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THE SETTLEMENT HOUSE MOVEMENT IN NEW YORK CITY, 1886–1914

HARRY P. KRAUS

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To Miss Margaret E. Berry of the National Federation of Settlements; Mr. H. Daniel Carpenter of the Hudson Guild; Miss Helen Harris of the United Neighborhood Houses; Miss Lillian D. Robbins of Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association; and Miss Gladys McPeek of Hartley House, I owe thanks for the gift of their time and insights into the settlement movement. Mr. Algernon D. Black, Senior Leader, New York Society for Ethical Culture, provided personal memories about John Lovejoy Elliott.

To those settlement club members who shared their recollections with me--Mr. Louis Lande, Dr. Gabriel Mason, Mr. Louis Naftalison, Mr. William I. Nathan, Professor J. Salwyn Schapiro, and Mr. Hyman Schroeder--I owe thanks for giving life and credibility to this study. Professor Alexander Baltzly added his own perceptions of the settlement experience.

I am indebted to Professor Bayrd Still, New York University, for his incisive comments; they have contributed substantially to the structure and content of this study.

in 1890 and returned to Boston to become first head resident of the newly established Andover House, later renamed South End.[56]

Gaylord S. White, founder of the City Park Parish House in Brooklyn, and later head resident of Union Settlement for twenty-two years, had studied at the University of Berlin during 1890 to 1892. During one of the summers he spent in Europe, White lived in Toynbee Hall; for many years after his return to the United States, he kept up a correspondence with Canon Barnett.[57]

Other settlement pioneers recalled that Toynbee Hall seemed a starting point for them. Graham Taylor, founder of Chicago Commons, remembered that his first introduction to the settlement movement came in reading about Toynbee Hall.[58] Everett P. Wheeler, founder of East Side House, referred to Toynbee Hall when he urged the creation of a settlement to serve the needs of an east side community.[59] The message of Toynbee Hall was gathered first hand and through impressions or accounts of that first settlement; that message penetrated a sheltered Harvard community and turned some of her students

[56] Robert A. Woods, English Social Movements (New York, 1891), 79-118; Arthur Mann, Yankee Reformers in the Urban Age (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), 119.

[57] Mrs. Franklin C. Wells, interview, June 12, 1969.

[58] Louise C. Wade, Graham Taylor: Pioneer for Social Justice, 1851-1938 (Chicago, 1964), 79.

[59] East Side House Papers: Report of the Committee on Social and Economic Questions, April 30, 1890.

In all of these major settlements, it must be noted that the individuals affiliated with the settlement--Stanton Coit and Charles B. Stover at Neighborhood Guild; Jane Fine and Jane E. Robbins at College Settlement; Everett P. Wheeler of East Side House; Lillian D. Wald at Henry Street; William E. McCord and Gaylord S. White at Union Settlement; John Lovejoy Elliott at Hudson Guild; Helen F. Greene and May Mathews at Hartley House; Mary K. Simkhovitch at Greenwich House--were remarkable in their intellect, dedication, and leadership.

Stanton Coit, the founder of Neighborhood Guild, was born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1857, and was reared in an Episcopalian household. A Phi Beta Kappa student at Amherst, he was graduated in 1879 and invited to become a tutor in English literature by the president of the college, Julius Seelye. When Coit asked how he, a non-communicant, could be hired by the college, Seelye told him "Coit, we all believe you have seen the real Christ, and that is all we care for."[2]

While teaching at Amherst, from 1880-1882, Coit learned of Felix Adler and the Society for Ethical Culture. Coit's own struggle to establish a viable code of philosophy had been influenced by Emerson's transcendentalism; Adler seemed to be a living embodment. Coit

[2]H. J. Blackham, (ed.), Stanton Coit: Selections from His Writings (London, 1944), 6.

