

*The*  
**Thetean**



*The*  
**Thetean**

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## Editor's Preface

IN ALBERT CAMUS' 1947 NOVEL *THE PLAGUE*, THE TITULAR DISEASE sends the French Algerian town of Oran into total quarantine, with no movement and little communication between Oran and the outside world. In Oran, "a feeling normally as individual as the ache of separation from those one loves suddenly became a feeling in which all shared alike," to use Camus' words. While the present global health crisis fortunately has not taken as deadly a toll as many plagues historically have, the global "ache of separation" remains acute and profound. In the novel, former activist and freedom fighter Jean Tarrou, an idealistic foil to the absurdist hero Dr. Bernard Rieux, keeps a careful journal in which "he set himself to recording the history of what the normal historian passes over."<sup>1</sup> Tarrou's journal serves as a reminder that history is not only about recording great deeds and heroes, but about seeking, understanding, and documenting the experiences and perspectives of all, from the extraordinary, to the ordinary, to the other. As Tarrou recognized the importance of documenting the experiences of ordinary people during the plague, *The Thetean* recognizes the importance of telling human stories during this pandemic.

And human stories these are, indeed. Brandon Smith and Natalie Merten document the reactions and involvement of Protestants and women, respectively, in the French Revolution. Three papers explore marginalized groups in early-twentieth-century America. Elyse Slabaugh and Bethany Morey both look at the immigrant experience; Elyse focuses on immigrant healthcare while Bethany explores how immigrants experienced motherhood. A third paper looks at working women's roles in the world of labor unions. Taylor Tree uncovers the difficult reality that many indigenous children faced being "adopted"

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1. Albert Camus, *The Plague*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 24, 67.

by Mormon settlers in nineteenth-century Utah, while Travis Meyer show us another dimension of suffering related to the Rwandan Genocide. Finally, we see the significance of the ordinary in Rachel Felt's work on missionary board games and Brooke Sutton's on chewing gum.

Of course, all of this remarkable work would not be possible without the wisdom, guidance, and patience of the history faculty. They provide the experience and perspective that allows eager students to turn their interests and ideas into fully realized projects worthy of publication. They deserve our every thanks. I would also like to personally thank this year's editing staff, a collection of excellent students whose insight and hard work ensured that we could publish the best possible edition of *The Thetean*, particularly under such difficult circumstances.

I distinctly remember sitting in Dr. Karen Carter's World Civilization as a sophomore, still operating under the misguided assumption that medical school was the right path for me. The first day of class she told us that the true purpose of history is to learn how to have compassion through understanding people of the past, an idea which affected me enough that I changed my major to history soon thereafter. Indeed, the value of history to me has always been the ability to see people of the past not as abstractions, but as individual human beings whose emotions and experiences were as real as mine. I hope this year's *Thetean* might help us find and cultivate such a perspective.

—*Jake Andersen*  
*Editor-in-Chief*

# “This Dangerous Ascendancy” Women’s Political Participation in the French Revolution

Natalie Merten

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION ENDURES IN HISTORICAL MEMORY AS ONE of the “great turning-points in history,” a complete upheaval of society ending the tyranny and inefficiencies of one of the world’s oldest and most powerful monarchies and championing those oft-mentioned values of *liberté, égalité, and fraternité*.<sup>1</sup> The 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, one of the fundamental documents of the Revolution, declared that “Men are born and remain free and equal in rights,” that “the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits other than those which assure to other members the enjoyment of the same rights,” and that the law “only has the right to prohibit those actions which are injurious to society.”<sup>2</sup> The charge that men were equal in rights was, for its day, incredibly radical. However, despite the Revolution’s declaration of such ideals and abolition of old-regime privilege (an astonishing accomplishment), revolutionary leaders fell short of creating a completely egalitarian society even during the most radical points of the Revolution, in part because they applied the rights of man to man, and not to mankind. Despite the efforts of various advocates for women’s rights, and despite the significant role of women in the Revolution (as seen during critical events such as

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1. Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution, 1789–1799* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1.

2. “Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen,” in *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution>.

the October Days or the assault on the Tuileries Palace), women continued to be denied the rights of citizenship. Eventually, even their participation in political societies and clubs was prohibited—under the law, it would seem, women’s involvement in the political public sphere was somehow “injurious to society.”

The purpose of this research is to examine different responses of male revolutionaries to female participation in the French Revolution from 1789–1793, focusing primarily on views of women’s activism in political societies. During the earlier stages of the Revolution, when the debate on women’s rights focused on the question of citizenship, we find that female participation was typically disallowed on the basis of appeals to nature (arguing in favor of women’s natural place in the domestic sphere) or claims of their inferiority to men. In the later stages of the Revolution, one further element of opposition to women’s rights emerged: fear of politically active women as a threat to public order (therefore, injurious to society). While arguments based on gender roles and supposed female inferiority persisted, the responses analyzed here suggest that this fear ultimately proved to be a more significant factor in the suppression of women’s involvement in revolutionary politics.

## The Debate Over Women’s Citizenship

The debate over women’s rights to democratic citizenship in revolutionary France arose with the National Assembly’s “unshakeable resolution” to create a new national constitution. Women’s right to political participation through citizenship was a novel concept, even for Enlightened thinkers such as the Abbé Sieyès. Sieyès proposed in “Preliminary to the French Constitution” (in 1789, the same year in which he published *What Is the Third Estate?*) that the National Assembly’s deputies must distinguish between active and passive citizens. Passive citizens, according to Sieyès, included women, children and foreign nationals: “those who contribute nothing to maintaining the public establishment.” They should be barred the right to exert “active influence on public affairs” by voting, for they were not “true shareholders in the great social enterprise” of the nation.<sup>3</sup> The Assembly agreed with Sieyès, for at this point in time the concept

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3. The Abbé Sieyès, “Preliminary to the French Constitution,” (August 1789) in *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, ed. and trans. by Lynn Hunt (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1996), 81.

of granting full citizenship to women was almost unheard of, and as Lynn Hunt puts it, "unimaginable to almost everyone, men and women alike."<sup>4</sup>

The early days of the Revolution had thrown the discussion on citizenship wide open, though, and it took little time for proponents of women's rights to introduce their arguments to the public consciousness in an attempt to change the narrative. In 1790, the Marquis de Condorcet, often considered the quintessential Enlightenment thinker, published a provocative essay titled *On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship*, a response to those who would prohibit women's political participation by insisting on female intellectual or moral inferiority, or by arguing that women should remain in their natural domestic sphere (at this time, the two main arguments against women's rights). For Condorcet, the rights of man existed due to man's rationality and sentience—"they are feeling beings, capable of acquiring moral ideas and reasoning about these ideas"—which "necessarily" gave women equal rights. To those who would claim that women lacked the reasoning capabilities of men, he challenged: "Elizabeth of England, Maria Theresa, the two Catherines of Russia—have they not shown that neither in courage nor in strength of mind are women wanting?" He also thought the 'domestic-sphere' argument poorly founded, for women given the right to vote would "no more be torn from their homes than agricultural labourers from their ploughs, or artisans from their workshops."<sup>5</sup> Among male revolutionaries, though, there were few in favor of equal social and political rights for both genders, and while Condorcet's argument created a stir, it did not create change.

The debate over women's political participation through citizenship and its accompanying rights arose once more with the need to replace the Constitution of 1791, outdated in the aftermath of the deposition of Louis XVI. In the months leading up to the creation of the Montagnard Constitution of 1793 (accepted 24 June 1793), various individuals turned their attention, yet again, to the question of whether the Declaration of Rights applied only to men. In April 1793, National Convention deputy Pierre Guyomar published a pamphlet entitled "The Partisan of Political Equality between Individuals," in which he decried the government's continuing denial of political rights to women,

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4. Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (NY: Norton, 2008), 170.

5. Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, "On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship [1795]," Online Library of Liberty, Liberty Fund, Inc. <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/condorcet-on-the-admission-of-women-to-the-rights-of-citizenship>.

and pointed out what he viewed as the Convention's hypocrisy in referring to women as *citoyennes*: "If [women] do not have the right to vote in the primary assemblies, they are not members of the sovereign," thus making the title "more than ridiculous" in Guyomar's mind. He maintained that "the declaration of rights is the same for men and women," and that "half of the individuals of a society do not have the right to deprive the other half of the imprescriptible right of giving their opinion," thus drawing on arguments previously made by thinkers such as Condorcet (as well as female activists such as Etta Palm d'Aelders or Olympe de Gouges, who in 1791 had famously challenged the Liberal Revolution's failure to grant political rights to women in her *Declaration of the Rights of Woman*).<sup>6</sup>

Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall notes that this debate also made its way to the floor of the National Convention in 1793, detailing an instance where deputy Gilbert Romme (most widely known for his development of the French Republican calendar), as a member of the "Commission of Six" created to analyze constitutional projects, "declared that women had an equal share in the category of the rights-bearing *homme*."<sup>7</sup> Other members of this committee, however, opposed these progressive views; moderate Girondin Jean-Denis Lanjuinais acknowledged Romme's "complaints" and Guyomar's "interesting dissertation" on the subject of women's rights, but ultimately argued that "If the best and most just institutions are those most in conformity with nature, it is difficult to believe that women should be called to the exercise of political rights." Lanjuinais further suggested that it would be "impossible" for men and women to gain anything good from women's admission to the rights of citizenship.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in 1793, the question of women's citizenship was again met with the response that granting political rights to women would fly in the face of nature. Sepinwall argues in her discussion of this event that Romme was clearly not the sole Convention member to favor political rights for women, since, reportedly, many deputies enthusiastically called for Romme's discourse on rights to be

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6. Pierre Guyomar, "The Partisan of Political Equality Between Individuals," in *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, ed. and trans. by Lynn Hunt (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1996), 133–134.

7. Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, "Robespierre, Old Regime Feminist? Gender, the Late Eighteenth Century, and the French Revolution Revisited," *Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 1 (2010): 22. doi:10.1086/650505. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/650505>.

8. Jean-Denis Lanjuinais, "Report of the Committee Charged with Analyzing Constitutional Projects," in *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, ed. and trans. by Lynn Hunt (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1996), 133.

printed.<sup>9</sup> However, the views to which Lanjuinais subscribed (as well as male opinions of female inferiority) obviously remained predominant, for when the Montagnard Constitution was accepted less than two months later (24 June 1793), women's political participation in terms of citizenship and voting rights remained nonexistent. As had been the case in 1791, the Declaration of the Rights of Man was determined to apply solely to men.

## Women's Political Participation: Societies and Clubs

While women had been denied the rights to citizenship during the creation of the Constitutions of 1791 and 1793 (Darline G. Levy and Harriet B. Applewhite characterize women's political exclusion in 1793 as the denial of "democratic citizenship," whereas 1791 had been a denial of "active citizenship" as outlined by Sieyès), they still initially retained a way to exert influence in the political public sphere—involvement in popular societies and clubs.<sup>10</sup> Beginning in 1789 (1790 in Paris), a healthy number of these clubs had emerged which permitted female as well as male membership. Known as "fraternal societies," these organizations included such groups as the *Amis de la Loi* (founded by female street activist and revolutionary agitator Théroigne de Méricourt), the *Société des Indigents*, and the *Société Fraternelle de Patriotes de Deux Sexes*; additionally, women frequented clubs such as the Cordeliers and Jacobins, although only as spectators.<sup>11</sup> Eventually, a further type of organization where women could be politically active was established: exclusively female political societies. The most notable of these was the *Société des Citoyennes Républicaines Révolutionnaires* (the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women), a Parisian club founded during the spring of 1793.<sup>12</sup> While the Society declared that they were formed with the intent "to instruct themselves, to learn well the Constitution and laws of the Republic," the first, and perhaps most significant article of their regulations stated that "The Society's purpose is to be armed to rush to the defense of

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9. Sepinwall, "Robespierre," 22.

10. Darline G. Levy and Harriet B. Applewhite, "Women and Militant Citizenship in Revolutionary Paris," in *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution* (NY: Oxford, 1992), 79.

11. Shirley Elson Roessler, *Out of the Shadows: Women and Politics in the French Revolution, 1789–95* (NY: Peter Lang, 1998), 50–51.

12. Roessler, *Out of the Shadows*, 57.

the Fatherland.”<sup>13</sup> This ambition was one that male revolutionary leaders found deeply concerning.

What Levy and Applewhite characterize as French women’s “militant citizenship” (or the exertion of political influence through the use of force) had, however, been relatively well-accepted in the early stages of the Revolution.<sup>14</sup> Time and time again, male leaders and journalists held up the example of the women who participated in the events of the October Days in 1789, marching to Versailles to state their demands to the king, and forcing the royal family’s return to Paris. However, these men typically still promoted the roles prescribed by nature—men in the public sphere, women confined to the domestic sphere—as the societal ideal. Louis-Marie Prudhomme, founder of the radical Parisian newspaper *Révolutions de Paris*, published an editorial in February 1791 which exemplified such views: it at once called women to arms (“Citizenesses of all ages and all stations! Leave your homes . . . rally from door to door . . . Armed with burning torches, present yourselves at the gates of the palace of your tyrants and demand reparation . . . let the atmosphere be charged with the seeds of death”) and reminded them of their “natural” place in society. According to Prudhomme, “A woman is only comfortable, is only in her place in her family or in her household,” thus making civil and political liberties “useless” and “foreign” to women. Thus, women’s participation—even violent participation—in the Revolution was accepted, even encouraged, but only as a temporary necessity: “Once the country is purged of all these hired brigands, citizenesses,” Prudhomme declared, “We will see you return to your dwellings to take up once again the accustomed yoke of domestic duties.”<sup>15</sup> As the Revolution progressed, certain radicals continued to support women’s political activity, at least in terms of their role in exerting influence through violence, if not through more organized structures such as political societies. In the last days of summer 1793, Jacques-René Hébert was still inciting women to take up arms in the absence of their husbands and sons (called to subdue the Vendée

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13. “Regulations of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women (9 July 1793),” *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/481>.

14. Levy and Applewhite, “Women and Militant Citizenship,” 81.

15. Louis-Marie Prudhomme, “On the Influence of the Revolution on Women” (12 February 1791), *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/483>.

