps, stationery, etc.....	112 48
		Freight and express.....	23 15
		Expenses of Fellowship Committee, postage, etc.....	16 88
		Type-writing.....	4 25
		Travelling expenses.....	13 00
		Share in expense of Conference of Settlements.....	5 25
			529 26
		Balance on hand Sept. 1, 1895 :	
		Deposited with Bay State Trust Co. of Boston.....	\$1,048 94
		On hand.....	110 00
			1,158 94
			\$6,305 20
			\$6,305 20

I have examined the above account and find it correct and properly vouched.
BOSTON, October 8, 1895.

SARAH YERXA.

FIGURE 11. CSA budget for 1895 (CSA 1895)

Besides the money from the CSA, Denison House had to search out donations of its own to cover expenses to run the settlement. As figures 12 and 13 illustrate, to supplement the \$600 appropriated to them by the General Treasurer the residents also relied on balances carried over from previous years, local donations and annual subscriptions, and bank interest (fig. 12). At least in 1895, the bulk of the money went to

TREASURER'S REPORT OF BOSTON SETTLEMENT.			
MARY MORTON KEHEW IN ACCOUNT WITH BOSTON COLLEGE SETTLEMENT, FOR THE YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 1, 1894.			
RECEIPTS.		EXPENSES.	
To balance on hand Sept. 1, 1893,	\$1,149 94	By Salary to Headworker,	\$500 00
Donations. { To General Fund,	629 35	Board of Headworker and Housekeeper,	654 02
Emergency Fund,	637 77	Emergency Fund,	567 40
Wells Memorial Sewing Room,	2,321 20	Wells Memorial Sewing Room,	2,082 50
Loan Fund,	200 00	Furnishing and Repairs,	315 65
To Annual subscriptions,	35 00	Water tax,	13 00
Cornelia Warren, Gen'l Treas. (appropriation),	600 00	Sundry expenses,	130 45
Interest on deposit in bank,	21 94	Loans,	67 00
	\$5,595 20	Balance on hand Sept. 1, 1894,	1,265 18
			\$5,595 20
MARY MORTON KEHEW, <i>Treasurer</i> .			
I have examined the accounts of the Boston College Settlement from Sept. 1, 1893 to Sept. 1, 1894 and find them correct. I find satisfactory vouchers for all payments made.			
Respectfully yours,			
HENRY W. BLISS,			
Boston, Oct. 10, 1894.			

FIGURE 12. Denison House budget 1894 (CSA 1894)

TREASURER'S REPORT OF BOSTON SETTLEMENT.			
MARY MORTON KEHEW IN ACCOUNT WITH BOSTON COLLEGE SETTLEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 1, 1895.			
RECEIPTS.		EXPENSES.	
To Balance on hand Sept. 1, 1894.....	\$1,265 18	By Salary to Head Worker.....	\$500 00
Donations to { General Fund.....	285 97	Board of Head Worker and Housekeeper.....	834 38
Emergency Fund.....	45 00	Emergency Fund.....	244 32
Annual Subscriptions.....	110 00	Furnishing and repairs.....	50 30
Cornelia Warren, Gen'l Treas. (appropriation).....	600 00	Water tax.....	13 00
Interest on deposit in bank.....	15 56	Printing and postage.....	87 25
		Sundry account.....	47 70
		Loan account.....	150 00
		By balance on hand Sept. 1, 1895.....	394 76
	\$2,321 71		\$2,321 71
Examined October 10, 1895 and found correct.			
HENRY W. BLISS.			

FIGURE 13. Denison House budget 1895 (CSA 1895)

the salary of the headworker (\$500) and for the board of the headworker and housekeeper (\$834.38). As mentioned earlier, the residents paid their own room and board.

Of course the budget typically reflected the needs of the neighbors and workers. Nowhere is this more evident than the winter of 1893-94. The residents worked hard to supply extra help for their neighbors during the financial panic that year. Over \$2000 was put into running the Wells Memorial Sewing Room that year to provide neighborhood women with work at a decent wage. The “furniture and repairs” line item was also significantly higher this year (\$315.65) than it would be in 1895 (\$50.35) (CSA1894). No doubt this was because the residents were taking every opportunity to find work for neighborhood craftsmen (Dudley 1894).

Decoration and furnishing

As numerous scholars of American women’s reform history have noted, many of the women who came to live in the settlements were looking for an escape from what it meant to be a middle-class woman in the end of the nineteenth century (Addams 1899, Scudder 1937, Randall 1964, Rousnamierre 1970, Solomon 1985, Carson 1990, Muncy 1991, Trattner 1999, Deutsch 2000). As Deutsch put it, the residents wanted “liberation from the confines of the privatized middle-class home and its supervision” (Deutsch 2000: 75). The photographs available of Denison House in its early years show a space which the women furnished and decorated with care. They show central visiting rooms that look like they would have been found in the elite Back Bay, instead of the tenements of the South Cove. When Jane Addams (1910: 66) wrote about the decoration of Hull

House in Chicago, she said, “We furnished the house as we would have furnished it were it in another part of the city, with the photographs and other impedimenta we had collected in Europe, and with a few bits of family mahogany.” The same was the case for Denison House. Helen Cheever wrote of the arrival of some of the furnishings: “A marvelous number of things arrived that first day; and we had as much reason to congratulate ourselves then upon the executive ability of the Furnishing Committee” (Residents December 27, 1892). It is interesting to note that one of the first orders of business for the women of Denison House was to create a Furnishing Committee. There is also note of students from Wellesley College making the trip to Denison House to help with “decoration and sewing” (Residents October 13, 1892).

Figure 14 is a photograph of the interior of the Green Room taken sometime around 1900. The room was completed in 1896 when the bottom floors of 91 and 93 Tyler Street were combined to make one room. The total construction and furnishing of the room cost the settlement \$4000 (CSA 1895). Vida Scudder (1896: 12) had this to say about the opening of the room:

Last Tuesday, the repairs being complete, a house-warming was held, and our neighbors come in and rejoiced with us. A door four feet wide admitted our guests from 93 to 91, for the former front door of 91 is replaced by a wide window and window-seat. The whole house is, on its street floor, thrown into one room, from which a staircase leads up, but none down. The room had a wainscoting stained green, and a green cartridge paper. It has a fine hard-wood floor, laid by Wellesley alumnae, and the hard-wood staircase is also given by them. The room is furnished by Wellesley undergraduates, and the beauty of the whole effect simple filled our hearts with pride. The staircase balustrade and the mantel-piece are painted white. A bas-relief of the Madonna and child, and several pictures hung on the walls, while two rugs and some very pretty screens gave a warm red color.