The Union Settlement was started under the aegis of the Alumni Club of the Union Theological Seminary. In April, 1893, a committee was created to consider the feasibility of organizing a settlement, whose purpose would be to have

> A little colony of men and women taking up their residence in the poorer and meaner districts of a city with the purpose of identifying themselves with the community's interests, of making its problems their own, and in general, as near neighbors and friends, of sharing with it any advantage in the intellectual, aesthetic or religious life which they may possess.[105]

An additional advantage, it was noted, would be the opportunity for greater contact with the poor, offering facilities for the study of social conditions at close range.

In May, 1895, the Union Settlement was opened at 202 East 96th Street, on the second floor of a tenement, in the midst of a neighborhood populated by Irish, Germans, and Americans. Two Union Theological Seminary students, William E. McCord and William T. Holmes, assumed responsibility for the new project; McCord was the headworker.[106]

[105] Union Settlement Association Circular, No. 1, February, 1894.

[106] Ibid.; Twenty Years in South Harlem, 1895-1915 (Union Settlement Pamphlet, December, 1915), 1-84; Ellen Marvin, "As I Remember Union Settlement," (typescript), 1-152, (Office Archives); Gaylord S. White, "Twenty-Two Years at the Union Settlement," Union Settlement Annual Report (1923), 5-17.

William Edgar McCord was born in Illinois in 1858, and educated at Blackburn University in his native state. After graduating in 1883, and several years as a teacher, he entered Union Theological Seminary in 1893. While a student, he resided at the University Settlement and was headworker at the Phelps Settlement, part of the institutional church work at Park Presbyterian Church. He therefore brought unusual qualifications to his new position in 1895.[107] William Trumbull Holmes was born in New York City in 1865; he received an A.B. from Oberlin College in 1892, an M.A. from Harvard in 1894, and entered Union Theological Seminary that same year. The next year he joined McCord in the work of the Union Settlement.[108]

McCord's first step as headworker was to prepare charts of the neighborhood, showing the distribution of saloons, churches, missions, schools, and factories; it was the beginning of a detailed knowledge of the community. Within two months, the Settlement needed larger quarters and moved to 210 East 104th Street, with "more spacious quarters in the parlor floor and the basement."[109] Even this move failed to keep pace with the demand for

[107] Union Theological Alumni Catalogue, 178. McCord became an ordained Presbyterian minister in 1898; after he left Union Settlement in 1901, he joined St. Paul Cathedral, Cincinnati, Ohio, as curate.

[108] Ibid., 186. Ordained a Congregational minister in 1897, Holmes held various posts until he became president of Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, Mississippi, in 1913.

[109] Union Settlement 7th Annual Report (1902); Twenty Years, 1-84.

club rooms and athletic facilities; and in October, 1895, five months after Union Settlement was opened, a third move occurred when the Settlement rented a three-story brick house at 237 East 104th Street. Here there was room for the four clubs, the library, the penny bank, and the gym which served over three hundred persons a week. In 1899, five houses, 235-243 East 104th Street, were purchased for the Settlement by Morris K. Jesup, a friend of Union Theological Seminary, and altered by him for the use of the Settlement.[110]

McCord resigned as headworker in May, 1901, and Gaylord S. White succeeded him.[111] For the next twenty-two years, White would be the headworker at Union Settlement. Gaylord S. White was born in New Rochelle, New York, in 1864, the Presbyterian son of a wealthy and pious manufacturing chemist. White's father spent his Sunday afternoons, for some sixteen years, as unofficial pastor to the women at the Nursery and Child's Hospital; White's mother was corresponding secretary of the Women's Board of Foreign Missions for nineteen years.[112] After

[110] Ibid.; Council Minutes of the Union Settlement (handwritten, Office Archives) October 12, 1899.

[111] Union Settlement 7th Annual Report (1902); Union Settlement "Neighbors All, 1895-1945," unpaged pamphlet.