Rebellion in the *levée en masse* of 23 August) and patrol the streets in search of counter-revolutionaries, utilizing the rhetoric of the October Days: "*Femmes du 6 octobre . . .*"<sup>16</sup>

By fall 1793, though, rhetoric such as Hébert's increasingly defied the norm, as this militant form of female "citizenship" was viewed in an ever more negative light by revolutionary leaders. Joan Landes emphasizes this trend, noting that initially "feminist protest" had been favored among the leaders of 1789's liberal Revolution, just four years earlier.<sup>17</sup> While Landes also suggests that the "austere republicanism" of the National Convention was significantly "less favorable to feminism," Sepinwall pushes back against the idea that the Jacobin faction was necessarily more opposed to women's presence in the public sphere; Robespierre, for example, had favored women's admittance to royal academies prior to the Revolution, arguing that "women drove progress and that their presence was necessary for enlightenment to spread."<sup>18</sup> Sepinwall posits instead that many revolutionary leaders held views on women's rights considered progressive by Old Regime standards, but the actions of revolutionary women—who "did not behave politely and charmingly," but were disturbingly "unruly and independent"—gradually pushed them to retreat from such positions.<sup>19</sup> These actions particularly included continued female agitation for the right to bear arms in the defense of the Republic, as claimed by the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women. Delegations of women had presented this demand to the National Convention multiple times throughout the first half of 1792 (in an initiative spearheaded by activists such as de Méricourt and Pauline Léon), and had been continually denied.<sup>20</sup> Thus, by the time of the Society's creation, women's political participation in the form of activism was already considered suspect by revolutionary leaders: members of these societies and clubs, in their minds, were becoming radicalized, and posed a danger not only to the ideal, gendered society envisioned by Jacobin disciples of Rousseau, but to social and public order.

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16. Le Père Duchesne, issue no. 235, 1793. Gallica Digital Library, Bibliothèque nationale de France, [https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k105608\\_43?rk=729617;2](https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k105608_43?rk=729617;2).

17. Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 146.

18. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 106.

19. Sepinwall, "Robespierre," 8, 26.

20. Levy and Applewhite "Women and Militant Citizenship," 89; Roessler, *Out of the Shadows*, 56.

## Responses to Women's Political Societies

The account of a 1793 meeting of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women, recorded by one Pierre-Joseph-Alexis Roussel, offers an idea of the responses which such political participation received during these later stages of the Revolution. Roussel primarily took a dismissive and mocking view of the Society's proceedings; indeed, he begins his account by assuring the reader that while these memoirs were published some years after the fact (in 1802), his descriptions are all accurate, for "this session seemed so comical to us that we each made a separate record of it when we left, while our memories were still filled with these details." He details the lengthy discourse given by a Society member on the utility of women in republican government, a speech which he again found "comical," and observes that the women made various proposals of how to be more involved in the Revolution, "each one more ridiculous than the last."<sup>21</sup> This condescending view of the Society illustrates the continued tendency of men during the Revolution to claim that female political participation should be restricted, based on women's perceived inferiority.

These typically negative responses to women's societies and clubs can also be observed in contemporary artwork, as in Chérieux's *Club des femmes patriotes dans un église*, a "satirical" scene depicting a meeting of a club of revolutionary women in 1793. The women in the foreground, presumably the club's leaders, have distorted facial proportions—ugly, and often more masculine features—and aggressive expressions; they rise from their seats and point at each other dramatically, possibly indicating a disagreement among their leadership. One appears to be swooning. A number of men appear at the bottom of the scene, some standing, some seated in the gallery. In contrast to the women, they are composed and unemotional; a few appear to look on the impassioned women with some amusement (recalling the mocking attitude taken by Roussel).<sup>22</sup> Chérieux's drawing thus displays the methods by which men sought to discredit female revolutionaries throughout the Revolution—firstly, the portrayal of women as dramatic and disorganized implies their intellectual and moral deficiencies in comparison to the more rational men. Their physical depiction,

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21. Pierre-Joseph-Alexis Roussel, "Account of a Session of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women," *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/482>.

22. Chérieux, "Club des femmes patriotes dans un église," 1793. Gallica Digital Library, Bibliothèque nationale de France, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10303232d.item>.

moreover, conveys the idea that, as Landes proposes, women's participation in the public sphere elicited fears that independent, political women might be "femmes-hommes—women masquerading as men, forsaking their feminine duty."<sup>23</sup> Thus, this negative portrayal of the members of the club appealed to nature: proper, virtuous women were supposed to remain within the domestic sphere, and those who chose to become politically active were "unnatural."

Such unfavorable depictions of female political societies demonstrate that male participants in the French Revolution continued to oppose women's attempts to exert political influence by appealing to perceived male superiority and nature-prescribed gender roles (which dictated that the public sphere should be the realm of men). Nonetheless, the response which seems to have proved the deciding factor in the suppression of women's political activity was male revolutionaries' fear of female activism as a threat to public order. This is best demonstrated by examining the discussion around the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women, immediately preceding the Convention's final resolution to disband all women's clubs.

On 8 brumaire an II (28 October 1793), the revolutionary committee of the Paris "Section du Contrat-Social" reported that, earlier that morning, the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women had assembled in order to attend the that day's meeting of the Paris sections, which would include the unveiling of the statues of the two revolutionary martyrs, Marat and Le Peletier de Saint-Fargeau. However, the committee claimed, "enemies of liberty" had taken the opportunity to mislead the other women in the crowd into believing that the Society wished all the women to adopt the red cap which they—and other sans-culottes—wore as a symbol of their republicanism. The committee complained that they had been occupied all day in dissolving the "considerable gathering" ("*rassemblement considérable*") which formed from the resulting dispute among the members of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women and the other so-called *citoyennes*. They had finally succeeded, but decided that it would be best to ban the Society from assembling until further notice, on the grounds that their meeting might serve as an excuse for others to disturb public order and safety.<sup>24</sup> This report of the Section du Contrat-Social contrasts in many ways with the far more aggressive address dealing with the same event which

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23. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 146.

24. "Commune de Paris: séance du 7 du second mois," *Mercure Universel*, report of proceedings, 30 October 1793. Gallica Digital Library, Bibliothèque nationale de France. <https://www.retronews.fr/journal/mercure-universel/30-octobre-1793/431/1504199/10>.

Jean-Baptiste Amar, a prominent member of the Committee of General Security, delivered to the National Convention two days later (30 October 1793). Both responses, though, suggest that revolutionary leaders' views of politically active women as disruptive, potentially violent, and difficult to control had a more immediate influence on women's ultimate exclusion from any role of political influence than did the idealization of traditional gender roles or general opinions of female weakness.

Amar's address, unlike the Section's report, did draw on these last two arguments (once again demonstrating their persistent presence in the debate on women's rights during the Revolution). A significant portion of his speech focused on the idea that women and men were destined by nature to exist in particular social spheres and to fulfill particular roles; Amar claimed that "Each sex is called to a type of occupation that is appropriate to it," and that women were thus "destined" to carry out "private functions" within the household, promoting republican virtues within the family, but not to participate in government. Furthermore, Amar called up the idea that women were inferior to men in terms of intellectual, moral, and physical capabilities, notoriously declaring that "Man is strong, robust, born with a great audacity, energy, and courage," and "almost exclusively destined to . . . everything that requires force, intelligence, and ability," while women, in contrast, were "hardly capable of lofty conceptions and serious cogitations." He claimed, too, that women were generally incapable of possessing the "required attentions and qualities" for participation in governance, such as "extended knowledge" and "abnegation of self."<sup>25</sup>

Even more notably, though, Amar's address displayed the growing concern that women's political societies were radical, violent, and sources of disorder. The Section's committee had temporarily banned the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women from assembling on the basis of public safety, but they had also attributed the disturbance at the Paris sections' meeting to counter-revolutionary activity (highlighting the atmosphere of paranoia that, not without reason, pervaded France in 1793). Amar, on the other hand, placed the blame squarely on the Society itself. What the committee had referred to, in more neutral terms, as a "considerable gathering" was for Amar a "mob" of 6,000 unruly women (a characterization which does seem consistent with the Paris government's reported difficulties in dispersing the women, and the Section's report

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25. Jean-Baptiste Amar, in "Discussion of Women's Political Clubs and Their Suppression, 29–30 October 1793," in *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, ed. and trans. by Lynn Hunt (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1996), 137.

to the Commune that the gathering "took on the character of mutiny").<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, while the "revolutionary committee" had referred to the *citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires*, Amar's language took a far more disparaging tone: "so-called women Jacobins, from a club that is supposedly revolutionary," thus refusing to categorize them with male revolutionary leaders, and implying that, rather than seeking to implement republican virtues, these women were only promoting their own agenda, leaving chaos (as in the incident of 28 October) in their wake.<sup>27</sup>

At the end of this address, Amar proposed that women's political clubs and popular societies, "under whatever denomination," be prohibited. The decree was summarily passed; Lynn Hunt states that there was "virtually no discussion" of the issue within the Convention.<sup>28</sup> One deputy (Louis-Joseph Charlier, an ardent Montagnard whose typically brief term as president of the Convention had ended eight days prior) did speak up, opposing the motion on the grounds that there was no justification for preventing women's right to assembly, but his argument was quickly rebuffed: other deputies shouted Charlier down, declaring that women's political clubs and associations were "dangerous" to public safety.<sup>29</sup> Without doubt, many delegates believed that women were incapable of matching men's ability to govern and were best suited to remain within the home, long-established justifications for opposing female participation in the public sphere as cited by Amar. However, the National Convention's nearly unanimous approval of this proposal suggests that in this later stage of the Revolution, its members were likely more preoccupied with the threat that women's political activism posed to public order and, therefore, Jacobin governing power. Just six months previously, members of the Convention such as Guyomar and Romme had argued in favor of political rights for women, opposing men who insisted female nature necessarily limited women to the domestic sphere. Theirs was not a popular opinion, but one which apparently still received some approval

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26. "Commune de Paris: séance du 7 du second mois," *Mercure Universel*, 30 October 1793. Gallica Digital Library, Bibliothèque nationale de France. <https://www.retronews.fr/journal/mercure-universel/30-octobre-1793/431/1504199/10>.

27. Jean-Baptiste Amar, in "Discussion of Women's Political Clubs and Their Suppression, 29–30 October 1793," in *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, ed. and trans. by Lynn Hunt (Bedford/St. Martin's, 1996), 137.

28. "Discussion of Women's Political Clubs and Their Suppression, October 29–30, 1793" in *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Bedford/St. Martin's, 1996), 135.

29. Roessler, *Out of the Shadows*, 159–160.

(consider the deputies' enthusiasm for Romme's report, which at least indicated no "serious objection" to his stance on female citizenship).<sup>30</sup> Faced with the disruptive activism of new women's clubs and societies such as the Revolutionary Republican Women, though, male revolutionaries overwhelmingly concurred that women's political participation must come to an end.

## Conclusions

Although they were unsuccessful in securing political rights for women, it was possible for supporters of women's rights to push back against their opponents' appeals to nature or illogical claims of female intellectual and moral inadequacy when the main debate over women's political participation had to do with whether they would be granted active, democratic citizenship—whether women were truly, as Sieyès questioned, "true shareholders in the great social enterprise of the nation." It would have been far more difficult, though, to oppose the overwhelmingly negative response to women who attempted to influence the Revolution through political clubs and societies, continuing to endorse the use of violence and call for radical action long after male revolutionary leaders had grown distrustful of female militant citizenship. Consequently, the trend we find when observing French revolutionary society from 1789 onwards is a growing fear of women's political participation, culminating in the effective exclusion of women from meaningful political activity in late 1793.

If we return to Roussel's account of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women, we find yet another example of this fear of radicalized, politically active women and the impact they might have on society. Despite his repeated mockery of the Society and belittling portrayal of its members as "ridiculous," clearly inferior to the male leaders of the Revolution and less capable, Roussel also confessed that "When I think about it, the delirium of these women frightens me." He suggested that the "obstinacy" of women made them capable of "committing certain excesses," undoubtedly referring to the violent actions of *révolutionnaires* who engaged in militant citizenship to achieve their goals and exert political influence.<sup>31</sup> As discussed, women's use of violence was ini-

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30. Sepinwall, "Robespierre," 22.

31. Pierre-Joseph-Alexis Roussel, "Account of a Session of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women." *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/482>.

tially encouraged as a temporary necessity, a catalyst for revolution—but by late 1793, in the minds of most revolutionary leaders it had reached the limits of its usefulness, and the organized activism of women's societies instead became a threat. As Roussel termed it, France was faced with a "dangerous ascendancy" of women, and revolutionary leaders' fear of this ascendancy, rather than opinions of natural gender roles or male superiority, appears to have proved the driving factor in the suppression of female political societies and the exclusion of women from the Revolution.

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# God Is King, but so Is Louis XVI

## Royalist Tendencies among Protestants during the Early Stages of the French Revolution

Brandon Smith

FROM ITS INCEPTION, THE FRENCH REVOLUTION (GENERALLY accepted as occurring between 1789 and 1799) has received a great deal of attention from historians. Riding on the heels of the Enlightenment earlier in the eighteenth century, it was an era of not only political but also social and even religious innovation and revolution. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that a great number of studies have been done concerning various aspects of the Revolution. Notable among these topics is that of religion. Historian Jeffrey Merrick has studied at length what he termed the “desacralization of the French monarchy,” or the increasing separation of religiosity from the role of the French king in the years leading up to the Revolution.<sup>1</sup> Though his terminology might be foreign to the casual student of late eighteenth-century France, many are familiar with the dechristianization that the country experienced, culminating in Robespierre’s famous “festival of the Supreme Being.”<sup>2</sup> Scholars such as Nigel Aston and Dale Van Kley have contributed to the study of Roman Catholicism prior to and during the Revolution through their respective works

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1. See Jeffrey Merrick, *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

2. Nigel Aston, *The French Revolution, 1789–1804: Authority, Liberty, and the Search for Stability* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 42; David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680–1800* (London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 194.

on the political involvement of the episcopacy, and on the Jesuits and their theological rivals, the Jansenists.<sup>3</sup> Van Kley has also worked extensively to illuminate the role of Protestantism leading up to the Revolution, while other scholars have similarly strived to elucidate the situation of other minorities in France during the eighteenth and on into the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

Despite this bounty of scholarship dealing with the influence of various religions' broad ideas and theories on the unfolding of the Revolution, there is a comparative lack of discussion concerning how French Protestants presented themselves in the early stages of the Revolution. As will be seen, Catholics sought to portray Protestants as radicals who were eager to dethrone the king. After all, regardless of theological differences, the various branches of Protestantism rejected the notion that a single, overarching ecclesiastical authority was necessary; some branches even prided themselves on their lack of a widespread organization. The natural assumption, then, was that Protestants were inherently disinclined to support a single political leader. If God alone was their Lord and ruler, who was the king that they should obey and honor him? Indeed, among the many complaints voiced by Catholics against the "so-called reformed religion" was that its adherents, along with their pastors were "treacherous, tainted by republicanism."<sup>5</sup>

Such a claim was a severe one, for even after the Third Estate had declared itself to be the National Assembly, after the Tennis Court Oath had been sworn, and after the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen had been produced (all of which happened in the summer of 1789—the traditional beginning of the Revolution), common opinion held that the "most suitable" government for France was a monarchy.<sup>6</sup> While there is, of course, a degree of validity in these

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3. See Nigel Aston, *The End of an Elite: The French Bishops and the Coming of the Revolution, 1786–1790* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Dale Van Kley, *Jansenists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits from France, 1757–1765* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975).