The women were obviously very proud of their parlor.

It is interesting to note that the more important meetings were often held in this room, especially those that included politicians or men's clubs, the individuals who the women realized could bring change from outside the neighborhood. The Green Room would have been considered the parlor of the house, and as such would have been the room to receive the most visitors. Because of this, the women would have taken great care in decorating and furnishing it. The walls of this room are painted darker than the other rooms, giving it a cleaner and more sophisticated look. The mirror on the wall to the right would have been an extravagance that only the middle class or elite could afford. Art work on the wall conveyed a sense of culture and sophistication. A newspaper



FIGURE 14. Interior of the Green Room (Courtesy of Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard)

journalist noted after a visit to Denison House: “A bright wood fire snapped and glowed in the fireplace of the cozy parlor of Denison House, on Tyler Street. In the muslin draped windows were growing plants, while on the walls were lovely pictures, the whole interior being homelike and attractive” (Boston Transport c.1895).

This room was no doubt the highlight of a house and very different from the homes of their neighbors. One neighborhood visitor to Denison House remarked that a room without a bed was a “waste of space” (Residents February 21, 1900). This visitor was most likely coming from a home that could afford no more than one or two rooms for the entire family - a home in which the inhabitants would eat, sleep, and spend all of their non-working hours in one room. His home would have contrasted sharply with Denison House. His home could have looked similar to the photograph on the next page, which was taken by Jacob Riis in a New York tenement (fig. 15).

A parlor or drawing room to receive visitors was needed for respectability and status in the late nineteenth century (Davis 1967). It was the main social area of the house and was often the only space in a middle-class home that outsiders would see and would reflect the family’s education, culture, and wealth. In 1896 Mary Gay Humphreys was quoted as saying of the parlor: “this room should convey a sense of elegance, good taste, recognition of the polite arts, and of graceful, social amenities”



Figure 15. A New York City tenement apartment (Riis 1890)

(quoted in Green 1983: 96).



Corner of green room in Denison house, showing attractive features for benefit of frequenters

FIGURE 16. Green Room (Courtesy of Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University)

According to the head of South End Settlement, Robert Woods (1898: 102), “To have a parlor gives a family a strong and thoroughly commendable feeling of self-respect.” The parlor was an amenity not available to those who called the tenements home. Wood (1898: 167) goes on to say that, “The almost universal absence of a common parlor where lodgers may receive their visitors, especially those of the opposite sex; and the lack, in general, of suitable provision for the reserves and proprieties of life, tend still more to break down social and moral barriers.”

Contemporary Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910) was an upper-middle class Bostonian

who helped edited the *Women's Journal* from 1872-1879 (juliawardhowe.com). The photo of her drawing room can be used as an example of what a prominent middle-class home would have looked like during the second half of the nineteenth century (fig. 17). Howe lived in a brownstone at 241 Beacon Street in the prominent Beacon Hill district of Boston. It is interesting to note that six members of the Denison House executive committee lived on Beacon Street in 1912 (DH 1912). The



FIGURE 17. Home of Bostonian Julia Ward Howe c1900 (Courtesy of www.juliawardhowe.com)

photos on the wall and statues in her drawing room are very similar to what was found at Denison House. The piano, like the one found in the Green Room of Denison House, was also a symbol of status and class. Dark wood furniture, founds in both homes, was also popular among the middle class during this period.

Sometime around 1908, the women had an oak cabinet designed and built for the Green Room. It was built under the staircase leading to the second floor. The builder's sketch and a photo with the finished product can be seen in figures 18 and 19. This cabinet would obviously have been both a big expense and another display of middle class tastes.

The other activity rooms of Denison House served a more practical purpose, as such, they were still kept clean and had some photos on the walls, but they were much plainer than the Green Room. These rooms included a kitchen which held cooking classes

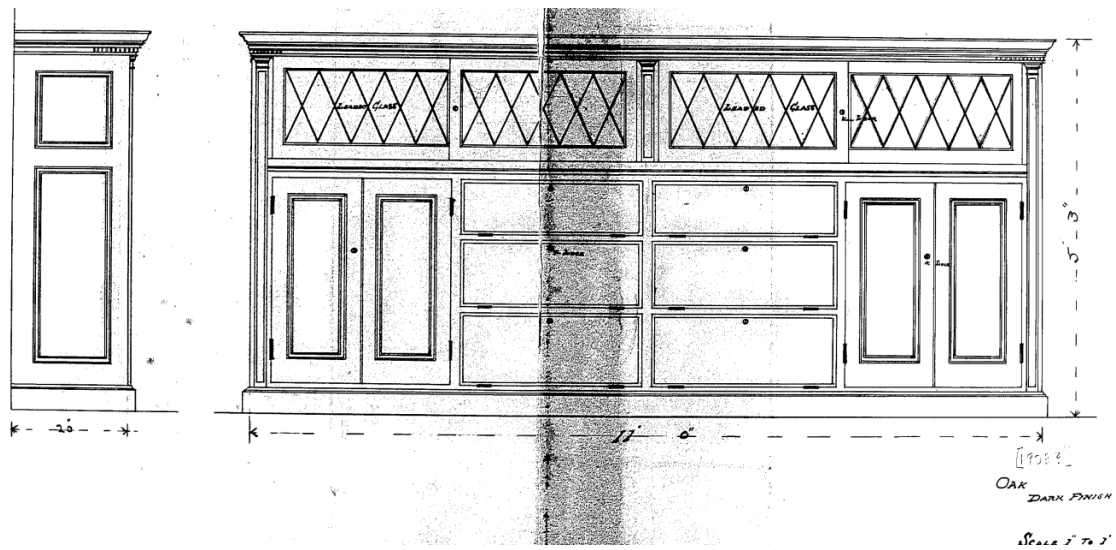


FIGURE 18. Sketch of cabinet built for Green Room c1903 (Courtesy of Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University)



FIGURE 19. Green Room decorated for the holidays with finished cabinet c1903 (Courtesy of Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University)

for neighborhood girls and women. The cooking and laundry classes (fig. 12 and 13) were held throughout the winter months to teach the neighbors about “proper” domestic and housekeeping matters. Vida Scudder (1901) described the space available for these types of classes in the 1901 Report of the Headworker:

In addition to evening classes for women, four small classes of girls met for cooking under volunteers from School of Domestic Science. Through the kindness of a generous friend we have had two large, well-lighted rooms in the adjoining house completely fitted for cooking and laundry work...We now use the basement and first floor of the next house for our manual training, and we very much need another floor to provide room for the clubs and classes that are greatly cramped in their work because of the limited space that is now available.