[112] Anna Barnard White Moore, "A Goodly Heritage: Charles Trumbull White and Georgiana Starin White," (unpublished typescript, 1940), 1-17. In possession of Mrs. Franklin Wells, daughter of Gaylord S. White.

graduation from Princeton in 1886, White attended Union Theological Seminary; he received a scholarship for graduate work upon completing his course at Union Theological in 1890. The next two years were spent at the University of Berlin; while in Europe, he spent some time with Samuel Barnett in Toynbee Hall. Upon his return to the United States, he married Sophie Douglass Young in June, 1892, and became assistant pastor of the Rutgers Riverside Church in New York City, where he remained until September, 1893. He then became pastor of the City Park Branch of the First Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn. Located at 209 Concord Street, in the Navy Yard area, White found fertile ground for his mission church work; for seven and one-half years, the Parish House, under his direction, maintained a gym, a penny provident bank, employment bureau, industrial classes, and various clubs. White was also active in promoting recreational facilities as president of the Brooklyn Society for Parks and Playgrounds for Children.[113]

In 1901, he left the pastorate of the City Park Branch to join Union Theological Seminary at the invitation of the president, Charles Cuthbert Hall. The Seminary had just created the new position of Director of

[113] Ibid.; interview, June 12, 1969, with Mrs. Franklin C. Wells and Mr. Charles T. White, children of Gaylord S. White; Woods and Kennedy, Handbook, 187; Brooklyn Society for Parks and Playgrounds for Children (pamphlet), April, 1899.

Student Christian Work in a proposed experiment relating theological training to practical field work. As Director, White would also be headworker at the Union Settlement; he told his congregation, in a farewell sermon, that he hoped to "bring the Settlement work into more intimate relation with the Seminary, as a place where the students have the opportunity of studying at close range the great social problems that arise in the congested life of our large cities."[114]

Headworkers were usually not married. White had a family, and since residency was a sine qua non of settlement work, Union Theological secured 246 East 105th Street for a family residence. Its back-yard faced the rear of the settlement buildings; along with the house, Union Theological paid White a salary of $3,500 a year.[115] This was the major contribution the Seminary made to the settlement work; additional funds came from Alumni Association dues, voluntary contributions, fees from club members, bazaars, and admission fees for games.

His ministerial background led White to attempt a

[114] The Bulletin, V, No.12 (April, 1901), 1-8, published monthly by The City Park Branch, First Presbyterian Church. In "Reflections of a Settlement Worker," Scribner's Magazine, LXXVI (December, 1924), 633-638, White wrote, many years after the event, that he had resigned his pastorate in 1901 to take the position at Union Settlement because, as a minister, he had been too concerned with individual salvation.

[115] Interview, June 12, 1969, with Mrs. Franklin C. Wells.

religious climate at Union Settlement; gradually he learned that the ideal of the settlement was the ideal of the good neighbor, for "what is the Settlement if it is not a clearing house of social needs and a rallying point for the forces for good in its neighborhood."[116] White had put into words what most settlement leaders and workers believed; they offered a "clearing house of social needs and a rallying point for the forces for good."

Hartley House was established in January, 1897, as an adjunct of the work of the Department of Relief and Food Supply of the New York Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor (AICP). An 1896 study of the 15th A.D. on the middle West Side by the Federation of Churches and Christian Workers had revealed a neighborhood of some 40,000 Irish, Germans, and Americans scattered through some 23 blocks. In this district were 92 corner lots, 44 of which were occupied by saloons; others distributed throughout the area meant an average of five and one-half saloons to a block. One deduction by the AICP was that the saloon offered a better meal than that prepared at home; "one-half of domestic in-

[116] White, "Reflections," Union Settlement Report of the Twentieth Year (December, 1915), 1-84. Helen Harris, Executive Director, United Neighborhood Houses, believed that White originally envisioned the settlement house as a missionary outpost but had sufficient elasticity to realize possible failure in an attempt to convert. Interview, October 30, 1968.