4. See Dale Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560–1791* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715–1815* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003).

5. *La religion prétendue réformée* (often *R.P.R.*) was the official term applied to Calvinism; Nigel Aston, *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe, 1750–1830* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 143.

6. Jean-Joseph Mounier, "Thoughts on Governments and Principally the Government Suitable for France," in *Social and Political Thought of the French Revolution, 1788–1797*, edited and translated by Marc Allan Goldstein (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1997), 171.

Catholic fears, a study of the early revolutionary rhetoric of Protestant leaders such as Jean-Paul Rabaut Saint-Étienne reveals a surprising amount of staunchly royalist ideas. By examining Rabaut Saint-Étienne's ideas, we will be better able to appreciate why he and his fellow Protestants sought refute Catholic claims to radicalism. Indeed, it will become apparent that despite God's unquestionable role as King of all Creation, France's Protestants held that Louis XVI's role as King of France was just as incontrovertible.

## Early Protestantism and France

To understand why the French Protestants—often called Huguenots—portrayed themselves as supporters of the monarchy, however, and why the Catholics sought to depict them as the king's enemies, we must first understand France's experience with the “so-called reformed religion.” The history of Protestantism in France is a long and storied one, and that of Protestantism in general is longer and more complicated still. Without neglecting the work of early Christian humanists and other influencers of Martin Luther, for simplicity's sake we can say that the Reformation began in 1517 when the German monk posted his *Ninety-Five Theses* on the door of his church in Wittenburg.<sup>7</sup> Thanks in large part to the advent of printing technology, Luther's ideas and theology began to spread throughout the German states and across Europe. By the early 1520s, Luther's writings had reached French humanists, including the influential sister of King Francis I, Marguerite de Navarre.<sup>8</sup> Although Francis I and members of the reform-minded Meaux Circle originally “looked favorably upon the intellectual activities of the reformers,” the infamous *affaire des placards* of 1534, when thousands of anti-Catholic tracts were posted throughout Paris and other major French cities, quickly soured public opinion.<sup>9</sup>

Despite persecution and repression, the Calvinists of the Reformed church somehow managed to maintain footholds throughout the country, though they were under constant threat of annihilation. Some thirty years later, during the regency of Catherine de' Medici, armed conflict broke out between

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7. De Lamar Jensen, *Reformation Europe: Age of Reform and Revolution* (Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1992), 59.

8. Jensen, *Reformation Europe*, 131.

9. Jensen, *Reformation Europe*, 132; Gérard LaBrune, *L'histoire de France* (Paris: Nathan, 2014), 50.

royal Catholic forces and rebel Huguenot armies, embroiling most of the 1560s in civil war.<sup>10</sup> While France knew intermittent periods of peace, the armed conflict came to a head at the infamous Massacre of Saint Bartholomew's day, which the renowned French philosopher Voltaire would later call "a crime without equal in the annals of man's wickedness."<sup>11</sup> In May of 1572, Henri de Navarre, a Protestant prince from France's southern border with Spain, married Marguerite de Valois, the Catholic sister of France's king. Designed to achieve peace between the two factions, Catholics and Protestants alike gathered in Paris for the celebration. When the opportunity arose, however, to assassinate Coligny, a prominent Protestant leader, Catherine de' Medici consented to take it. The ultimately unsuccessful attempt on Coligny's life gave rise to a new wave of contention, resulting in thousands of deaths in Paris on that night alone.<sup>12</sup>

And so, the civil war dragged on, with Huguenots declaring that it was now the monarchy itself that they were fighting. By the end of this tumultuous period, however, France found herself with a formerly Protestant king on the throne. Henri de Navarre, having married into the royal family, declared himself Henri IV and, in the 1590s, took his place as king of France.<sup>13</sup> Although the "Good King Henri" had converted to Catholicism in order to solidify national support for his reign (Paris is worth a Mass, after all), he maintained an attitude of toleration and open-mindedness that eventually resulted in the production of France's official policy regarding Protestantism, the Edict of Nantes.<sup>14</sup>

## The Legal Question of Protestantism

Issued in 1598, the Edict of Nantes established the basis for the treatment of Protestants in France for the next eighty-seven years. Although it was not a sweeping acceptance of Protestantism as a viable alternative to Catholic worship, Henri IV's edict provided the Huguenots with several liberal concessions. They were gifted a number of fortified towns, wherein they were free to practice

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10. Jensen, *Reformation Europe*, 241. King Charles IX was but nine years old at his accession to the French throne.

11. Voltaire, *Treatise on Tolerance*. Translated by Brian Masters (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 16.

12. Jensen, *Reformation Europe*, 242–43.

13. Jensen, *Reformation Europe*, 246.

14. The apocryphal phrase "Paris is worth a mass" was allegedly uttered by Henri IV when he elected to leave the Protestantism of his family in order to guarantee his place on the French throne.

their religion. Likewise, this free exercise extended to areas that had previously permitted their worship in former treaties, as well as any land held by Protestant nobles. In addition to granting these religious liberties, the Edict of Nantes guaranteed a degree of civil equality between the Huguenots and Catholics, ensuring both groups access to public facilities such as schools, allowing both groups to hold public offices, and establishing bipartisan courts that would fairly judge both groups before the law.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, it seemed, the Huguenots had found the simple recognition that they had so long desired. Not only had the monarchy acknowledged their existence, but it had allowed them to practice their religion freely, albeit only in prescribed cities. There was even a former Protestant on the throne of France! Of course, such good fortune could not last forever. Twelve years after the creation of the Edict of Nantes, a Catholic fanatic named Ravallac took the life of the “Good King Henri.”<sup>16</sup> Although the defender of Protestantism was no more, at least the rights of this minority were guaranteed by the late king’s edict! These victories, however, were to be reversed by Henri IV’s grandson, Louis XIV. After several years of increasing, not to mention illegal, persecution, the eminent “Sun King” saw fit to revoke the Edict of Nantes, claiming that it had only ever been meant as a temporary measure designed to bring peace, with an edict of his own.

The Edict of Fontainebleau, issued in 1685, forbade Protestant worship services, banished Protestant pastors who refused to convert to Catholicism, and prohibited former Protestants from leaving France.<sup>17</sup> This did not, of course, put an end to the whole affair, for “illegality should not be understood as absence.”<sup>18</sup> Once again, the Reformed church survived underground during this political exile in the metaphorical *désert*. And, once again, as with the previous eras of persecution, open conflict between Protestant and Catholic forces was brewing. Starting in 1702, Protestants in the region of Cévennes broke out in open rebellion against Catholic dominance. These *Cévenols* resurrected recent fears of a France rife with civil war.<sup>19</sup> As such, after fighting in what

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15. Jensen, *Reformation Europe*, 248.

16. LaBrune, *L'histoire de France*, 56–57.

17. LaBrune, *L'histoire de France*, 62.

18. Bryan A. Banks, “The French Protestant Enlightenment of Rabaut Saint-Étienne: *Le Vieux Cévenol* and the Sentimental Origins of Religious Toleration,” *French History* 32, no. 1 (March 2018), 28, <https://doi.org/10.1093/fh/crx069>.

19. Timothy Tackett, *Religion Revolution, and Regional Culture in Eighteenth-Century France: The Ecclesiastical Oath of 1791* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 206–7.

became known as the Camisard Wars until their submission in 1715, Protestants once again found themselves “simultaneously policed and persecuted.”<sup>20</sup>

Despite the official policy of oppression and nonrecognition, many Protestants found a tacit acceptance in several French societies.<sup>21</sup> The preeminent *philosophe* Voltaire worked to further this cause by publishing his *Treatise on Tolerance*. In noting the proportionate dominance of Catholicism, he presents the following situation: “Let us suppose for a moment that there are indeed in France twenty Roman Catholics for every one Huguenot; I am not about to suggest the single Huguenot should gobble up the twenty Catholics; but, conversely, on what grounds should those twenty Catholics devour the lonely Huguenot?”<sup>22</sup> Although perhaps somewhat begrudgingly, many Catholics began to look the other way, recognizing, for example, the legitimacy of Protestant marriages.<sup>23</sup> Especially in areas of higher Huguenot concentration, some bishops even ignored the rebaptism of children as Protestants and turned a blind eye to common prayer.<sup>24</sup> On such implicit toleration, however, Nigel Aston sagely notes that the wealthier Calvinist families were typically the ones to enjoy such peace: “It was the Protestants of little substance who were the most vulnerable to the authorities imposing the full rigours of the law.”<sup>25</sup>

## Continued Conflict

The conflict between Catholics and Huguenots was not entirely resolved, however. Notable among the incidences that typify the strong albeit dwindling resentment against the Protestants was the infamous Calas affair, which showed that even as late as 1762, “it was possible for a Protestant to be tortured and broken on the wheel for the falsely attributed murder of his Catholic-convert son.”<sup>26</sup> In the light of such a rushed and unjust trial, Voltaire took up his pen and excoriated the officers who had allowed such an oversight. Comparing the

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20. Banks, “The French Protestant Enlightenment,” 31.

21. Jack Alden Clarke, “A Protestant *Philosophe* at the Constituent Assembly,” *The Historian* 20, no. 3 (May 1958), 292.

22. Voltaire, *Treatise on Tolerance*, 95.

23. Merrick, *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy*, 34.

24. Aston, *The End of an Elite*, 27.

25. Aston, *The End of an Elite*, 28.

26. Aston, *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe*, 110.

country to a crowded ship in danger of sinking, Voltaire advised that regardless of individual opinions and practices, all the passengers ought to work together to prevent leaks.<sup>27</sup> He cautioned, however, that “the contagious disease of fanaticism still thrives,” prophetically warning that despite the improvements made thus far, there remained much to do.<sup>28</sup> If nothing else, however, the Protestants had gained a powerful ally in the *philosophes* as they steadily worked to achieve social, political, and religious acceptance.<sup>29</sup>

With all that turmoil in mind, it is not difficult to understand why Catholics saw their religious rivals as rebellious and even revolutionary. The Wars of Religion of the sixteenth century had become a point of reference for understanding Protestantism.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, during those wars the Calvinists had “openly denounced and attacked the decadent Valois monarchy.”<sup>31</sup> Also fresh in Catholic memory was the War of the Camisards, and even the potential for Huguenots to ally with Protestant England during the Seven Years’ War caused fear and suspicion.<sup>32</sup> In addition to these overt acts of sedition, imagined or otherwise, Protestants were accused of “harboring theological justification for treason.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, members of the “so-called Reformed religion” were portrayed as a social and political threat just as much as a religious one.<sup>34</sup>

## Protestantism vis-à-vis the King

The Huguenots were, of course, eager to prove such Catholic claims to be false. Theologically, it is worth noting what Luther and Calvin said regarding one’s civic duties. Seeing as a civil leader was necessary for preserving peace, Luther wrote that “the Christian submits most willingly . . . pays his taxes, honors

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27. Voltaire, *An Address to the Public Concerning the Parricides Imputed to the Calas and Sirven Families*, Translated by Simon Harvey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 134.

28. Voltaire, *An Address to the Public*, 125.

29. Clarke, “A Protestant *Philosophe*,” 291–92.

30. Bryan A. Banks, “The Limits of Religious Liberty: Rabaut Saint-Étienne and the French Revolution.” *On Age of Revolutions*. Posted April 18, 2016. <https://ageofrevolutions.com/2016/04/18/the-limits-of-religious-tolerance-rabaut-saint-etienne-and-the-french-revolution/>.

31. Jensen, *Reformation Europe*, 243.

32. Aston, *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe*, 20.

33. Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, 162.

34. Aston, *The End of an Elite*, 91; Van Kley, *Religious Origins of the French Revolution*, 363.

those in authority, serves, helps, and does all he can to assist the governing authority, that it may continue to function.”<sup>35</sup> Although Calvin did not agree with Luther on every matter, their thoughts on government were similar in that they both accepted that the role of the civic authority was to maintain public order. Indeed, Calvin insisted that “rulers must be obeyed, regardless of their faults and failings.”<sup>36</sup> Despite underlying principles that could in some contexts be used to justify revolution, Calvinism’s political philosophy was one of “cautious conservatism.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, Protestants could argue that their rebellion during the Wars of Religion and under Louis XIV were due to the wicked actions of those rulers. But seeing as Louis XVI behaved virtuously, there was no way to justify establishing, heaven forbid, a republic!

With the question of theological justification for republicanism laid to rest, it now remained to be seen whether the Huguenots would be able to adhere to these principles. They were indeed loath to forget the suffering and persecution that past French kings had caused them. It must be remembered, however, that the king was not always their enemy. As the monarch, Henri IV had ushered in an era of peace that the Protestants had never before enjoyed, nor had they since. And although tensions ran high under Louis XIV, Protestants defied Catholic accusations of treason under his great-grandson, Louis XV, “show[ing] themselves to be such loyal patriots during the disastrous Seven Years’ War.”<sup>38</sup> Under Louis XVI, who took the throne in 1774, Protestants were eager to demonstrate their loyalty and hopeful to receive the formal recognition that they had so long been denied.

## Protestantism on the Eve of the Revolution

Some ten years after the accession of the new king, Jean-Paul Rabaut Saint-Étienne wrote that “the Protestants have place to hope for a change under Louis XVI.”<sup>39</sup> A Protestant pastor and champion for the rights of adherents

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35. Martin Luther, “Concerning Governmental Authority.” In *The Protestant Reformation*, edited by Hans J. Hillerbrand (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 76.