The laundry room and kitchen (fig. 21 and 22) still have hardwood floors and curtains, but much more attention was paid to functionality, than aestheticism. There are no pictures on the walls, as could be found in the other rooms of the house. In both classes the girls were made to wear white aprons and bonnets, no doubt to give the room and house a cleaner and purer look. These outfits were similar to what nineteenth-century domestic servants could be seen wearing. It appears that these working-class women and children were being trained for vocational positions and perhaps even as housekeepers for middle- and upper-class families (fig. 20).



FIGURE 20. Nineteenth-century domestic servants (NWHM)



FIGURE21. A cooking class at Denison House c1900 (Courtesy of Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University)

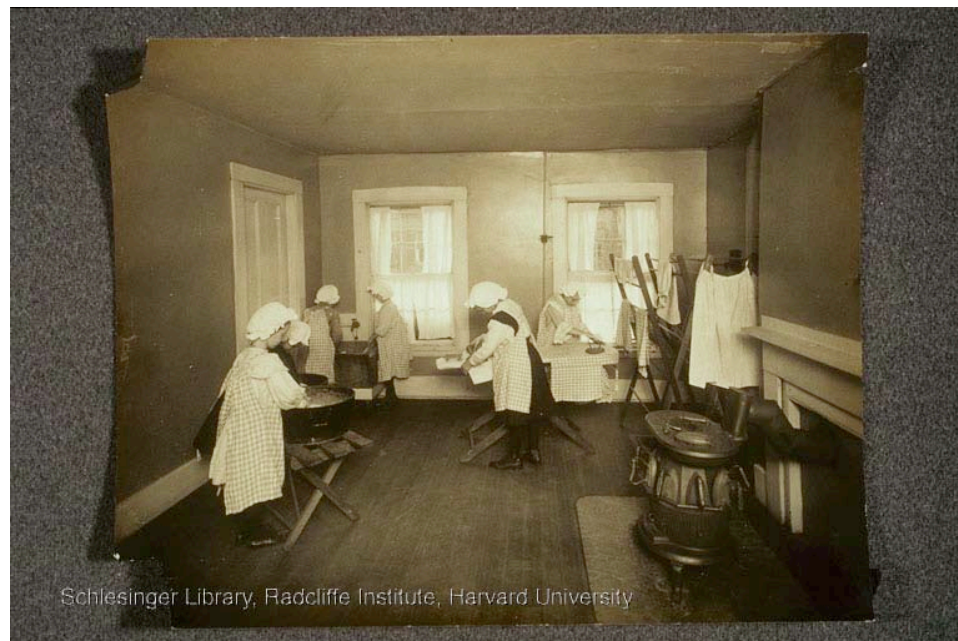


FIGURE 22. Laundry class at Denison House c1900 (Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University)

Good housekeeping habits may have been even more important to the women than decoration. A must for the women when they first moved into Denison House was a housekeeper. Miss Hartwell, the Denison House housekeeper, moved into the house along with the first six residents. The women felt that they would need a fulltime person to keep the house in top shape and not take the others away from their work. Miss Hartwell's ethnicity is not known, however it is clear that she was a paid working-class woman. After only six months in the house, she was deemed unable to keep up with the work and was found another position as housekeeper to a family by the name of Harmel. The residents then began their search for her replacement at a rate of \$25 a month (Residents June 19, 1893). Besides Miss Hartwell, the residents themselves were expected to keep their own rooms clean and devote at least an hour a day to light housekeeping and cooking activities.

The women made a habit of commenting on the housekeeping habits of the neighbors that they visited. The cleanliness of the house was sometimes the only attribute that was noted and very often correlated with their opinion of the tenants. While visiting a neighbor, a resident noted that "the door opened directly into the kitchen so we could see the dirt and disorder there" (Residents January 7, 1893). The lack of a proper parlor and the unsanitary conditions were duly noted. When Helen Cheever saw the state of one of the tenements, she quickly concluded that she "saw that the family needed to be trained in some delicacies and refinements of manner" (Residents January 22, 1893). Likewise, when Miss Cate visited one Irish family, she believed it to be a good family, because the kitchen "was made homelike by the bits of decoration and a sleeping cat upon the

hearth.” However, the next Irish family she visited was believed to be a “different kind of Irish” because they were “less intelligent and dirty” (Residents January 3, 1893).

The residents made visiting their neighbors a regular part of their daily work. In the nine-day period from January 14th to January 23rd 1892, the residents made thirty-eight visits. Making social visits was not a new concept for middle-class women. In fact, it was proper etiquette at the time for such women to spend much of their afternoons calling on their peers (Green 1983).

Of course the residents used their visits more as a chance to check on their neighbors’ living condition and less as a chance to socialize. The residents’ comments were often patronizing in nature. They did not take into account the lack of resources available to the working class, as well as differing ideas about cleanliness and hygiene between immigrants and Americans. The neighborhood women would have had less free time to worry about the state of their house, as well as a lack of influence over absentee landlords. The residents were being both condescending and unfair in their judgments towards their neighbors.

In contrast to their neighbors’ homes, the residents created a space very much like what they were accustomed to in middle-class society. This could be seen as their way of maintaining a balance between their class and the class among whom they chose to live and work. Also, by using middle-class conceptions of right and wrong, they were able to maintain the support of society as well as their donors. However they also created a very public space where they held the power, a first for many women.

Use of space

A look at how the residents chose to use the space they acquired shows not only their motives for settlement work, but also how they justified their place in the neighborhood to their neighbors and to their peers who lived elsewhere. In many ways, the residents of Denison House believed that their settlement should emulate the roles and function of the American home. According to Mina Carson (1990: 97), the residents were drawn to settlement work largely because it brought forth the characteristics that the middle class had established “as feminine virtue: domesticity, nurturance, a special solicitude for the homely details of daily life, and moral guardianship over family and community.” Carson (1990: 198) goes on to say that, “the settlements institutionalized the religion of humanity that was one of the most potent products of Victorian middle-class culture and served as one of the most powerful conduits of Victorian social thought into the twentieth century.”