CHAPTER III

PRACTICAL IDEALISTS

The special distinction of the settlement movement in New York City was the direct result of the individuals who participated in it. These settlement workers included full-time residents, part-time workers who resided in the settlement, and volunteers. Settlement workers who lived in the settlement houses were residents, but within that category there were distinctions. Lillian Wald was a full time resident of the Henry Street Settlement; so was John L. Elliott of Hudson Guild, Gaylord White of Union Settlement, and Mary K. Simkhovitch of Greenwich House. These pioneers and others, often called head-workers, had life long careers in the settlement movement.

Other workers lived in the settlement house but gave part-time service while pursuing other careers and interests. These members supervised clubs, taught classes, and led discussions. J. Salwyn Schapiro recalled that he lived at the Down Town Ethical Society for three or four years while attending Columbia University.[1] When Robert Hunter was headworker at the University Settlement, 1902-1903, the residents included Frederick King, David Blaustein,

[1] J. Salwyn Schapiro, interview, May 14, 1968.

Settlement Resident (Settlement)	a. Year of birth b. Place c. Religion (Belief)	Education
Walling, William E. (University)	a. 1877 b. Louisville, Ky. c. Protestant	1897, Chicago 1899-1900, graduate study
Wheeler, Everett P. (East Side)*	a. 1840 b. New York City c. Episcopalian	1856, Free Academy 1859, LL.B., Harvard
White, Gaylord S. (Union)*	a. 1864 b. New Rochelle,N.Y. c. Presbyterian	1886, Princeton 1890, Union Theological Seminary 1890-92, Berlin
Williams, Elizabeth (College)*	a. 1869 b. Buffalo, N.Y. c. Unitarian	1891, Smith 1897, M.A., Columbia
Woerishoffer, Carola (Greenwich)	a. 1885 b. New York c. -	1907, Bryn Mawr

Analysis of the preceding data shows the following:

1. The 44 settlement workers comprise 21 women and 23 men. The women include 13 headworkers or assistant headworkers, and 8 resident workers; the men include 15 headworkers or assistants and 8 resident workers.

2. The religious or institutional affiliation of the 44 settlement workers is indicated in the following table:

Affiliation	Women	Men	Total
Protestant			
Congregational	4	3	7
Episcopalian	2	3	5
Presbyterian	4	3	7
Unitarian	3	1	4
Undesignated	3	8	11
Jewish	1	3	4
Ethical Culture		2	2

and some inferences drawn, the question still remains. Why did these relatively young men and women, well educated, of upper and middle incomes, from communities outside New York City, choose to live in the midst of poverty?

In the earliest years of the settlement movement, the strongest of all motives was the religious impulse.[18] Charles B. Stover found his orthodox training incompatible with the slum world conditions he had experienced, yet he could not reject the implications of that religious education. Gaylord S. White challenged the idea that a minister could effectively treat the diseases of an age from the ivory tower of a pulpit; John L. Elliott hoped to transfer ethical principles into a neighborhood house while Vida Scudder felt that cultural inheritance and education imposed obligations to expend herself in behalf of those less fortunate. There is a broad strain of Christian humility and sacrifice, a recognition of the brotherhood of man, which runs through these accounts as though, in obedience to a higher law, there was a required testing of one's self in the crucible of a new and changing

[18] In a national poll of 339 settlement workers, 88 per cent acknowledged active church membership; nearly all said religion had been a dominant influence in joining the settlements. Outlook, LXXXII (January 20, 1906), 122-125. For another view, see Christopher Lasch, The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963 (New York, 1965), 11, who asserts that it was "the waning of theology rather than the persistence of piety that created the cultural climate" for the settlement.

society.[19]

Some had planned to become missionaries in those far-off corners of the world, but the remote areas of the world did not offer more of a challenge than did the forgotten communities of their own country. Benjamin Marsh recalled that his missionary parents, based in the Middle East, had sent him to Grinnell College in the expectation that he would eventually teach somewhere in Africa. After seeing conditions in the industrial centers of America, he decided "I need not cross the ocean to work in a Dark Continent."[20]