36. Jensen, *Reformation Europe*, 145.

37. Jensen, *Reformation Europe*, 146.

38. Aston, *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe*, 143.

39. As quoted in Catherine Bergeal, *Protestantisme et tolérance en France au XVIIIe siècle: de la révocation à la Révolution (1685–1789)* (Carrières-sous-Poissy, France: La Cause, 1988), 140.

to the “so-called reformed religion,” Rabaut Saint-Étienne worked tirelessly to achieve what Huguenots had for so long hoped for, and had for so long been denied. Throughout his sermons, though, he maintained that the “Church of the *Désert*” had always supported the monarchy and lamented the possibility that France be ruled without one.<sup>40</sup> Even as the Estates General were gathering, he himself having been elected as a representative of the Third Estate, Rabaut Saint-Étienne wrote to those he represented, Protestant and Catholic alike, offering the following counsel: “Remain devoted to the glory of your king, for the king is the rallying point of all good Frenchmen. The king and the nation: two indissolubly linked ideas, for their interests are one.”<sup>41</sup> The pastor evidently believed that there could be no nation without a king, and that the duty of all “good Frenchmen,” regardless of religion, was to support the monarch.

The next question to consider is what Louis XVI had done to earn the approbation of Rabaut Saint-Étienne and his fellow Calvinists. He was, after all, a deeply Catholic king who “took Christian piety and morality as seriously as any French monarch of the early modern period.”<sup>42</sup> Seeing as Protestants were being implicitly accepted prior to and during Louis XVI’s reign, many of them felt that the time had come to be explicitly accepted. In seeking to achieve royal recognition, the Huguenots “described themselves as loyal as well as useful subjects.” They denounced radicalism, denied accusations of treason, deplored the rebellion of the Camisards, displayed their willingness to submit to taxation, and demonstrated their devotion to the crown.<sup>43</sup>

Their efforts eventually paid off in the form of yet another royal edict. Thanks to lobbying from the Marquis de Lafayette, Lamoignon de Malesherbes, and Rabaut Saint-Étienne, Louis XVI issued what came to be known as the Edict of Toleration in 1787. Through this edict, Protestants hoped to officially receive the civil rights that they had long since unofficially enjoyed, not to mention the professional and above all religious liberties that they had so long been denied.<sup>44</sup> Such hopes were shaken when the preamble of the edict declared in

40. Clarke, “A Protestant *Philosophe*,” 292–93.

41. Jean-Paul Rabaut Saint-Étienne, “Considerations on the Interests of the Third Estate, Addressed to the People of the Provinces by a Landed Proprietor.” In *Social and Political Thought of the French Revolution, 1788–1797*, edited and translated by Marc Allan Goldstein (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1997), 81.

42. Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight* (London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 29.

43. Merrick, *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy*, 143.

44. Merrick, *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy*, 142.

no uncertain terms that “we will always favor with all our power the means of instruction and persuasion that will tend to link all our subjects by the common profession of our kingdom’s ancient faith.”<sup>45</sup> Despite clearly giving Catholicism the preeminence, the edict did indeed give Protestants the civil and political rights that they had been seeking.<sup>46</sup>

While the gains that it granted Calvinists were impressive, the Edict of Toleration “continued to deny Protestants the right to celebrate their ‘cult’ in public.”<sup>47</sup> Naturally, Protestants throughout France felt that it left much to be desired.<sup>48</sup> Rabaut Saint-Étienne was among those who felt that the edict did not grant enough liberties to a people who had for so long been oppressed. Despite this disappointment, however, neither he nor the Protestants at large took offence with the king. Indeed, he notes how through this edict Louis XVI “manifested his good dispositions towards us,” and invites his fellow Huguenots to “wait with a confidence mixed with discretion and wisdom.”<sup>49</sup>

## Protestantism during the Revolution

Rabaut Saint-Étienne heeded his own advice and waited patiently for the opportunity to improve the plight of his co-believers. When, during the gathering of the Estates General, the Third Estate declared itself to be the National Assembly, he joined his fellow representatives in discussing a new Constitution.<sup>50</sup> Despite the shortcomings of Louis XVI and Catholic claims of Protestant Republicanism, never once did Rabaut Saint-Étienne propose a system of government without the monarch.<sup>51</sup> He did, of course, propose religious liberty for France’s citizens: “I demand, gentlemen, for all French Protestants, for all the non-Catholics in the kingdom, the same that you demand for your-

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45. “The Edict of Toleration.” In *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, edited and translated by Lynn Hunt (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1996), 40.

46. Bergeal, *Protestantisme et tolérance*, 164; Paul Girault de Coursac, *Louis XVI et la question religieuse pendant la Révolution: Un combat pour la tolérance* (Paris: O.E.I.L., 1988), 26–9.

47. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution*, 342.

48. Valérie Sottocasa, *Mémoires affrontées : Protestants et catholiques face à la Révolution dans les Montagnes du Languedoc* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004), 26–7.

49. As quoted in Bergeal, *Protestantisme et tolérance*, 225.

50. Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution, 1789–1799* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2002), 52.

51. *Archives parlementaires*. Tome VIII. 403–06.

selves: liberty and equal rights.”<sup>52</sup> He pointed out how several of the *cabiers de doléances* had urged their representatives to ensure freedom of worship for the non-Catholics of their respective regions, and proposed that the tenth article of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen be worded as follows: “All men are free in their opinions; all citizens have the right to freely profess their faith, and none may be troubled because of their religion.”<sup>53</sup> Ultimately, when the Declaration was adopted on August 26, 1789, the tenth article instead read: “No one may be harassed because of his opinions or religious beliefs *as long as they do not disturb public order as established by the law.*”<sup>54</sup> Despite the addition of the caveat in the final draft, by the end of 1789 Rabaut Saint-Étienne could rest knowing that Protestants had finally received their long-awaited recognition, thanks to “a decree of Christmas Eve 1789 ending every legal distinction between Protestants and Catholics.”<sup>55</sup>

The rest of the French Revolution is, as they say, history. Studies abound on the various stages of the Revolution, the atrocities of the Terror, and the rise of Napoleon. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen has been dissected, imitated and debated throughout the world. The question arises, what became of the Protestants as they gained greater recognition? As the Revolution became increasingly radical, so too did the Calvinists. Ultra-royalists saw the left wing as “the principal enemies of the Church and of the Monarchy,” consisting of “Jews, Protestants, Deists.”<sup>56</sup> Indeed, one scholar commented that “not surprisingly, Protestants had few problems about accepting the creation of the first Republic in 1792.”<sup>57</sup> But what of the eminent Jean-Paul Rabaut Saint-Étienne? Backing the king became increasingly unpopular following his flight towards Varennes in 1791. Rabaut Saint-Étienne therefore rejoiced that Louis XVI’s attempted escape had failed,<sup>58</sup> and later expressed frustration when

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52. Rabaut Saint-Étienne, “No Man Should Be Harassed for His Opinions nor Troubled in the Practice of His Religion.” In *Tolerance: The Beacon of the Enlightenment*, edited and translated by Caroline Warman, 70–71 (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2016), 71. [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt19b9jvh.34](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt19b9jvh.34).

53. *Archives parlementaires*. Tome VIII. 478, 480.

54. “The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.” In *Social and Political Thought of the French Revolution, 1788–1797*, edited and translated by Marc Allan Goldstein (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1997), 162. Emphasis added.

55. Aston, *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe*, 194.

56. McPhee, *The French Revolution*, 85.

57. Aston, *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe*, 195.

58. Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, 130

rivals accused him of complicity with the king.<sup>59</sup> Yet when the time came to put Louis XVI on trial, he maintained that the deputies of the Convention did not have the right to judge the king. He would ultimately be executed for voting in favor of the king.<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusion

The political legacy of French Protestantism in the aftermath of the Revolution “ensured that Protestants would support left-wing, secular political parties.”<sup>61</sup> It would seem as though the early Catholic accusations of Republicanism were not unfounded after all. But it is important to understand that these accusations evolved into reality throughout the course of the Revolution. In its early stages, the Protestants found an ally against Catholic oppression in Louis XVI, much as the Third Estate saw him as an ally against the Second. The example of Jean-Paul Rabaut Saint-Étienne must be remembered as typical of Huguenots leading up to the Revolution, who “remained faithful to the monarchy as long as there was a chance of saving it.”<sup>62</sup> The division depicting Catholics as conservative and Protestants as radical throughout the entirety of the Revolution is simply false. Although the Huguenots came to reject the notion of a king, they were, at first, as supportive of Louis XVI in his role as King as they were of God in his as Lord of all.

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59. Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, 206.

60. Sottocasa, *Mémoires affrontées*, 155.

61. McPhee, *The French Revolution*, 180.

62. Clarke, “A Protestant *Philosophe*,” 304.

# Immigrant Hospitals

## Centers of Charity and Agents of Social Change

Elyse Slabaugh

WHEN THE STATUE OF LIBERTY WAS BROUGHT TO THE UNITED States, it was placed in a central location in the New York harbor. As the first sight to greet arriving immigrants, it stood as a beacon of hope and a symbol of freedom. Inscribed at the foot of this majestic statue is a poem by Emma Lazarus. The last few lines read:

Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”<sup>1</sup>

However, the reality is that attitudes among the public have rarely reflected the ideals in this poem. Americans have not always *wanted* to welcome the poor, homeless, or sick. This view is reflected in a newspaper editorial from 1892 which addressed the influx of immigrants by stating, “We have enough dirt, misery, crime, sickness, and death of our own without permitting any more to be thrust upon us.”<sup>2</sup> The link between immigrants and disease has been a

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1. Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus” (Statue of Liberty, New York, 1883).

2. Lorie Conway and Chris Barnes, *Forgotten Ellis Island: The Extraordinary Story of America’s Immigrant Hospital* (New York: Collins, 2007), 4.

constant thread in America's history, especially in periods with a higher number of arriving immigrants.

The stigmatization of immigrants in the early 1900s was closely related to issues of public health, spurred by the fear of disease and contamination. Foreigners have often been blamed for outbreaks of certain diseases.<sup>3</sup> It was widely believed that not only were immigrants more susceptible to disease because of their poor living conditions and lack of cleanliness, but they were also the carriers of foreign germs that wreaked havoc on ordinarily healthy Americans. Therefore, hospitals created specifically for immigrants were seen as a desirable addition to American society precisely because they would help eliminate the public health threat posed by immigrants and also alleviate widespread fears of contamination. The Ellis Island Hospital was the first of these immigrant hospitals, although other hospitals created by immigrant groups themselves, such as the Beth Israel Hospital, the Sisters of Charity, and the St. Raphael Society, soon followed.

Because immigrant hospitals were primarily seen as a means to combat the general public's fears towards immigrants, they endeavored to eliminate the health problems that frequently plagued immigrants and that posed a larger threat to public health. However, in examining the history of these immigrant hospitals it is clear that they were created not only as a necessary preventative measure to combat prejudiced attitudes and widespread fear of contagion, but also as a charitable response by Americans and immigrants themselves—a reflection of compassion and genuine concern for each immigrant's well-being. As immigrant hospitals provided care for certain vulnerable immigrant groups, they helped these immigrants assimilate to American society. In doing so, immigrant hospitals also evolved and became important centers of innovation and medical research that gradually helped diminish the prejudice and antipathy that had marked immigrants as a public health threat for so long.

## The Link Between Foreigners and Disease

In the history of immigration to the U.S., foreigners have long been associated with germs and disease. One of the most influential books addressing this topic is Alan Kraut's *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the "Immigrant Menace."* Kraut

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3. Alan Kraut, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the Immigrant Menace* (New York: Basic Books, 1995) 32, 84–90, 109.

looks at the relationship between immigrants and disease throughout America's history, citing ample evidence of the prevalence of the popular belief that "disease came from abroad, spread by the bodies and/or breath of immigrants" and that "the foreign-born continued to be perceived as the most significant public health menace."<sup>4</sup> Due to the lack of advanced medical knowledge, or even a basic understanding of bacteria and how diseases are spread, these fears were easily fed. When faced with unknown and seemingly uncontrollable diseases, Americans found it easier to blame immigrants. As Kraut put it, "Knowing that the stigmatized victim is from another place brings with it the reassurance that one's own body and surroundings are inherently healthy and would remain so were it not for the presence of the stranger."<sup>5</sup> For many Americans, it was not a question of *how* diseases were spread, but rather *who* spread them.

Not only was it easier and more comfortable to blame the stranger, but there were many instances in which certain groups of immigrants appeared to be more susceptible to certain diseases, or even appeared to be the cause of the outbreaks. The Irish were blamed for the cholera epidemic of 1832, the Italians for polio, and the Chinese for the Bubonic Plague outbreak in San Francisco in 1900.<sup>6</sup> Even Jews, who had lower rates of disease than any other immigrant group because of religious customs that promoted cleanliness, were under severe scrutiny by the general public who were predisposed to blame them for certain diseases.<sup>7</sup> Extensive studies were undertaken in the early 1900s to try to explain the inconsistency between perceptions and reality—not only by Anti-Semites, but also by Jewish physicians in order to dispel bias and stigma.<sup>8</sup>

Often studies were conducted to reveal statistics that confirmed prejudices and stigmas in order to influence government policies. In 1912, there was a series of communications between the Commissioner of Immigration at Ellis Island and New York government officials requesting data from the New York State Board of Charities regarding the number of foreign-born inmates in state institutions. These government officials were interested in two factors: how long foreign-born individuals had been in the United States before becoming public

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4. Kraut, *Silent Travelers*, 29–30.

5. Kraut, *Silent Travelers*, 26.

6. Kraut, *Silent Travelers*, 32, 109, 84–90.

7. Kraut, *Silent Travelers*, 146.

8. Mariano Martini et al., "The Intriguing Story of Jews' Resistance to Tuberculosis, 1850–1920," *Israel Medical Association* 21, no.3 (March 2019): 222; Kraut, *Silent Travelers*, 156–158.

Foreign Born Admissions  
to the  
New York State Hospitals for the Insane.