Like most in the nineteenth-century middle class, the residents realized the importance of the American middle-class home and a good home life. As such, the women wanted to be seen by their neighbors as a home, not a settlement. Helen Cheever made this very clear when she told Father Billings, the parish priest, that “we did not want to be known as College Settlement and begged him to speak of us as a home – to which home we might decide to give a name” (Residents December 15, 1892). Father Billings was one of the first visitors to Denison House in the winter of 1892 and he had an in-depth conversation with Cheever about the importance of home. At that time, Father Billings expressed concern about the women inviting children to Denison House.

He felt that it would take the children away from their own homes. At that Cheever remarked that “To increase home life was one of our strongest desires” (Residents December 15, 1892). Father Billings felt that the women went against his wishes and paid them a visit again a few months later, in March of 1893. He was upset that he had heard of groups of children gathering at Denison House and told Cheever that they should instead “influence them indirectly through their parents.” Cheever responded by saying, “But suppose the parents are bad people?” Father Billings reply was “I prefer bad influence to outside influence” (Residents March 21, 1893). The residents would have to persuade Father Billings that they felt just as strongly about home life as he did, however they believed that they could indirectly influence all members of the family in a positive way. They started by inviting all, men, women, and children, into their home where they could lead by example.

Since they were running a household, the residents sometimes felt that their efforts at recording statistics and taking attendance records did not adequately portray their actual effects on the neighborhood. Helena Dudley noted, “in regard to the desire for definite statistics from our work, that one might as well expect a mother to draw up a daily record like the following: Spoke to Charley 25 times, smiled at Charley 49 times” (Dudley 1895: 35). As their work was “informal, not institutional, friendly, not ‘philanthropic’” it would be impossible to record their results. After their first few years of work within the South Cove, the residents “felt that the house stands more and more as a centre of informal social life in the neighborhood” (Dudley 1895: 36).

Besides bringing domesticity and middle-class values to their neighbors, the

residents also worked to keep their neighbors off the streets. They were appalled by the number of men in the saloons, children either idle on the street corners or overworked in the factories, and women with no respectable social outlets. A major function of Denison House was to give the neighbors a place to socialize. In the 1893 Report of the Headworker, Helena Dudley (1893) reported that “young people have few quiet and respectful ways of meeting.” This was still a problem in 1901 when Dudley (1901) again wrote:

In our immediate neighborhood the strong forces of evil unite in offering many attractions, in bright saloons, dance halls, and variety shows, while the forces that make for social health offer few counter attractions, certainly none that in any way adequately meet the natural demands of the community for recreation.

The residents hoped to fill this void by offering organized clubs and classes, as well as unplanned games and visits for their neighbors of all ages.

Many of the social activities of Denison House would take place in the Green Room, where the residents would often have entertainment in the form of music or plays after dinner. They would also have a gathering of neighbors each Thursday night, which the residents believed to be the center of their social life. Wellesley College students were often responsible for supplying the entertainment to the neighbors on these nights. Entertainment included music from Wellesley’s Glee Club, an act of Shakespeare preformed by their Drama Club, or music performed by a Symphony Orchestra violinist, among other forms of entertainment. Thursday attendance went from ten or twenty in the beginning of the winter of 1894 to sixty or seventy by the end (CSA 1894). Besides keeping their neighbors off the streets, the entertainment provided also served as

socialization into middle-class culture and refinement. The residents hoped that through friendly visits, classes, clubs, and social gatherings, they could level the social playing field.

The residents also became adept at catering to the needs of their neighbors. During their second winter on Tyler Street, the country was hit with the financial Panic of 1893. The South Cove was one of the harder hit areas in Boston and unemployment skyrocketed. The residents of Denison House, along with a Citizens Relief Committee that had been appointed by the mayor, succeeded in opening four sewing rooms for women. In the work-rooms they were able to employ one-hundred and fifty workers a week in two shifts of three days each at seventy-five cents a day. They were able to help three-hundred and twenty workers in all, and total wages paid were \$6113.00 for the time the work-rooms were open. One of their goals became helping the women of the work-room into regular employment. The women also made it clear that this form of work or material relief was not typical of settlement work. In their report to the College Settlement Association (1894: 45-46) they wrote:

To give work relief or any form of material relief is not the highest function of a settlement, nor, in ordinary times, any part of its function. First and foremost a settlement stands for friendliness and when relief agencies are inadequate in such an emergency as last winter it may be necessary to help a friend, or even a stranger, in material ways... The ordinary relief agencies that may be adequate to deal with poverty resulting from incompetence, drunkenness, idleness, sickness or old age have not the machinery to help the men and women thrown out of work by industrial depression. These cannot be relieved by two dollars worth of groceries and a coal order [although such relief work has its place], and well meant efforts to secure work are often unsuccessful.

The relief they sought to give their neighbors through the work-rooms was an

extraordinary measure, which they did because they felt it was the right thing to do. The residents felt that all households who had money to give to charity should instead “devise methods of giving extra employment” (CSA 1894: 47). During the winter of 1893, the residents employed a carpenter to make and put up shelves, as well as others to paint, wallpaper, and perform extra cleaning in an effort to help their neighbors. They did not feel that this type of relief should become a regular part of settlement work and even made it a point to say that no residents were taking away from their duties because of it. However there was no mistaking the impact that the economic crisis had on their work. As the report says, “That the other interests of the house suffered from our absorption in the physical and mental sufferings about us is undoubted” (CSA 1894: 46). However, the residents wanted it to be known that, in this way, they were acting more as neighbors and less as settlement workers, making clear their purpose and separating themselves from organized charity.

Early on the Denison House residents admitted that they offered fewer organized activities than the other college settlements. They attributed this to the lack of space, but also made it their “policy from the first to emphasize the idea of the settlement as a home and to leave abundant time for informal and occasional meetings in our house” (CSA 1894: 39). The women went on to list the interests of the household, number one being general social life, followed by children’s clubs, educational clubs, study and effort along social lines, and emergency work (CSA 1894). The women wrote that “a large part of their life has been absorbed by the SOCIAL INTERCOURSE of our neighbors, especially with the older people” (CSA 1894: 39). The daily activity logs the women kept

also made frequent note of groups of neighborhood boys spending an impromptu afternoon or evening in the house playing games. In this way the women were also keeping the neighborhood boys off the street during their idle times when not in school or working.