Barnett's "consciousness of sin" penetrated this middle class, for it seemed that there were deepening schisms dividing America. The growing wealth epitomized by Carnegie and Rockefeller and Vanderbilt contrasted sharply with the growing poverty of the great mass of people. The young women graduating from college had the benefit of an education which had provided insights but left unanswered questions demanding further investigation. Formal political activity was denied them, since they could not vote in most states and hence were unacceptable as political candidates. Rejected by business and industry, unwilling to enter the ivory tower of education, and unprepared for domesticity, they found a kind of fulfillment

[19] Mary K. Simkhovitch, Neighborhood (New York, 1938), 58.

[20] Benjamin C. Marsh, Lobbyist for the People (Washington, 1953), 13.

led settlement workers to petition for stricter regulation of dairy plants and the organization of municipal milk stations; by 1911, a total of 15 such stations had been established.[57]

Observers of the East Side scene frequently commented on the garbage strewn streets, the cluttered fire-escapes, and the stench of decaying food. "Filthy persons and clothing reeking with vermin are seen on every side," the New York Times reported in July, 1893. "Many of these people are afflicted with diseases of the skin. Children are covered with sores and hundreds of them are nearly blind with sore eyes."[58] The public bath facilities provided by the settlements were among the first general remedies for this situation. Almost every settlement constructed showers and baths; University Settlement provided 30 showers and two tubs and, for five cents, a customer was given "a fresh piece of soap and a clean towel." During one summer, 11,000 baths were sold each month and, on particularly hot days, the number of customers averaged 700 to 800. In all the settlements, this was the one service returning a profit.[59]

In 1902, settlement workers created a tuberculosis

[57] Lubove, The Progressives, 190; Truax, "Hartley House," 136-137; Wald, House, 55, says that a settlement milk station was begun in 1903 when one of the settlement directors began sending milk of a high grade from his private dairy.

[58] New York Times, July 30, 1893.

[59] Walling MSS; University Settlement 20th Annual Report (1906), showed a profit of $2,781.51.

committee headed by Robert Hunter and Lillian Wald, and then organized a tuberculosis exhibit, portraying the causes, conditions, and results of a disease then common to the lower East Side. Settlement workers also formed committees to change the conditions under which food was sold on pushcarts.[60] Gaylord White, headworker at Union Settlement, was disturbed by the way midwives practiced in the growing Italian population in his district; too many instances of incompetence and criminal negligence had been brought to the settlement's attention. White urged an investigation; and, in 1905, the Association of Neighborhood Workers, a settlement group, initiated such a study. The disclosures led to legislation in 1907 under which the Department of Health promulgated regulations for the practice of midwifery; in 1911, the first school for midwives was established at Bellevue Hospital.[61]

The programs and pressures of the settlements made an impact upon the health of the slum community. The visiting nurse program, the school nurses, the development of a new field of industrial hygiene, the studies of midwives and of tuberculosis, the establishment of milk stations,

[60] Woods and Kennedy, Settlement Horizon, 256; College Settlements Association 17th Annual Report (1906), 32; Josephine Goldmark, Impatient Crusader: Florence Kelley (Urbana, Ill., 1953), 81.