Year	Admissions		Birth Place Unascertained	From Northern and Western Europe		From Southern and Eastern Europe		From Other Countries	
	Native born	Foreign born No. Per cent		No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
1889	1,250	534 29.9	26	481	90.1	10	1.8	43	8.1
1890	1,307	579 30.7	56	511	88.3	17	2.9	51	8.8
1891	1,870	811 30.2	187	702	86.6	28	3.4	81	10.
1892	1,709	816 32.3	112	693	84.9	50	6.1	73	9.
1893	1,815	804 30.7	85	696	86.6	40	4.9	68	8.5
1894	2,320	1498 39.2	183	1,541	89.5	40	2.7	117	7.8
1895	2,019	963 32.3	47	790	82.	76	7.9	97	10.1
1896	2,824	2670 48.6	121	2,117	79.3	415	15.5	138	5.2
1897	2,510	2084 45.4	55	1,593	76.4	357	17.2	134	6.4
1898	2,773	2589 49.6	180	2,042	78.9	403	15.6	144	5.5
1899	2,847	2319 44.9	71	1,794	77.4	385	16.6	140	6.
1900	2,771	2055 42.6	36	1,492	72.6	441	21.5	122	5.9
1901	2,827	2044 42.	45	1,482	72.5	427	20.9	135	6.6
1902	3,587	3724 50.9	308	2,668	71.7	861	23.1	195	5.2
1903	3,258	2821 46.4	57	1,945	69.	466	16.5	410	14.5
1904	3,176	2546 44.5	66	1,697	66.6	707	27.8	142	5.6
1905	3,518	2975 45.8	71	1,998	67.2	827	27.8	150	5.
1906	3,469	2810 44.8	64	1,743	62.	892	31.8	175	6.2
1907	3,827	3085 44.6	42	1,828	59.2	1,054	34.2	203	6.6
*1908	2,737	2549 48.2	15	1,438	56.4	900	35.3	211	8.3
*1909	2,791	2411 46.3	20	1,378	57.2	836	34.7	195	8.1
*1910	2,975	2559 46.2	30	1,421	55.5	961	37.6	177	6.9
*1911	2,923	2737 48.4	40	1,443	52.8	1,106	40.4	188	6.8
Total	61,103	47983 44.	917	33,293		11,301		3,389	

\*First admissions only.

Figure 1

charges, and if the percentage of foreign-born inmates had been increasing over time.<sup>9</sup> Their data (see Figure 1) revealed that the percentage of foreign-borns admitted to these mental institutions had been increasing since 1889.

However, more interesting than the data collected is the conclusion that the government officials drew. In a letter to the Secretary of Commerce and Labor, the Commissioner complained of the large financial burden this increase posed to the New York taxpayers. He stated, "The fact that this enormous burden upon the State of New York results from the inability or the impossibility, owing to the lack of adequate legislation, of the Federal Government to exclude these persons, or by its decision for any reason to permit them to remain in the country, strongly suggests the desirability of legislative amendments which would prevent the influx of this large number of aliens."<sup>10</sup> Government officials in New York clearly wanted to show through this study that immigrants were more susceptible to mental illnesses, and therefore would become burdens

9. Report of the New York State Board of Alienists on mental illness and the immigration law, New York State, Jan 01, 1901—Aug 31, 1912., 20.

10. Report of the New York State Board, 62.

to the state and American taxpayers—something that could be avoided if a stricter immigrant quota was established. Therefore, studies such as these were conducted in order to reinforce prejudices against immigrants and to promote government policies that would restrict the number of immigrants coming into the United States.

In his book, Kraut analyzes other studies that were conducted to prove the apparent link between certain groups of immigrants and their higher susceptibility to disease. In the case of the Irish, statistics revealed that they did have higher rates of illness, especially mental illnesses. “From 1849 to 1859, three-fourths of the admissions to New York City’s lunatic asylum on Blackwell’s Island were immigrants; two-thirds of these were Irish.”<sup>11</sup> However, it is probable that more immigrants were institutionalized because they had no one else to take care of them. Kraut’s book is important, among other reasons, because it reveals the distorted nature of statistics collected for these studies. Although today it is understood that these studies were often biased and that immigrants are not inherently to blame for diseases, at the time, such studies held powerful sway on the public’s attitudes towards immigrants, and the creation of charitable immigrant hospitals was a direct response to these studies because they clearly highlighted the fact that immigrants stood in need of better health care.

## The Ellis Island Hospital

The Ellis Island Hospital was primarily created in response to public fears regarding immigrants and the health threat they posed. However, it further expanded as a charitable response to meet arriving immigrants’ needs and soon developed as a center of medical research and experimentation. Dr. Alfred Reed, a physician on Ellis Island, addressed the public’s growing concerns about arriving immigrants in a newspaper article. He stated,

No one can stand at Ellis Island and see the physical and mental wrecks who are stopped there, or realize that if the bars were lowered ever so little the infirm and mentally unsound would come literally in hordes . . . The average citizen does not realize the enormous numbers of mentally disordered and morally delinquent persons in the United States nor to how great an extent these classes are recruited from aliens, and their children. Restriction

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11. Kraut, *Silent Travelers*, 38–39.

is vitally necessary if our truly American ideals and institutions are to persist, and if our inherited stock of good American manhood is not to be depreciated. This restriction can be made operative at various points, but the key to the whole situation is the medical requirement. No alien is desirable as an immigrant if he be mentally or physically unsound, while, on the other hand, mental and physical health in the wide sense carries with it moral, social and economic fitness.<sup>12</sup>

As Dr. Reed notes, these fears toward immigrants and the diseases they brought led to the desire for further restriction of incoming immigrants. It became apparent to government officials that some sort of structure must be established on Ellis Island to weed out the undesirable immigrants. In his 1901 State of the Union address, Theodore Roosevelt called for stricter examination of incoming immigrants, and he chose William Williams to be the hospital's commissioner.<sup>13</sup> Prior to 1901, the building that immigrants passed through on Ellis Island was ill-equipped to take care of the many who would require medical attention. Williams undertook the daunting task of building an adequate hospital for the incoming immigrants, and the Ellis Island General Hospital officially opened in 1902.<sup>14</sup>

Whereas the Ellis Island hospital began as a preventative measure to protect American public health, evidence exists that it was also a place established on charitable principles, which was a very innovative idea for that time period. Williams was adamant that all the immigrants "be treated with kindness and civility by everyone at Ellis Island. Neither harsh language nor rough handling [would] be tolerated."<sup>15</sup> Williams was only commissioned to enforce stricter examination of incoming immigrants, but with the creation of the hospital, he went beyond what was asked of him. The Ellis Island hospital was not just a site where incoming immigrants were indifferently examined and sorted based on their health; it became a hospital that was dedicated to the well-being of its patients.

Williams helped the hospital expand and transform over the years as new needs arose. For example, after the suicide of several patients, a psychiatric hospital was created to best meet the needs of those who had mental or emotional

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12. Alfred C Reed, "Going Through Ellis Island," *Popular Science Monthly* 82 (January 1913): 9.

13. Conway and Barnes, *Forgotten Ellis Island*, 4.

14. Conway and Barnes, *Forgotten Ellis Island*, 2–7.

15. Conway and Barnes, *Forgotten Ellis Island*, 6.

problems, dedicated to providing the most “humane and efficient treatment.”<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the Contagious Disease Hospital opened in 1911, reflecting Williams’ commitment to help the immigrants in spite of the acquisition of contagious diseases that would surely prevent them from entering the United States.<sup>17</sup> These new additions to Ellis Island were not only treatment centers but also leading centers of medical research, where physicians and medical students could study a variety of diseases in high-tech laboratories.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the Ellis Island Hospital was not just an examination or detention center, but an adaptable edifice that attempted not only to meet the needs of incoming immigrants, but also to make breakthroughs in the medical understanding of diseases and pathogens.

## Immigrant-Run Hospitals

While the Ellis Island Hospital was created by U.S. officials to treat recently arrived immigrants, a variety of other immigrant hospitals appeared throughout the country, supported and maintained by second or third-generation immigrants themselves to provide additional treatment and care for their own people. In doing so, they helped recently arrived immigrants assimilate to their new environment, and eventually their success as centers of medical research helped dissipate the stigma connecting immigrants to disease. A few of the most influential were the hospitals established by the Catholic Sisters of Charity in New York, the Jewish Beth Israel Hospital, and the St. Raphael Society established for Italian immigrants. These hospitals are unique in that they usually were created by immigrant groups themselves to care for their own. There are a number of reasons why this was the case. For example, Jewish hospitals started in response to growing Anti-Semitism. In Alan Kraut’s book, *Covenant of Care*, he explains that fellow Jewish immigrants desired to provide “a charitable institution where their identities and religious beliefs would be respected and allowed expression.”<sup>19</sup> In providing a hospital with Jewish physicians, patients would not be subject to Anti-Semitic attitudes and cultural insensitivity that would affect diagno-

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16. Conway and Barnes, *Forgotten Ellis Island*, 8.

17. Conway and Barnes, *Forgotten Ellis Island*, 9.

18. Conway and Barnes, *Forgotten Ellis Island*, 8–9.

19. Alan M. Kraut and Deborah A. Kraut, *Covenant of Care: Newark Beth Israel and the Jewish Hospital in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 4.

ses. Other immigrant groups similarly wanted to take care of their own. Italians immigrants preferred Italian doctors. They distrusted American physicians, mostly because of the language and cultural differences, and other immigrant groups were no different.<sup>20</sup> Immigrant hospitals were an important creation because many immigrants would resist care from anyone other than their own. Therefore, because treatment was provided in a facility where the patient's comfort and cultural traditions were respected, many immigrants received treatment who otherwise would have gone untreated.

One physician who understood that well was Michael M. Davis, Jr., the director of the Boston Dispensary. Davis conducted a series of studies with immigrants in the early 1900s, attempting to understand the problems that they faced in terms of healthcare. He discovered that the rates of recovery were higher when patients were treated in a hospital where someone spoke their language and where they were treated with respect and cultural sensitivity. However, he went beyond what other immigrant hospitals were doing in caring for just their own. He believed that such practices could and should be implemented in all hospitals.<sup>21</sup>

Davis' ideas reflected another powerful idea that often was present in providing health care for immigrants—the eventual goal of assimilation. Many immigrant hospitals provided treatment with compassion and understanding of the cultural differences and traditions of each immigrant, but they also expected immigrants to change some of their habits and become healthy, productive Americans. While charity may have been a motivating force behind the creation of immigrant hospitals, “improving health and hygiene were means to an even broader end, assimilation.”<sup>22</sup> Newcomers to America may not have had the desire to assimilate or even understand the need to assimilate, but second-generation, or even third-generation immigrants were more assimilated. As the ones providing health care in immigrant hospitals, these experienced immigrants could help the newcomers adapt to American life and help them let go of some old traditions and practices, especially those that negatively affected health and hygiene.

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20. Alan M. Kraut, “Foreign Bodies: The Perennial Negotiation over Health and Culture in a Nation of Immigrants,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 23, no.2 (2004): 6–7; Kraut, *Silent Travelers*, 199.

21. Kraut, *Silent Travelers*, 199–200.

22. Kraut, *Silent Travelers*, 132.

One important organization that reflected these goals was the St. Raphael Society for Italian immigrants, which was established in 1891 in New York. Although it was not strictly a medical hospital, providing health care was part of the society's aim. This stated aim was to "procure [Italian immigrants'] moral, physical, intellectual, economic and civil welfare."<sup>23</sup> The society offered medical assistance to Italian immigrants, mainly through the form of visiting nurses who would provide whatever care was needed in the homes of the affected individuals. They would also help immigrants assimilate by offering health and hygiene tips.<sup>24</sup> Italians, who were often naturally distrustful of hospitals, were more prone to listen to other Italians, and were more comfortable with visiting nurses who would come to their homes.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the St. Raphael Society offered a charitable alternative to immigrant hospitals, by helping the immigrants in a way that would be more comfortable to them, while still ensuring that they received treatment.

Although many immigrant hospitals were created for specific ethnic groups, many were more committed to providing charitable relief than they were concerned about who was receiving their care. Catholic hospitals are one such example. Known as the Sisters of Charity, various groups of Catholic nuns began establishing hospitals in New York in the 1850s.<sup>26</sup> A statement written about St. Vincent's Hospital located in Manhattan makes the purpose of these hospitals clear: "Although a Catholic institution, its doors are ever opened to the afflicted of all denominations who seek admission, and who may be attended during their illness by their own ministers, if desirable."<sup>27</sup> These Catholic hospitals were different because they were motivated not just by a sense of kinship toward immigrants of the same ethnic background, but by a sense of Christ-like charity. The sisters who ran the hospitals practiced the highest levels of devotion and spirituality, creating an environment not only of physical healing, but of spiritual healing as well.<sup>28</sup>

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23. Edward Stibili, "The Italian St. Raphael Society," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 6, no. 4 (1987): 308.

24. Stibili, "The Italian St. Raphael Society," 309

25. Kraut, *Silent Travelers*, 199.

26. Bernadette McCauley, "'Sublime Anomalies': Women Religious and Roman Catholic Hospitals in New York City, 1850–1920," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 52, no. 3 (January 1997): 289.

27. Kraut, *Silent Travelers*, 45.

28. McCauley, "Sublime Anomalies", 290–291.

Jewish hospitals were similarly motivated. In fact, the creation of Jewish hospitals was closely tied to the concept of *tzedakah*—a Hebrew word that translates to “charity”, but also has a more literal meaning of “justice.”<sup>29</sup> In providing care to Jewish immigrants, they were not only providing compassionate service to the poor and needy, but also making the hospital “an engine of social change”—a place where justice was given to those who had rarely received justice in their life.<sup>30</sup> The Beth Israel Hospital opened in 1902 had a similar vision to that of the Sisters of Charity: “No patient would be turned away because of religion, ethnicity, or race.”<sup>31</sup> The establishment of these immigration hospitals, while run by certain immigrant groups, were meant to benefit all, and by providing the necessary medical care, they accomplished the goal of helping immigrants assimilate to their new environment.

## Dispelling Prejudice and Stereotypes

The influence of immigrant hospitals is perhaps best seen in the role it played in dispelling the prejudice and fears marking immigrants as a public health threat. This change in public perception of immigrants occurred slowly, and perhaps had more to do with the changing role of hospitals themselves than from a general acceptance of immigrants; for it is clear that nativism and prejudice towards immigrants did not suddenly disappear in the twentieth century (as seen with the passage of numerous policies such as the 1907 Gentleman’s Agreement that limited Japanese emigration, the Immigration Act of 1917 that established a literacy test for incoming immigrants, and the 1924 National Origins Act that established a national quota favoring immigrants from Northern and Western European countries). Rather, the development of twentieth-century hospitals gradually severed the link between immigrants and disease as medical advances progressed and scientific facts could replace bias and stigma.

Historian Guenter B. Risse analyzes the changing role of hospitals in his book *Mending Bodies, Saving Souls: A History of Hospitals*. In it he highlights the fact that the twentieth century marked a key turning point in the role of hospitals. It was then that hospitals became not just places where people went

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29. Kraut, *Covenant of Care*, 1.