The clubs and classes which the women chose to conduct within the walls of Denison House tell about the residents' motives and the ways in which they worked to bring American-style domesticity to the urban slums. In 1895, the residents started a mother's meeting in the neighborhood. The meetings were comprised of "practical talks" given by middle class women and professionals. Topics included: Relation of the Kindergarten to the Home, Home Emergencies, The Beautiful in our Homes, and Proper Clothing for Children – all topics that could be construed as middle-class socialization of working-class mothers (Dudley 1895: 37). Many of these talks were based on the false assumptions that mothers would have the time and money to put into having a clean and beautiful home or buying and making proper clothes for their children.

The table of classes (table 2) available at Denison House during the winter of 1900 to 1901 can be found below. The classes offered usually remained the same from year to year. Each class met weekly from October to May. They were open to all wage earners at a cost of fifty cents. Those in the dressmaking, cooking, and embroidery classes had to pay ten to fifteen cents extra a class to cover supplies. The Directory of Clubs and Classes boasted that each class was taught by an expert teacher who was usually a college graduate. It is not clear why a college graduate was needed to teach classes in sewing and cooking. The participants would also be awarded a diploma for

regular attendance (DH 1901). In 1901 a total of 109 young women attended the evening classes, which was 43 more than the previous year, and the number of classes had increased from 9 in 1900 to 16 in 1901 (Scudder 1901).

Besides classes the residents also offered clubs free of charge. Each club targeted a certain demographic and centered on specific activities. It is interesting to note that all nine clubs available to girls and women in 1901 catered to domestic matters. They included instruction in sewing, embroidery, basket weaving, and housekeeping. The case could be made that the residents were training housekeepers for the middle class.

TABLE 2. Classes offered at Denison House for 1901 (DH 1901, Courtesy of Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University)

DAY	TIME	CLASS DESCRIPTION	RESIDENT LEADER
Monday	6:45 p.m.	English Literature	Miss Florence Converse
	7:45 p.m.	Elocution Class	Miss H. G. Crosby
	7:45 p.m.	History Class	Miss Bertha Hazard
	7:30 p.m.	Cooking Class	Miss A. L. Phelps
Tuesday	6:45 p.m.	French Class	Miss G. V. Lynch
	7:00 p.m.	Arithmetic Class	Miss K. Morse
	7:30 p.m.	Cooking Class	Mrs. M. A. Tilton
	7:45 p.m.	English Composition	Miss E. T. Mellor
Wednesday	6:30 p.m.	Arithmetic Class	Miss K. Morse
	7:30 p.m.	Shakespeare Class	Miss A. K. Tual
Thursday	7:30 p.m.	Dressmaking Class	Miss G. K. Peaslee
	7:30 p.m.	Embroidery Class	Miss A. S. Streigffert
Friday	7:30 p.m.	Literature Class	Miss Bertha Scripture
	7:30 p.m.	Cooking Class	Miss A. M. Eaton
Saturday	7:30 p.m.	Embroidery Class	Miss M. F. Patterson
	8:00 p.m.	English Class	Mrs. Chas. Park

TABLE 3. Clubs at Denison House in 1900 (DH 1901, Courtesy of Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University)

DAY	TIME	CLUB DESCRIPTION	POPULATION SERVED	RESIDENT LEADER
Monday	4:00 p.m.	Basket Weaving	Boys - 9 years old	Miss Griggs
	7:00 p.m.	Paul Revere History Club	Boys - 11 to 13 years old	Mr. Witherbee
	7:00 p.m.	Sloyd (woodworking)	Boys - 12 to 14 years old	Miss Walberg
	8:00 p.m.	Dramatic Club	Boys - 17 to 20 years old	Mr. Witherbee
Tuesday	2:30 p.m.	Woman's Club	Women	Mrs. Scudder
	4:00 p.m.	Sloyd (woodworking)	Boys - 10 years old	Miss Thompson
	4:00 p.m.	Cooking	Girls - 10 to 12 years old	Miss Shaw
	7:00 p.m.	Reading Club	Boys - 10 to 12 years old	Mr. Witherbee
	7:30 p.m.	Cane Seating	Boys - 11 years old	Miss Druley
	8:00 p.m.	Girls' Club	Girls - 17 and over	Miss Mackintosh
Wednesday	3:30 p.m.	Kindergarten Club	Children - 5 to 7 years old	Miss Druley
	4:00 p.m.	Cooking	Girls - 14 years old	Miss E. E. Torrey
	4:00 p.m.	Wood Carving	Boys - 13 years old	Miss Walberg
	7:15 p.m.	Each for All Club (Embroidery, Color Work, Basket Weaving, Knitting)	Girls - 13 to 15 years old	Miss Bigelow
	7:00 p.m.	Trojan Club	Boys - 13 years old	Mr. Witherbee
Thursday	3:30 p.m.	Sunshine Club (Sewing, Embroidery, Basketweaving)	Girls - 11 to 13 years old	Mrs. Hammond
	4:00 p.m.	Cooking	Girls - 11 years old	Miss A. Jacobson
	7:00 p.m.	Sloyd (woodworking)	Boys - 12 years old	none listed
Friday	3:30 p.m.	Housework Club	Girls - 11 to 12 years old	Miss Dudley
	4:00 p.m.	Sloyd (woodworking)	Boys - 11 years old	Miss Walberg
	4:00 p.m.	Cooking	Girls - 11 years old	none listed

The clubs available to boys were different from those for girls; however, they were also vocational in nature. The schedule included manual training in the form of four Sloyd (woodworking) classes, one woodcarving class, one class in cane seating, and one in basket weaving. However the boys could also enjoy two drama clubs, the Dramatic

Club (for boys 17 to 20) and the Trojan Club (for boys 13 years old), and a Paul Revere History Club.