[61] Woods and Kennedy, Settlement Horizon, 252.

it was primarily Italian. The settlement known as the Recreation Rooms and Settlement began with a Jewish membership; the beginning of the second decade in the twentieth century found the neighbors largely Italian. Union Settlement had run a range from Irish, German, and American neighbors to Jewish and Italian members; Warren Goddard House saw Irish members replaced by Italians as did Doe Ye Next Thynge.[5] When one ethnic group succeeded another, conditions and attitudes might be changed.[6] Gaylord White had entered the Union Settlement in 1901 when Germans and Irish were its neighbors and the Jews were newcomers; by the end of the first decade, the Italians were the dominant group. In the midst of all these changes, White asked if it were not worth something to have at least one constant factor, one established neighbor--the settlement. The settlement would be a fortress in a changing neighborhood.[7]

Some settlements found that public institutions were providing the services settlements had originally supplied. Indeed, one measure of the success of the settlements was the public adoption of programs initiated by the settle-

[5] Survey, Analysis and Plan for United Neighborhood Houses of New York, Inc. (New York, 1958), 1-56.

[6] Herbert J. Gans, "Redefining the Settlement's Function for the War on Poverty," Social Work, IX (October, 1964) 3-12, argues that the early success of the settlements was due to a Jewish membership and the subsequent decline followed their departure from the slums. This ignores the work of Greenwich House, Hudson Guild, Union Settlement, and East Side House which had a predominantly non-Jewish membership.

[7] Gaylord S. White, "The Settlement Problem of a Changing Neighborhood," Readings in the Development of Social Work, Lorene M. Pacey, ed., (New York, 1950), 91-99.

community. A poignant story reveals both the innocence of and harshness experienced by the settlement workers. Isabel Dillingham, a Wellesley graduate, class of 1912, and a new resident at Greenwich House, caught measles while taking a sick child to the hospital; complications developed, leading to Dillingham's death in January, 1914. Simkhovitch said that this incident provided a turning point in the Greenwich House group, for "we grew up with the knowledge of good and evil and of danger."[7]

Vida Scudder thought that the settlement experience had more meaning for the resident than for the community he served. Louis Pink, housing reformer and one-time resident at the University Settlement, called the settlement a laboratory and said it was an education just to live in it. Living in a settlement "was an investment of self only Americans of remarkable sensitivity and imagination could afford."[8] One resident, Alice Hamilton, said she would not have taken up the cause of the working class had she not lived in a settlement; another believed that the settlement experience meant more than any college year; while a third, Henry Moskowitz, felt that one of the most significant results of the settlement movement was the contribution that it made to the experience

[7]Mary K. Simkhovitch, Neighborhood: My Story of Greenwich House (New York, 1938), 140; Wellesley College Alumnae Records.

[8]Vida Scudder, On Journey (New York, 1937), 160; Louis Pink, Oral History Project, Columbia University; Clarke Chambers, Seedtime of Reform (Minneapolis, 1963), 109.

of the residents because of their contact with the common lot of mankind.[9] Some served an apprenticeship in the settlements before embarking on other careers; among these were Harry Hopkins, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Frances Perkins, Adolph A. Berle, Jr., Sidney Hillman, and Raymond B. Fosdick, who called his first year in New York at the Henry Street Settlement "perhaps the most unique experience of my life."[10] John L. Elliott, Lillian Wald, Mary K. Simkhovitch, Gaylord White, Christina MacColl, and May Mathews were some of the settlement residents who made the settlement a life's work.

Regardless of the reactions of settlement workers to the settlement experience, questions of attitude and practice had to be faced. The New York settlement workers, like those in other urban centers where settlements had been established, had to cope with the fact that their activities were not in the context of the prevailing social thought at the turn of the century. Economic individualism supported highly competitive practices, irrespective of social injury; the principle of individual salvation,

[9]Willette C. Pierce, "A Study of the Contributions of Student Residents in the Settlement Program and Its Resulting Value to the Student" (unpublished master's thesis, Boston University School of Social Work, 1950), 1, quoting Alice Hamilton; Helen A. Scribner, "Residents of College Settlements," College Settlement Association 12th Annual Report (1901), 18-25; Henry Moskowitz, "The University Settlement: Its Influence in Communal Life," Jewish Social Service Quarterly, II (June, 1926), 251-258.

[10]Raymond B. Fosdick, Chronicle of a Generation (New York, 1958), 75.

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