30. Kraut, *Covenant of Care*, 1.

31. Kraut, *Covenant of Care*, 21.

to die, but “indispensable instruments in the modern practice of medicine.”<sup>32</sup> Risse analyzes this transformation, also touching on the concept of immigrant-run hospitals. He states that as hospitals became more medicalized and less linked to charity, immigrant hospitals also became centers of medical research and innovation, as other public state hospitals were. Of these immigrant hospitals, he says,

Religious rivalries and charitable goals remained but were deemphasized in favor of medical ones. To be sure, private religious institutions retained the notion that the hospital symbolized hope and pious benevolence based on the Scriptures. However, the welfare role narrowed at the expense of physical rehabilitation in a cultural atmosphere that sought to foster personal responsibility and economic self-reliance. Most new voluntary hospital foundations in America came to be components of local networks of prominent and influential citizens. Faced with waves of new and recently arrived immigrants, many religious, ethnic, and national communities sought to provide welcome settings to protect the newcomers’ cultural identity. Among these facilities were churches, schools, service clubs, mutual aid societies, and hospitals. Much more than temporary shelters, American voluntary hospitals became sources of civic pride, embodiments of local philanthropy, and displays of economic power. Sponsors were determined to assist members in need and then encourage them to realize their individual potential.

While immigrant hospitals were becoming less focused on just taking care of their own, they were at the same time seeking to expand their role in society as institutions that could provide not just care but cures. As Risse notes, these nurses and doctors understood that hospitals “needed to be transformed into appealing home substitutes where routine medical and surgical care could be delivered with efficiency and success.”<sup>33</sup> This transformation could only take place as hospitals became not just centers of care but also centers of research.

Nowhere can this transformation be seen more clearly than in the Beth Israel Hospital. Dr. Lee K. Frankel was a physician at the Beth Israel Hospital in the 1930s and was widely influential because of his commitment to medical research. He believed that a hospital should have “trained staff and adequate

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32. Guenter B. Risse, *Mending Bodies, Saving Souls: A History of Hospitals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 472.

33. Risse, *Mending Bodies*, 468.

facilities not only to cure, but to prevent disease” and many hospitals met that goal.<sup>34</sup> Many significant medical advances occurred as a result of Dr. Frankel’s leadership. One such example of a disease-preventing breakthrough can be seen in the work of Dr. Philip Levine. Levine helped establish a blood bank in Beth Israel Hospital, and studied blood types in order to understand how to help mothers who experienced hemorrhages soon after giving birth to anemic babies. His discovery of the blood transfer necessary to prevent such occurrences saved many lives.<sup>35</sup> Another notable contribution was Dr. Paul Keller’s work in helping create several outpatient clinics that would allow patients to be treated early before they became bedridden.<sup>36</sup> Beth Israel gradually grew in prestige as it became known for its commitment to research. In 1930, the American Hospital Association, or AHA, made a report that listed Beth Israel as “one of only thirteen hospitals in the United States and Canada not connected to a university that offered the proper opportunities for the study of post-mortem pathology.”<sup>37</sup> Beth Israel soon became a place where medical students and interns attended in order to receive the best hands-on medical training.

Although Beth Israel Hospital’s beginnings were humble, it grew in influence and importance due to many key medical advances and innovations, and its impact can still be seen today. In fact, “of the thirty-six accredited Jewish hospitals . . . almost all are still components of the U.S. health-care system.”<sup>38</sup> The success and durability of these immigrant hospitals can be attributed to their flexibility and ability to adapt to changing times, as well as their valuable contributions to modern medicine.

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that negative prejudices and stigmas existed in the early 1900s that linked immigrants with disease and illness. In response to these prejudices and the widespread fear that arose because of the influx of immigrants and the outbreaks of certain diseases, a need for immigrant hospitals emerged. The Ellis Island Hospital and various other Jewish, Catholic, and Italian hospitals

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34. Kraut, *Covenant of Care*, 110.

35. Kraut, *Covenant of Care*, 116.

36. Kraut, *Covenant of Care*, 110.

37. Kraut, *Covenant of Care*, 111.

38. Kraut, *Covenant of Care*, 224.

developed to meet those needs. In a country built by immigrants, they provided the backbone of health care and support that these immigrants needed to become valuable, contributing members of society. These hospitals served valuable functions in American societies: helping immigrants receive care from their own, helping them assimilate to American culture and customs, and providing charitable relief to all who were in need of it. They also developed as centers of innovation, medical research, and experimentation. Although they were formed in response to prejudices and nativism, their role in the discovery of medical knowledge and advances helped diminish those prejudices. Not only were these immigrant hospitals successful in meeting the medical needs of immigrants, they also were successful in bringing about social change, and the legacy of these immigrant hospitals can still be felt today.

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## The “Science of Motherhood”

Bethany Morey

AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, MAJOR CITIES IN THE United States experienced radical growth as thousands upon thousands of immigrants flooded into the country with hopes for a better life and greater economic opportunities. Research indicates that women in particular anticipated the privileges and opportunities the states would provide them. Upon her arrival into the country, one Slovenian woman, brimming with anticipation exclaimed “Živijo Amerika, kjer so ženske prve!” (Long live America, where women are first!).<sup>1</sup> However, the reality of life in American cities proved to be starkly different from what most immigrants imagined. Cities were burdened by overpopulation, staggering infant mortality rates, and mothers and children were living in abject poverty in the tenements of the cities. Many individuals recognized the increasingly dire situation for immigrant families and made substantial efforts to reform life in the cities, especially for mothers and children. Individuals such as Sara Josephine Baker and institutions like the Caroline Rest greatly improved the critical situation by creating programs to educate impoverished mothers on the “science of motherhood,” which

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1. Maxine Schwartz Seller, *Immigrant Women* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1981), 4.

led to the dramatic decline of infant mortality rates and improved the overall health of mothers and children in American cities.<sup>2</sup>

While some immigrants came for personal or familial reasons, the majority came for work.<sup>3</sup> Men rarely earned enough to support their family so “wives had to supplement the family income by working inside or outside the home.”<sup>4</sup> Foreign women soon constituted a major part of the American workforce.<sup>5</sup> Employers took advantage of the situation, recognizing that the majority of immigrants were desperate for any work they could find. Immigrants were underpaid and overworked, causing a shortage in job opportunities, increasing unemployment, and placing even further financial strain on new American families.

With the majority of job opportunities concentrated in the hearts of cities, immigrants tended to move to the center of the city, which quickly became dangerously congested. Landlords capitalized on this trend, overcharging for rent and filling the tenements beyond capacity. Consequently, inner cities quickly became the epitome of “abject poverty and squalor,” an “urban slum previously unseen in the United States.”<sup>6</sup> During her time as a doctor in Boston in 1898, S. Josephine Baker described a tenement she saw in Boston while visiting pregnant mothers:

I thought I already knew something about how filthy a tenement room could be. But this was something special, particularly in the amount of insect life. One dingy oil lamp, by the light which I could barely make out the woman in labor, lying on a heap of straw in one corner. Four stunted children, too frightened to make any noise, huddled together in a far corner. The floor was littered with scraps of food, too old to be easily identifiable, but all contributing to the odor of the place. Cockroaches and bedbugs crawled about everywhere. . . . All of it was the nth power of abject, discouraged squalor.<sup>7</sup>

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2. Elizabeth Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars: Life and Culture on the Lower East Side 1890–1925*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1985), 138.

3. Donna Gabaccia, *From the Other Side: Women, Gender, and Immigrant Life in the U.S., 1820–1990* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 5.

4. Gabaccia, *From the Other Side*, 22.

5. Donna Gabaccia, *From the Other Side*, 46.

6. Richard A. Meckel, *Save the Babies: American Public Health Reform and the Prevention of Infant Mortality 1850–1929* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 12.

7. S. Josephine Baker, M. D., *Fighting for Life*, with a historical introduction by Patricia C. Kuszler, M. D., and Charles G. Roland, M. D. (Huntington, NY: Robert E. Krieger, 1980), 49.

Baker further described that tenements were crammed, "sometimes more than one family in a room, often boarders, never a bathroom, only some had a toilet inside."<sup>8</sup> In addition to being dirty and uncomfortable, the tenements were a breeding ground for contagious diseases that spread rapidly through the overcrowded housing.<sup>9</sup> The reality of the dangerous and miserable state in which families lived in the cities was devastating, crushing the dreams of millions of immigrants who came to the United States hoping for a better quality of life. One Italian woman, upon seeing the tenement her husband had purchased for them in the Lower East Side of New York City, looked at her husband and said "So, we have crossed half the world for this?"<sup>10</sup>

## Immigrant Mothers

The inexhaustible demands of work, the stress of awful housing conditions, and the pressure of caring for her children, life for the working immigrant woman was a constant struggle. "For the wage-earning mother . . . there is no hour of her day but has its duty, no day of her week but has its labor."<sup>11</sup> In many ways, mothers were "the backbone of everything" and kept families afloat.<sup>12</sup> They worked, cleaned, cooked, shopped, ironed, raised children, and completed a myriad of other daily tasks. Truly, immigrant mothers were the critical center "around whom the whole machinery of the family revolves."<sup>13</sup> It was an exhausting life and mothers could not handle all their duties alone. Housework was turned over to daughters the moment they were old enough to work. "Little girls helped their mothers as soon as they were able and children as young as ten or twelve sometimes managed the entire household for wage-earning mothers."<sup>14</sup> These young girls, frequently called "little mothers," took over as many child rearing tasks as they could once an infant could be separated from its mother.<sup>15</sup>

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8. Baker, *Fighting for Life*, 69.

9. Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 28.

10. Elizabeth Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars*, 60.

11. Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work*, 30.

12. Elizabeth Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars*, 109.

13. Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars*, 97.

14. Maxine Schwartz Seller, *Immigrant Women*, 99.

15. Seller, *Immigrant Women*, 123.

One of the greatest concerns of mothers in the slums was bearing more children. Over half the women at the turn of the twentieth century with more than one child had children in intervals of 18 months or less.<sup>16</sup> Before coming to America, many women came from traditional, agricultural societies where large families were considered a gift from God.<sup>17</sup> However, in the slums of American cities more children became a curse. Another child meant another mouth a family could not afford to feed. One 23-year-old mother said, "I would rather die than have any more children when we cannot take care of them." Another 30-year-old mother of four described the despair of bearing more children saying, "My soul cries out to die rather than have more babies. . . . I'd be happy if I wasn't constantly under the shadow of more babies."<sup>18</sup> For these mothers and thousands like them, pregnancy and childbirth were no longer a joyous blessing, but rather causes of great distress and worry for the health and financial wellbeing of their families.

Desperation to care for children they already had led women to take drastic measures to ensure they did not have another baby. Without adequate birth control, thousands of women turned to the illegal act of abortion "for the sake of the little ones already here," or their other children.<sup>19</sup> In 1904, Dr. Charles Sumner Bacon estimated 6,000–10,000 abortions were performed every year in Chicago alone. Women turned to doctors and midwives who would secretly perform abortions, or mothers invented methods of their own.<sup>20</sup> Emma Goldman, a midwife in the 1890s, described the overwhelming experience of watching the "fierce, blind struggle" poor mothers fought against frequent pregnancies. "It was incredible what fantastic methods despair could invent: jumping off tables, rolling on the floor, massaging the stomach, drinking nauseating concoctions, and using blunt instruments . . . it was harrowing, but it was understandable."<sup>21</sup> Although many mothers survived, abortions were incredibly dangerous and took a heavy physical and emotional toll on already weary mothers.

While heavy workloads, poor living conditions, and the fear of having more children were great concerns for immigrants during this time, an even greater

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16. Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work*, 22.

17. Maxine Schwartz Seller, *Immigrant Women*, 123.

18. Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work*, 22.

19. Elizabeth Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars*, 133.

20. Leslie J Reagan, "About to Meet Her Maker': Women, Doctors, Dying Declarations, and the State's Investigation of Abortion, Chicago, 1867–1940," *Journal of American History*, (March 1991): 1245.

21. Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work*, 22.

issue was the staggering infant mortality rates in the cities. In July 1876, *The New York Times* wrote, "There is no more depressing feature about our American cities than the annual slaughter of little children of which they are reporting that each day during the preceding week more than a hundred infants under the age of one year had died in the city."<sup>22</sup> Everything that epitomized life in the slums, such as poorly built tenements, unsanitary conditions, and the rapid spread of contagious diseases, was a threat to infants. In New York City in 1885, 248 out of every 1000 babies died.<sup>23</sup> Nationwide, 15–20% of infants born died within the first year of life. That percentage doubled for infants born in cities. To put this statistic into perspective, today only 1% of infants die before their first birthday.<sup>24</sup> Summer in New York City was particularly deadly for infants. During the intense heat of summer in 1902, 1,500 babies were dying each week from dysentery.<sup>25</sup> During WWI, Dr. Josephine Baker declared "It is three times safer to be a soldier in the trenches in this horrible war than to be a baby in the cradle in the United States."<sup>26</sup> For a summer in 1902, Dr. Baker worked in "Hell's Kitchen" in Manhattan and experienced the hopelessness of immigrant mothers firsthand.

I climbed stair after stair, knocked on door after door, met drunk after drunk, filthy mother after filthy mother and dying baby after dying baby. . . . The babies' mothers could not afford doctors and seemed too lackadaisical to carry their babies to the nearby clinics and too lazy or too indifferent to carry out the instructions you might give them. . . . They were just horribly fatalistic about it while it was going on. Babies always die in the summer and there was no point in trying to do anything about it.<sup>27</sup>

Mothers' lackadaisical approach to caring for their infants was not out of a lack of love or concern for their babies, rather it was a grim acceptance of the likelihood that many of their infant children would die. Infant mortality was so frequent that many immigrant mothers, although devastated, simply accepted it as God's will.

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22. Richard A. Meckel, *Save the Babies*, 11.

23. Meckel, *Save the Babies*, 90

24. Meckel, *Save the Babies*, 1.

25. S. Josephine Baker, M. D., *Fighting for Life*, 58.

26. Patricia C. Kuszler, M. D., and Charles G. Roland, M. D., introduction to *Fighting for Life*, by S. Josephine Baker, M. D., xiv.

27. Tanya Hart, *Health in the City*, 87.

## Social Reform

To Dr. Baker and other social reformers, viewing infant mortality as God's will was unacceptable. Their collective efforts to change cultural and medical norms for mothers sparked a wave of social reform surrounding infant and maternity care swept the nation with Baker at its head as the first director of the New York City Bureau of Child Hygiene. After taking a class in medical school about "The Normal Child," Baker became convinced that preventative health was the key to solving the infant mortality crisis. Although preventative care seems like an obvious solution today, at the time it was revolutionary. To Baker, preventative health had everything to do with the mental health of the mothers. British physician George Newman agreed: "The problem of infant mortality is not one of sanitation alone, or housing, or indeed of poverty as such, but it is mainly a question of motherhood."<sup>28</sup> Newman and Baker were certain that by taking better care of immigrant mothers before the baby was born and teaching them how to properly care for their infants, the health of the infants and the mothers would improve.