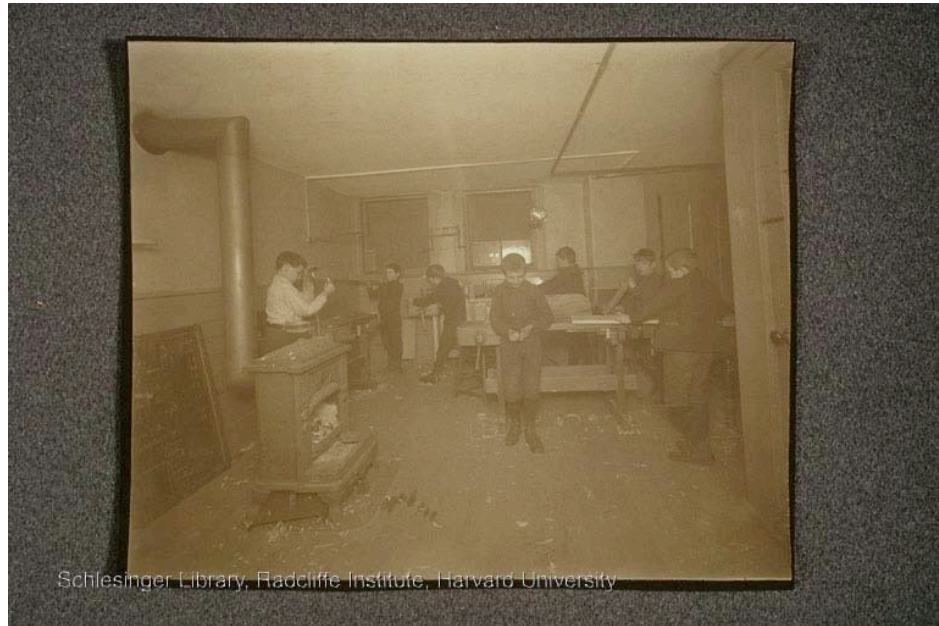


FIGURE 23. Boys woodworking class c1900 (Courtesy of Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe InstituteHarvard University.

In 1901, the cooking and woodworking (Sloyd) (fig. 14) classes took place in two rooms in the basement of 95 Tyler Street. The residents claimed that a great interest had been taken in these classes by the boys and girls of the neighborhood. They stressed the importance of raising money to build better accommodations for these classes. According to them, “the need is very pressing for the development of this small beginning into systematic training on various industrial lines; it would supplement most usefully the instruction received in the Public Schools, and have a direct influence on the home life” (DH 1901).

By 1903 the money had been acquired, and the residents were able to lease two more floors on 95 Tyler Street, including a large room equipped for teaching cooking and other elements of housekeeping. They had also set up a smaller room where children were taught to wash and iron their own clothes. The children would take classes in the afternoon, followed by the women and working girls in the evening. At that time, the average number in each class was twelve. By 1903 Miss E. W. Buckingham, a graduate of the Boston Cooking School, had taken charge of all the classes (DH 1903).

The residents' choices for clubs and classes point to the distance in expectations they had for themselves as middle-class women and for their working-class neighbors. In many ways, it would have been too optimistic to think their neighbors would ever break out of their working-class existence. However being overly realistic also led the women to act in a patronizing manner towards their neighbors. They felt that regardless of what they did for their neighbors, the immutability of class was a glaring reality that could not be overcome.

Summer at Denison House had a completely different feel from the rest of the year. Clubs and classes were suspended and "their place is taken by a freer hospitality and the more general sociability which the warm weather seems to bring with it" (Dudley 1895: 38). At this time the work of the "Summer Settlement" became "to share as much as we can of summer and the country with our district" (Dudley 1895: 38). One of the ways they did this was by handing out flowers to their neighbors. In the summer of 1895, the residents would hand out a hundred bouquets a day that they received from many different sources in the country. The flowers were given to friends of the settlement and

not just handed out randomly, so that “the touch of friendship is added to the gift of beauty” (Dudley 1895: 39).

Although hardly adequate, the residents worked to provide a short respite for some of their neighbors. They would take families to the country for picnics. However the women themselves were the first to admit that “the number we can reach is very small in proportion to all; tickets for electric car rides, all day picnic and even the country week are pitifully inadequate to relieve so intense fatigue” (Dudley 1895: 39). In this way, they were trying to bring middle-class leisure activities to the working class. For the working class, a day in the country would hardly have been enough to rejuvenate them. The distance between middle-class leisure activities and the daily lives of the working class was too hard to overcome. At the end of the day, they would ride back to their crowded tenements, probably no better off than they were before.

In 1900 the residents opened a health clinic for their neighbors. The clinic was staffed by one resident nurse and a number of volunteer nurses. Most of the cases were not serious enough to require hospital care, but did need medical attention (Dudley 1901). By 1912 the clinic had expended its hours to include an evening clinic for day laborers. The number of patients seen at the evening clinic in 1911-1912 was 955. Besides that 4705 home visits had been made by the resident nurse and her volunteer workers (DH 1912). Classes in Hygiene and Home Nursing, conducted by the resident nurse, had also become popular with the neighbors. And a course in First Aid to the Injured was given, along with lectures in hygiene to the boys and young men in the neighborhood (DH 1912).



FIGURE 24. Denison House Health Clinic c1905 (Courtesy of Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University)

The women also provided a vacation school for the neighborhood students during the summer. In the summer of 1895, the average attendance throughout the six weeks was 137, a considerable number when attendance was not mandatory. Besides a kindergarten, there were classes in sewing, carpentry, nature studies, and drawing. The nature room was always supplied with specimens of plants and animals for study. The classes were also taken on excursions to the country or seaside (Dudley 1895). In 1896, over two-hundred students registered for the six-week summer school, and attendance remained that high for the next fifteen years (Dudley 1896, 1911).

In 1904 Scudder and a newly arrived Italian immigrant and professional, Francesco Malgeri, started the Circolo Italo-Americano club at Denison House. Both Scudder and Headworker Dudley were very fond of Italian language and culture and spent much of their time away from Denison House in Italy. Italian population around the settlement was increasing and they wanted to help the newly arrived immigrants

acclimate and, at the same time, bring some of the Italian art and culture they loved so much into Denison House (Dudley, 1904). Scudder, in particular, was saddened by the lack of opportunities for educated Italian immigrants in America and by the fact that they were usually clumped into the same category as their uneducated countrymen, once they arrived in America (Carson 1990). Malgeri and Scudder believed that Denison House could be a place for Italians to socialize among themselves and with Americans. The Circolo Italo-Americano club offered classes in English for Italians, as well as classes in Italian art and culture for Americans and first-generation Italian Americans. Scudder believed it was important for young Italians to remain connected with the old country. The club held a festival each May and exhibition of Italian art each December to help the immigrants maintain a sense of pride in their country of origin. In 1905 two rooms of the settlement were dedicated to Italy and to the study of Italian culture and language (Dudley 1905). As late as 1912, Scudder continued her work with the Italian community in the South Cove. As was reported in regards to the Italian club, “We had a good year, for which we hope that hundreds of Italians were happier and dozens, at least, wiser” (DH 1912: 12).