With the focus on educating mothers, Baker began an experiment in the Upper East Side of New York City where the immigrant population and infant death rate were the highest. Nurses received names and addresses of new babies and would immediately go to the new mothers and instruct them on the science of being a mother. Breast feeding, efficient ventilation, frequent bathing, and proper clothing for summer heat were a few of their main focuses. The success of the experiment exceeded everyone's expectations. Baker described:

From the first I was pretty sure that we were getting results. I was not prepared, however, for the impressiveness of the facts when the results of the summer's campaign in that corner of the east side were tabulated. During that summer there were 1200 fewer deaths in that district than there had been the previous summer; we had saved more babies than there were men in a regiment of soldiers . . . we had proved that prevention paid far beyond our wildest hopes. There . . . was the actual beginning of my life work.<sup>29</sup>

During her career, infant mortality in New York City went from 144 deaths per 1,000 births in 1907 to 66 deaths per 1,000 births in 1923. By 1923, of the ten largest cities in the United States, New York City had the lowest infant death

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28. Richard A. Meckel, *Save the Babies*, 93.

29. S. Josephine Baker, M. D., *Fighting for Life*, 86–87.

rate.<sup>30</sup> Baker's system of nurses visiting new mothers and teaching them how to better care for themselves and their infants helped mothers and infants in the cities survive, and even thrive, despite their difficult living conditions.

## The Caroline Rest

Many others joined Baker's cause and established institutions to provide for and take care of immigrant mothers and infants. To these mothers, an institution could be "a shelter of last resort, a socially determined alternative to self or family care, a place of access to medical technology and cure" or a means to escape their impoverished life for a time.<sup>31</sup> One such institution was the Caroline Rest, founded by George H. F. Schrader, president of the Schrader Manufacturing Co.

During his years as a businessman in New York City, Schrader was overwhelmed by the pathetic state in which newborns and their mothers lived in New York City. He began researching and studying the needs of New York's mothers and infants.<sup>32</sup> As he did so, he was inspired by Plato's teaching that "the best way to set a society straight is to see to it that the country's babies come into the world and are started on their journey through life under reasonably fair conditions."<sup>33</sup> This belief became the cornerstone of Schrader's work to improve the lives of mothers and children.

While studying mothers and infants, Schrader, like Newman and Baker, also became convinced that the key to decreasing infant mortality was the education of mothers. Schrader firmly believed that mothers who were properly cared for, educated, and trained would be able to handle the needs of their infants and keep them healthy and strong. With this ideal in mind, Schrader began experimenting with a new program he called the "science of mothering" in Hartsdale, New York. His goal was to take care of women before and

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30. Patricia C. Kuszler, M. D., and Charles G. Roland, M. D., "Introduction" In *Fighting for Life*, by S. Josephine Baker, M. D., xvi.

31. Joan Lynaugh, "Institutionalizing Women's Health Care in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century America," in *Women, Health, and Medicine in America: A Historical Handbook*, ed. Rima Apple (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990), 249.

32. *Charities and the Commons*, vol. 20 (Philadelphia, PA: New York Charity Organization Society, 1906), 577.

33. *The American Educational Review: A Monthly Review of the Progress of Higher Education*, vol. 30 (Chicago: American Educational Co., 1909), 404.

after birth, enabling them to return to their lives in the cities rejuvenated and capable of handling the demands of raising infants. The experiment proved to be incredibly successful and, in 1907, Schrader, established the Caroline Rest for Convalescent Mothers and entrusted the management of the home to The New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor. The Caroline Rest, named after Schrader's mother Caroline, was the first institution of its kind and was unique in two major aspects: it was the first permanent school for mothers in the United States and it was the only home maintained in the United States devoted to poverty-stricken mothers for rest and recuperation.<sup>34</sup> Schrader had two main focuses for this institution: to take care of mothers and to take care of social workers. Schrader was adamant that mothers and babies could not be healthy if the social workers caring for them were overworked and underqualified. The Caroline Rest became a home both for mothers and their young children as well as for the social workers that cared for them.

The social workers at the Caroline Rest helped mothers before and after the birth of their babies. During pregnancy, nurses would visit and take care of the mothers in the tenements of New York City. As quickly as possible after delivery, mothers, along with any of their children who were under seven, were brought to Hartsdale. "There, free from toil and the pinch of poverty, they [the mothers] will get the much-needed rest and at the same time take the course of instruction. To these women and children, straight from the dirt and darkness of the city tenement houses, Caroline Rest cannot help but seem like a fairyland."<sup>35</sup> Mothers stayed for about three weeks.<sup>36</sup> After resting for the first day, mothers began taking classes. They learned how to bathe their babies, clean the ice box where the milk was kept, sterilize dishes for preparing the baby's food, do laundry, mend clothes, keep the home clean, and how to select and prepare cheap and nutritious foods.<sup>37</sup> The success of the program was recorded in a report given by the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, which stated:

The infant death rate in New York City is approximately 14%; in the homes of 135 women whom the Caroline Rest nurses visited after their babies had

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34. *The American Educational Review*, 304.

35. *The American Educational Review*, 305.

36. Rose McCabe "All the Fun I've Had," *Pi Lambda Theta Journal* 3, no. 23 (March 1945): 84.

37. Robert W. Bruère, "The Work of the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor in Saving Child Life," *The Pedagogical Seminary* 16, no. 4 (1908): 452.

been born and had fallen sick, there were 22 infant deaths, or a mortality rate of 17%; in the homes of 202 mothers whom the nurses taught and cared for before their children came, there were only 9 infant deaths, or a mortality of 4.9% and this result was secured among the poorest of the poor.<sup>38</sup>

Clearly, what Schrader started as a mere experiment proved to dramatically improve the lives of impoverished mothers and infants of New York City.

## The Siebach Family

To illustrate just how transformative the Caroline Rest could be, we can look at the story of one woman named Lina Elfrieda (Frieda) Oertel Siebach. Born in 1894 in Leipzig, Germany, Siebach moved from Germany in 1925 with her four-year-old son Henry to be with her husband, Rudolph, who had moved the previous year to New York City. As it was with many immigrants, Frieda and her family endured the atrocities of the tenements in the city. For a long period of time, Rudolph was unable to find a job, making Frieda the sole provider as a seamstress. Speaking very little English and living in an unfamiliar country, Frieda struggled to support her rapidly growing family. Frieda arrived in New York City in 1925. In October of 1926, Frieda had a daughter named Ruth who was followed a year later by another daughter named Eleanor. Frieda became pregnant again in 1928. With a rapidly growing family, she grew increasingly frantic as she agonized over how to provide for her children. However, during her pregnancy in 1928, the Caroline Rest nurses found Frieda and helped her through her pregnancy and delivery of her son Martin, born December 1928.<sup>39</sup> Frieda and her young children stayed in the Caroline Rest in 1928 and again in 1930 when another daughter, Miriam, was born in March.

Frieda’s daughter Ruth, who was four when the family visited Hartsdale the second time, later recalled her time at the Caroline Rest.

There was a place called Hartsdale—it was part of a government program. . . . It was a place out in the country where mothers and their little kids were housed and fed. My older brother Henry [11] didn’t qualify so he stayed

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38. Robert W. Bruère, “The Work of the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor in Saving Child Life,” 452.

39. Unfortunately, there is no record as to how Frieda came into contact with the nurses from the Caroline Rest.



*Frieda Siebach (standing) holding son Martin with children Eleanor, Ruth, and Henry on the swing. Hartsdale, NY. Circa 1930. Siebach family collection.*

with my father while my mom and we youngest went to Hartsdale. We qualified: mom, me [4], Eleanor [3], Martin [2], and Miriam [newborn]. . . . I loved the smell of the meadows; it was so sweet and fresh compared to the smells of the city . . . in the city we lived in an apartment, which was mostly bare of furniture. . . . I can't remember how long we stayed, probably until my father had the means to provide for us.<sup>40</sup>

Although Ruth's memory of staying in Hartsdale in her early childhood was vague, it is clear the Caroline Rest not only provided solace for the overburdened mothers and their children but was a haven and escape from the stresses and difficulties associated with living in the tenements of the city.

Despite success stories like the Siebach family and others, the Caroline Rest closed in 1943.<sup>41</sup> Albert G. Millbank, chairman of the health committee of the Community Service Society of New York said that the Caroline Rest had "fulfilled its purpose."<sup>42</sup> George Schrader's experiment became a model to the rest of the nation, setting a precedent of education and care for new mothers, infants, and treatment of social workers. In its 34 years of service, the Caroline Rest cared for nearly 50,000 mothers and children.<sup>43</sup>

40. Ruth Knight, interview with Bonnie Nelson, 2000.

41. With the United States joining WWII in 1941, a possible cause for the closing of the Caroline Rest could be that government funding and resources were being directed towards war efforts instead of charitable institutions.

42. "Caroline Rest Closes After Years of Service," *Scarsdale Inquirer*, October 1, 1943, 4.

43. "Caroline Rest Closes After Years of Service," *Scarsdale Inquirer*, 4.

## Conclusion

At the turn of the twentieth century, life for impoverished immigrant mothers could be incredibly bleak. Because of unsanitary and cramped housing conditions, incessant demands from work and children, the fear of bearing more children the family could not afford to feed, and an ever-present feeling of hopelessness surrounding the high rate of infant mortality, immigrant women were pushed to the brink of despair. Many began to believe their pathetic situation was the reality of life in American cities. One midwife said: "women are born to suffer and it's wrong to interfere."<sup>44</sup> However, individuals such as Dr. S. Josephine Baker and George. H. F. Schrader were determined to help impoverished mothers and infants thrive in their new lives. Dr. Baker championed the reform movement that promoted an active role of nurses in the homes of new mothers and encouraged the education of infant care to new mothers. Schrader furthered this movement by creating the Caroline Rest, which allowed impoverished mothers to recover and learn about how to care for the infant and succeed as a mother. The effects of these reformers' efforts in the area of maternal and infant care improved the lives of tens of thousands of families. It is no wonder researches have declared that "of all the health revolutions that have taken place since 1850, reduction of infant mortality rate is probably the greatest and most far-reaching."<sup>45</sup>

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44. Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work*, 19.

45. Richard A. Meckel, *Save the Babies*, 93.



## “Rebel Girls” Reevaluated Gender in the Lives of Three Wobbly Women

Jake Andersen

**D**URING THE 1912 LAWRENCE TEXTILE STRIKE, ELIZABETH GURLEY Flynn, a speaker and organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), stood to address local workers at a Greek Catholic Church. Before she made it to the pulpit, a local priest stopped her, insisting that as a woman she had no place to speak in the church. The priest allowed her to approach the pulpit only after she convinced him that she “spoke as an organizer, not as a woman.”<sup>1</sup> While only a minor incident in the large Lawrence strike, the priest’s actions and Flynn’s denial of her own gender hints at the difficulties women faced in trying to fulfill their duties as IWW organizers. Hardly the only incident in which Flynn privileged her class identity over her gender identity, it hints at the complex, and often contradictory, role of gender in the IWW. In order to advance the IWW’s cause, Flynn found it necessary to emphasize class over sex.

Long hailed as a more progressive institution because they did not officially discriminate along gender lines, general scholarship on the IWW (whose members were often referred to as “Wobblies”) explores the IWW’s contradictory views on women. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, in particular, historians

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1. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *The Rebel Girl: An Autobiography, My First Life (1906–1926)* (New York: International Publishers, 1973), 145.

identified the gap between the IWW's rhetoric of gender equality that existed in theory and their narrow, domestic gender ideology that existed in practice. For example, Philip S. Foner's 1979 *Women and the American Labor Movement: From Colonial Times to the Eve of World War I* argues that the IWW's approach to women was essentially "chauvinistic," even though they officially organized workers regardless of gender.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Ann Schofield's 1983 "Rebel Girls and Union Maids: The Woman Question in the Journals of the AFL and IWW," looks at the ideology of women in the journals of the IWW and AFL, concluding that the IWW's supposedly radical, socialist vision of the future still put women squarely in the home.<sup>3</sup> While both scholars provide important insight, they focus more on the perspectives of the IWW and say little about the daily lives and lived experiences of Wobbly women. A more complete understanding of Wobbly women requires looking beyond the top-down perspectives of the IWW.

More recent scholars have done just that, looking more at women's perspectives and experiences, which has led to better understandings of women in the IWW. Meredith Tax's 1980 *The Rising of the Women: Feminist Solidarity and Class Conflict, 1880–1917*, argues that during IWW strikes, working women transcended traditional forms of striking and brought issues like wages and hours out of the workplace and made them community issues that involved the entire family, not just men.<sup>4</sup> However, Tax argues that the IWW primarily had an economic understanding of all issues, thinking only in terms of class conflict, which limited their ability to understand the unique oppressions that women faced.<sup>5</sup> By looking at women's daily lives, Tax provides new insight into both the role of women during IWW strikes and the limits of the IWW's views on women. Ardis Cameron's work, meanwhile, focuses on women's perspective before, during, and after the 1912 Lawrence Strike, which deepens our understanding of women's role in the strike. Cameron argues that the women of Lawrence had developed an active and vibrant community long before 1912 and that the IWW did not "organize" these women into an activist community so much as they took advantage of existing community networks during the

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2. Philip S. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement: From Colonial Times to the Eve of World War I* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), x.

3. Schofield, "Rebel Girls and Union Maids," 335–337.

4. Meredith Tax, *The Rising of the Women: Feminist Solidarity and Class Conflict, 1880–1917* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980), 285.

5. Tax, *Rising of the Women*, 187.

strike.<sup>6</sup> By focusing on women's perspectives, like Tax, Cameron shows the importance of women in the Lawrence strike; Their scholarship provides a more nuanced view of Wobbly women.

Other scholars have looked at how ideas of gender functioned in the IWW. In particular, Francis Shor's 1999 "'Virile Syndicalism' in Comparative Perspective: A Gender Analysis of the IWW in the United States and Australia" argues that competing definitions of masculinity were a key part of industrial conflicts in the Progressive era and that the IWW emphasized "reclaiming manhood and protecting-working class masculinity" from the emasculating effects of industrial capitalism, a practice Shor calls "virile syndicalism."<sup>7</sup> According to Shor, the IWW provided men "opportunities to experience a form of cultural empowerment" that included "rituals of manhood."<sup>8</sup> These opportunities and rituals included the IWW's direct action campaigns and, in particular, its rhetoric of sabotage which constituted "masculine posturing" in defiance of industrial capitalism.<sup>9</sup> In short, virile syndicalism was a set of ideas and practices which viewed capitalism as a threat to masculinity and offered working men an opportunity to assert their own masculinity. Shore acknowledges that this system offered little to women, but there has been little scholarship on how virile syndicalism may have impacted IWW women in practice.