An analysis of the documents produced by the residents points to deliberate actions to keep much of their activism, especially in the area of labor reform, undisclosed from their CSA donors. In 1892 the first headworker’s report listed reform as one of the goals of the settlement (Dudley 1892). Scudder and Dudley remained active participants in the labor movement, however one gets the feeling that they worked to keep much of their participation either separate from their work at Denison House or chose not to

disclose it to the CSA.

After Dudley's 1892 projection that much of the work of Denison House would be in the area of social and labor reform, there are breaks and contradictions in the settlement's labor activities. Beginning in 1893, tailoresses from a nearby shop asked the residents for help in organizing their shop. The result was a local Union of Tailoresses which was affiliated with the Central Labor Union. They began to hold meetings twice monthly at Denison House, which were partly social, partly educational. This endeavor led to a Federal Labor Union, made up of wage earners and professionals with the aim of securing better working conditions and a better understanding of the labor movement for all working women (CSA 1894). Through their participation in the labor union, the residents came to see their function as offering "common ground where earnest people of various classes may, through freer intercourse, gain fuller sympathy... We are encouraged to hope that Denison House may exercise this function in the future by the surprising welcome which has been accorded us by some of the prominent workingmen of Boston" (CSA 1894: 44). A couple of years later, Denison House was still the meeting place for many labor unions, however, the residents made it clear that they were only giving the unions a public space to meet.

Denison House continued to be a meeting place for both male and female labor organizers and middle class sympathizers throughout the 1890s and the first decade of 1900. The residents viewed their involvement as having larger social consequences. In the 1894 Report of the Headworker, Dudley (1894: 5) wrote that "the mere knowledge we are gaining, and which we in turn may hope to share with many, will assuredly help to

that awakening of social conscience which must precede all social betterment.” Scudder and Dudley took particular interest in the concerns of the labor movement and each eventually became members of the Union Label League, the American Federation of Labor (AFL), and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. Scudder even helped to organize the Women’s Trade Union League in 1903.

By 1904, perhaps feeling the pressure from middle-class donors, Dudley was making the separation between Denison and the labor movement clearer. In her 1904 report she wrote about the Trade Union League for Women saying:

Such a league is now started in Boston and, although it is not in any sense an enterprise of Denison House, it should be mentioned in the report as it is officered by members of the committee, Miss Scudder being president and Miss Dudley vice-president, and has hitherto held its meetings in the house (Dudley 1904).

She again downplayed the importance of social and labor reform in the 1905 report when she wrote, “It should be said, however, that the settlement worker is occupied generally not in securing the larger conditions which must come gradually through public action, but in caring for the individual or the group in connection with the settlement” (Dudley 1905). Knowing Dudley’s work and actions, it is highly unlikely that she felt this indifferent towards public action. Her words can instead be interpreted as a reaction to her audience – the CSA members. In her last report, Dudley (1912: 5) wrote, “questions of legislative reform, of the organization of labor, and the broader aspects of social betterment have not been neglected, although the immediate practical service of the neighborhood has often pushed aside the more problematic or distant ‘Cause.’”

The fate of the social science classes at Denison House can also be construed as a

reaction to the CSA. Social science classes were started in 1894 at Denison House and were created to generate social awareness among both residents and neighbors. The class included presentations on civil subjects, such as improving tenements, public schools, the history of factory legislation and laws, and hospitals (Dudley 1896). The social science classes only lasted three years, perhaps because the settlement started to move away from its initial goal of reform (Dudley 1907).

After 1912 Denison House began to take on a new feel. In that year, Helena Dudley resigned as Headworker. She felt that her increasing involvement in socialism was causing Denison House to lose some of its financial backing. Besides that, the residents were becoming increasingly professionalized social workers. As a result, the board separated the residents' home from the rest of the settlement, giving them more privacy and a parlor and dining room of their own when they were not working (Deutsch 1992). The nature of Denison House continued to change through the first half of the twentieth century. In her last headworker's report, Dudley (1912: 5) saw the settlement as a "social clearing house to bring individuals in touch with the appropriate agencies." This description brings up images of a modern social worker instead of the late-nineteenth settlement that Denison House once was. In the 1930s, Denison House had its first male headworker. In 1942 Denison House began its move to the Dorchester-Roxbury area, where it was believed they would be needed more. By 1949 Denison House was completely moved into its new location in Dorchester, and in 1965 it merged with three other settlements to form Federated Dorchester Neighborhood Houses (FDNH). In 1975 FDNH's building was destroyed in a fire, and the organization moved to its present

location on Samoset Street in Dorchester.

The early Denison residents believed they were bringing the riches of culture and education to the poor. They offered local youth, usually children of immigrants, the skills and values needed for social adaption. In essence the activities of Denison House illustrated the application of popular values to the perceived modern socialization needs of the poor. However, with their actions, they had made clear the connection between domesticity and their public activities.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The settlement leaders and workers were revolutionaries, initiators, and organizers. They embodied the “neighborhood idea” – interdependence of social groups – and did not buy into the commonly held belief that society benefits when all men and women pursue their own self-interest (Trattner 1999). They were the beginning of a new era of Progressive reformers which would last into the 1920s. In essence the first generation of college settlement women still saw themselves as “true women,” virtuous and domestic in their own way, however at the same time they were no longer submissive to men. Denison House was conceived, managed, and economically supported by women.

The women of the settlement movement had learned from the charity workers who came before them. They knew that charity in the form of money and food was a quick fix that would not last. They realized that to make lasting changes they would have to give the working class skills to improve their own lives. They had also seen the efforts of “visiting charities” end in vain. The residents knew that if they were really to understand and gain the respect of the poor, they would have to live and work among them.

The women of Denison House handpicked the South Cove for their location.

They knew that it was arguably the worst neighborhood in Boston. It was in desperate need of help and deteriorating fast. The immigrant, working-class population was living in squalor while earning meager wages, and the residents believed that the South Cove would benefit most from their help and guidance.

When the women of Denison House chose their location in the South Cove, they knew that they were transcending both class and gender lines. With society's expectations of marriage and a middle-class lifestyle put on hold, the residents were forced to be careful about how they approached life in the slums. Decorations, space set-up, as well as use of space all speak to the women's methods for maintaining their integrity as middle-class women.

The way the women chose to decorate and set up their space was very deliberate in nature. The parlor, or Green Room, of Denison House was similar in decor and function to a room that would have been found in a middle class or elite part of town. The women took great care in making it that way by paying close attention to furniture, cleanliness, and decoration. It was the nerve center for the entire house and the first room that visitors would see. It was home to many visits, parties, after-dinner talks, and nights of entertainment. By decorating and making use of the Green Room, the women were being careful not to pull too far away from their middle-class peers and donors. Through this room, they were also able to show off and hold onto their middle-class status.

In contrast the classroom spaces were more functional, or even working-class, in nature. The functionality of the rooms also led to them being gendered spaces. The woodworking room would have been used exclusively for boys, while women and girls

would have been the only groups to use the laundry room and kitchen. These rooms were also much plainer, with white walls and fewer pictures on the wall. They were simply places where the residents could teach their neighbors the trades they felt they would need to live a more comfortable working-class existence.

Even as the women worked to free themselves from gender and class prisons, the activities the women offered to their neighbors were both gendered and classist in nature. Neighborhood women were expected to take part in a mother's club or sewing classes. Boys were taught woodworking and basket-weaving. And girls were taught sewing, laundry, and cooking. Besides being gender-specific activities, each of the classes and clubs available were meant to teach the neighbors how to be proper working-class citizens. In this way, the women were speaking to what they believed to be the immutability of class. Even though they themselves were able to transcend gender and class boundaries, they did not feel it was possible for their working-class neighbors to do the same.

The residents' attitudes toward their neighbors can be interpreted by analyzing their actions. It is clear that the women felt their neighbors lacked many of the middle-class values and mores, as they sought to instill their own values among their neighbors. They commented on issues of cleanliness and how that directly related to the value of the household. To deal with this, they offered classes in housekeeping, cooking, and laundry. However condescending their actions may have been, there were also activities that pointed to the acceptance of cultural differences. Scudder's love of Italian culture and language prompted the formation of the Circolo-Italo club, which thrived at Denison

House for years and celebrated Italian culture, including art, language, religious festivals, and food. This is similar to the activities at Hull House, where the residents celebrated their neighbors' cultures and heritages with a museum and festivals. In contrast, the men of the South End House drew out guidelines for what it meant to be an American and expected their neighbors to follow them. They refused to speak in their neighbors' native languages and one of their meeting rooms was even decorated with an American flag motif (Streiff 2005). Despite their avowed commitment to social reform, Woods and his fellow workers shared many American fears of new immigrants, who created "breeding grounds for much that is incompatible with or hostile to the best values of American life" (Woods quoted in Streiff 2005: 114). The residents of Denison House believed they were giving their neighbors the tools they needed to live more comfortable working-class existences, but did not feel they needed to completely shed their former lives for that to be possible.

Denison House, the New York College Settlement, and the Philadelphia College settlement were sanctioned and financially supported by the members of the CSA. In this way, they were different from all other English and American settlements. CSA settlements were supported by a group of middle-class, mostly college women who did not necessarily live in the area of the settlement, but paid an annual membership to the association. Although the CSA offered Denison House financial support, as well as a pool of socially-conscious, college women from all over the country, it also may have inhibited the residents. This most likely explains the differences between Denison House and non-CSA settlements.

Perhaps the most glaring difference between the agenda of the Social Settlement Movement and the agenda of Denison House was the lack of social investigation and social reform efforts at Denison House. Social and workplace reform at the neighborhood level, backed up by social investigation, was an important part of the work at most settlements, including Hull House in Chicago and the South End House, located less than a mile away from Denison House. Jane Addams and the women of Hull House were adamant about the use of data in efforts to create change in the tenements and the workplace. Robert Woods and his fellow workers at the South End House conducted and published a systematic study of the people of the South End. In contrast Denison House residents did not seem to be interested in social investigation. The extent of their investigating was done when they first moved into the neighborhood and conducted visits to see which services were most needed.

More surprising than the lack of social investigation was the deficit of reform efforts at Denison House, especially considering the presence of Scudder and Dudley in the house. It seems as though much of Scudder and Dudley's work was either not reported in the annual reports or was done completely outside of their work at Denison House. Dudley continually made note of the fact that any union activity at the house was not a Denison House initiative, but that Denison House simply served as a meeting place for various union and labor groups. Financial support from the CSA no doubt contributed to the lack of reform activity; as any reform activity might be seen as outside the bounds of respectability.

The residents of Denison House were very much homebound. Unlike the women

of Hull House, who moved throughout their neighborhood and into the civic arena, Denison House residents restricted most of their activity to their location on Tyler Street. Perhaps in some ways, Denison House could be considered more as a community center than a settlement. The residents welcomed their neighbors, offered clubs, class, and services, and offered a meeting place for various groups within the settlement to make the lives of their neighbors better, however they rarely moved past the settlement doors. Instead of enacting legislation or other neighborhood initiatives, they felt they could fill the gaps with educational classes, clubs, health clinics, public playgrounds, milk stations, reading rooms, and public gymnasiums.

Regardless of how much Denison House may have transgressed from the settlement agenda, the importance of the settlement and the work of its residents should not be overlooked. The women of Denison House were not passive victims of a male-controlled world. However, instead of confronting male dominance head-on, in areas of women's rights and suffrage, they changed the meaning of the dominant cultural ideology of "separate spheres." This type of domestic feminism enabled women to claim moral superiority and begin what some called "national housekeeping" (Matthews 1987: 89). As Spencer-Woods (1994: 178) attests, domestic reformers as a group "transformed women's domesticity from a perceived subordinate role into a gendered source of innately superior abilities that powerfully justified increasing women's roles and power in both spheres." This was the case at Denison House, where the residents used their domestic expertise to forge their way into the South Cove and into their neighbors' lives.

By the time Denison House residents established themselves in the South Cove,

they had created a middle-class home for all in the center of an urban slum, recreating their genteel upbringing. Denison House was a home in which the residents were to teach their neighbors how to be more like a middle-class American. At the same time, they no longer pictured themselves as being constrained by their class, gender, or ethnicity.

In essence, the settlement house used a domestic form to create a public institution. They used their unique position as carriers of virtue and protectors of the home to move into very public spaces. The residents were not at all conceding to their middle-class upbringings, they were instead creating a space for themselves in their nineteenth-century world.

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