Drawing on memoirs, letters, speeches, and both union and nonunion newspapers, and building on prior scholarship, this paper explores gender in the IWW through the lives of three Wobbly women: Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Matilda Robbins, and Jane Street. All three made valuable contributions to the IWW's cause, suggesting their preference for the more inclusive industrial unionism over the more limited craft unionism. Yet all three faced either indifference or outright opposition from Wobbly men. Flynn, as a speaker and leader, focused on building the IWW from the top-down; as the "Rebel Girl" she came to embody the ideal Wobbly woman, but she harbored doubts about the IWW's narrow ideology and faced opposition from IWW men when

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6. Ardis Cameron, "Bread and Roses Revisited: Women's Culture and Working-Class activism in the Lawrence Strike of 1912," in *Women, Work and Protest: A Century of US Women's Labor History*, ed. Ruth Milkman (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 44–50.

7. Francis Shor, "'Virile Syndicalism' in Comparative Perspective: A Gender Analysis of the IWW in the United States and Australia," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 56, Gendered Labor (Fall, 1999), 65–77.

8. Shor, "'Virile Syndicalism' in Comparative Perspective," 69.

9. Shor, "'Virile Syndicalism' in Comparative Perspective," 67–74.

she voice practical concerns and suggested a new course for the organization. Robbins, a working-class immigrant, focused on organizing workers from the bottom-up, but received little support from the IWW's male leadership, who preferred speechmaking and spectacle over substance. Street organized an effective union of domestic workers, a field infamously difficult to organize, that exercised real power over employers, but she faced vicious opposition from her male colleagues in the IWW. These women's experiences and perspectives suggest that the IWW's narrow gender ideology limited the role of Wobbly women in building a more sustainable labor organization.

### Elizabeth Gurley Flynn: The Original "Rebel Girl"

Because of her visible role as a leader, general scholarship on the IWW often includes Flynn. Scholars like Foner and Tax highlight Flynn for her role in the IWW and argue that she understood the importance of organizing women but struggled to help her naïve male colleagues understand women's unique struggles.<sup>10</sup> While these are valuable insights, they lack Flynn's perspective, which Lara Vapnek adds to the narrative in 2018's "The Rebel Girl Revisited: Rereading Elizabeth Gurley Flynn's Life Story." Vapnek argues that the two organizations to which Flynn was principally loyal, the IWW and the Communist Party USA, controlled and limited her image and self-expression, which in turn limited the scope of her 1955 memoir, *The Rebel Girl*.<sup>11</sup> Her loyalty to the Communist Party may have skewed her depictions of some events, but Flynn's memoir remains a valuable source of her perspectives and experiences in the IWW, especially alongside her other writings, speeches, and personal papers. These sources together help illuminate the role of the IWW's gender ideology in her own life.

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn's family background and education introduced her to socialism. Raised by a labor-activist father and a suffragist mother, Flynn likely found socialism at a young age. While her family struggled financially (her father was frequently out of work), she enjoyed the privilege of a formal education, where she thrived, earning straight A's and winning a debate medal. Her father was an ardent socialist, frequently taking her to meetings.<sup>12</sup> Her

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10. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, 406; Tax, *The Rising of the Women*, 142.

11. Lara Vapnek, "The Rebel Girl Revisited: Rereading Elizabeth Gurley Flynn's Life Story," *Feminist Studies* 44, no. 1 (2018): 13–42.

12. Lara Vapnek, *Elizabeth Gurley Flynn: Modern American Revolutionary* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2015), 13–14.

memoir shows how close studies of everything from Thomas Paine to Mary Wollstonecraft to Karl Marx contributed to her political radicalism. Particularly influential was Edward Bellamy's socialist novel *Looking Backward*, which showed her "how peaceful, prosperous and happy America could be under a socialist system of society."<sup>13</sup> Her education soon oriented her towards activism.

At age fifteen, she gave her first speech on January 31, 1906 at the Harlem Socialist Club.<sup>14</sup> That speech, titled "What Socialism Will Do For Women," suggests that she understood women's unique struggles under industrial capitalism from a young age. While the speech itself has not survived, it drew heavily on August Bebel's *Woman and Socialism*.<sup>15</sup> Bebel, a nineteenth-century German socialist, argued that women faced unique dimensions of oppression under capitalism and that the liberation of the working class depended on "social independence and equality of the sexes."<sup>16</sup> In *Woman in the Past, Present, and Future*, Bebel proposed that the "solution" to the "women's question" included not just equality under the law but women's "economic freedom and material independence." This solution, according to Bebel, was "unattainable . . . under the existing social and political institutions."<sup>17</sup> For Bebel, women faced unique economic and material difficulties and the solution was total institutional revolution. While the text of Flynn's first speech has not survived, her title and source material suggest that Flynn, from a young age, recognized women's unique place in capitalist society.

Some of Flynn's writings suggest that she maintained her sympathies for women's unique struggles throughout her time with the IWW. A rough outline of an unpublished 1915 manuscript, simply titled "Birth Control," indicate that she remained attentive to the unique struggles of working women. Her notes include phrases like "Small Families—A Proletarian Necessity" and "Babycare and Hygiene for Women." She also includes a section titled "Bebel," suggesting that August Bebel's work, which emphasized childbearing and rearing as an impediment to women's economic independence, remained important to her.<sup>18</sup> Flynn saw birth

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13. Flynn, *The Rebel Girl*, 48–53.

14. Flynn, *The Rebel Girl*, 54.

15. Flynn, *The Rebel Girl*, 55.

16. August Bebel, *Woman and Socialism*, trans. Meta L. Sterne (New York: Socialist Literature Co., 1910), 1–7.

17. August Bebel, *Woman in the Past, Present, and Future* (Winchester, MA: Allen & Unwin, 1988), 4–5.

18. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *Birth Control*, unpublished manuscript, 1917, EGF Papers (Tamiment), Box 1, Folder 30.

control as a possible tool in the economic emancipation of women. Her support for birth control was not outside the norms of the IWW; the Wobblies were early advocates of contraception.<sup>19</sup> Schofield, however, clarifies that “the IWW stance in favor of birth control was rooted not in a commitment to feminism, but rather in a class analysis of reproduction.”<sup>20</sup> Flynn’s manuscript notes suggest that her own commitment to birth control went beyond class, recognizing the challenges women faced in raising supporting large families. Another unpublished manuscript, simply titled *On Women*, further suggests that Flynn remained committed to women’s issues.<sup>21</sup> A surviving outline from 1917 suggests some its main ideas, including “freedom of choice in selecting a mate,” “equality in the home,” and “a community motherhood.”<sup>22</sup> These points suggest that Flynn continued to recognize the unique dimensions of struggle that women faced and that her commitment to a more feminist socialism, characteristic of Bebel, did not fade.

Flynn’s public speeches and writings as a Wobbly, however, often echoed the IWW’s limited gender ideology. In an article she wrote around 1909 for *Solidarity*, an official IWW organ, specifically addressed the issue of women in the IWW. She declared that “society moves in grooves of class not sex,” and labelled “sex distinction(s)” as “insignificant.”<sup>23</sup> Further, the IWW “makes no special appeal to women as women,” sees “no basis in facts for feminist mutual interest,” and declares the “sisterhood of women” to be a “sham.”<sup>24</sup> These ideas are inconsistent with the more women-centric approach to socialism she had demonstrated a few years earlier, but right in line with the IWW’s emphasis on class over sex. In a 1911 speech, published in the *Industrial Worker*, Flynn at first channeled a more nuanced, Bebel-esque view of women and socialism, recognizing that women face unique difficulties, such as “dependence upon individual men for their existence” and spending one’s entire life “exclusively within the four walls of one’s individual composite home.”<sup>25</sup> However, towards the end of her speech she explained that if women are not properly taught the principles of

19. Schofield, “Rebel Girls and Union Maids,” 337–341.

20. Schofield, “Rebel Girls and Unions Maids,” 340.

21. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *On Women*, unpublished manuscript, 1917, EGF Papers (Tamiment), Box 1, Folder 34.

22. Flynn, *On Women*, EGF Papers (Tamiment), Box 1, Folder 34.

23. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, “IWW and Women,” 1909 or 1910, EGF Papers, Tamiment Library, New York University (Tamiment), Box 1, Folder 12.

24. Flynn, “IWW and Women,” EGF Papers (Tamiment), Box 1, Folder 12.

25. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, “Women in Industry Should Organize,” *Industrial Worker*, June 1, 1911.

unionism, they will be a source of discouragement to their husbands, and may even lead their husbands to betraying their fellow workers.<sup>26</sup> Thus, according to Flynn, it is important to organize and educate the working women of today, because "the union factory girl of today is the helpful and encouraging wife of the union man of tomorrow."<sup>27</sup> Flynn may have supported organizing women, but she limited the purpose of that organization to women's influence in the home, implying that while women may work for a time, their ultimate role was in the home, supporting their union men.

Flynn echoed the IWW's ideology in other ways. In one instance she spoke out in support of sabotage, which she defined in virile syndicalist terms. As a policy, the IWW maintained an open platform during strikes: anyone was welcome to speak. This policy at times caused problems for the IWW, particularly during the 1913 Paterson Silk Strike when Socialist Frederick Summer Boyd used the open platform to advocate sabotage, which brought a storm of condemnation down on the IWW.<sup>28</sup> While there were mixed feelings among IWW leaders, they decided to endorse and defend his controversial comments. In this context, Flynn made a speech in support of sabotage in 1915 that the IWW adapted into a pamphlet.<sup>29</sup> She clarified that sabotage, not necessarily violent, refers to various means of interfering with the production process, such as simply working at a slower pace.<sup>30</sup> Flynn also casted sabotage in masculine terms. Referring generally to male workers, she said, "his choice is between starvation in slavery and starvation in battle. His wife's worries and tears spur him forth to don his shining armor of industrial power . . . his manhood demands some rebellion against daily humiliation and intolerable exploitation. To this worker, sabotage is a shining sword."<sup>31</sup> In this analogy, Flynn casts the working man as the defender of his home and family against the bosses that exploit and make them miserable; it is his duty to protect his wife and children from the evils of industrial capitalism, and sabotage is his weapon. In presenting sabotage as a means by which working men could reclaim and defend their manhood, Flynn fell in line with the IWW's virile syndicalism.

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26. Flynn, "Women in Industry Should Organize," *Industrial Worker*, June 1, 1911.

27. Flynn, "Women in Industry Should Organize," *Industrial Worker*, June 1, 1911.

28. Flynn, *The Rebel Girl*, 162.

29. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *Sabotage: The Conscious Withdrawal of the Workers' Industrial Efficiency* (Chicago: IWW Publishing Bureau, 1917). <https://www.marxists.org/subject/women/authors/flynn/1917/sabotage.htm>

30. Flynn, *Sabotage*.

31. Flynn, *Sabotage*.

As an outward supporter of the IWW's ideology, Flynn became a symbol of the ideal Wobbly woman, immortalized in the song "The Rebel Girl," which both celebrated and limited the role of women in the IWW. The song was the work of Joe Hill, a migrant worker convicted and executed in Salt Lake City for a murder he likely did not commit.<sup>32</sup> While awaiting execution in 1915, Hill received a visit from Flynn that inspired him to immortalize her in song.<sup>33</sup> The first verse describes women "living in beautiful mansions" and "wearing the finest of clothes," but declares that "the only and thoroughbred lady is the Rebel Girl."<sup>34</sup> These lyrics reflect the IWW's emphasis on class over sex while also defining what it is to be a "lady," declaring that proper femininity can only be found in the Rebel Girl. These lines also deny any commonality between women, drawing the sharp line of class between society women and rebel girls. The song goes on to describe how her "hands may be hardened from labor and her dress may not be very fine/But a heart in her bosom is beating that is true to her class and her kind."<sup>35</sup> Here are two critical qualities of the Rebel Girl: a close association with labor and loyalty to the working class. Hill ties femininity to proper class loyalty; true womanhood could only be found in the working class. The song's chorus describes the true purpose of the Rebel Girl: "To the working class, she's a precious pearl/She brings courage, pride and joy to the fighting Rebel Boy."<sup>36</sup> All of the Rebel Girl's hard work, class consciousness, and activism are to support the Rebel Boy, an idea in line with the IWW's limited vision for women that scholars like Foner and Tax describe. Furthermore, characterizing the Rebel Girl as a "precious pearl" suggests that the ideal Wobbly woman was an inspiring beauty to be admired rather than a fellow worker on the picket line. "The Rebel Girl" reflected the limited role that leaders envisioned for women in the IWW.

Flynn's personal life suggests that in practice she did not totally fit the Rebel Girl image. In 1908 she had married Jack Jones, an IWW miner. After a couple years of marriage, most of which she spent travelling and speaking, he

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32. Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 307–311.

33. Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States* vol. 4, *The Industrial Workers of the World, 1905–1917* (New York: International Publishers, 1965), 154.

34. Joe Hill, "The Rebel Girl" in Joyce L. Kornbluh, *Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964), 145.

35. Hill, "The Rebel Girl."

36. Hill, "The Rebel Girl."

confronted her and implored her to stay home and raise a family, which she refused.<sup>37</sup> She explained in her memoir that "a domestic life . . . had no attractions for me. . . . I wanted to speak and write, to travel, to meet people, to see places, to organize for the IWW. I saw no reason why I, as a woman, should give up my work for his. I knew by now I could make more of a contribution to the labor movement than he could."<sup>38</sup> Flynn clearly was not interested in domestic life and saw that she was far more valuable to the IWW than Jones. She may have supported the IWW's gender ideology outwardly, but privately she maintained a personal opposition to some of the limits of the Rebel Girl image.

Flynn also grew skeptical of sabotage and questioned the IWW's male leadership. She remembered being "greatly troubled" to see her pamphlet *Sabotage* used as evidence against Wobblies on trial.<sup>39</sup> Wobblies constantly faced arrests, trials, and prisons, and legal fees consumed a great deal of the IWW's financial resources.<sup>40</sup> Financial struggles often caused organizational problems, like in the Paterson Silk strike of 1913, where a lack of funds was key to the IWW's defeat.<sup>41</sup> Apparently Flynn was concerned that rhetoric about sabotage threatened the IWW's viability. She also became skeptical of William D. "Big Bill" Haywood, a major IWW leader. Haywood had grown up a miner in the mountain west, joined the radical Western Federation of Miners, and gained fame when accused of murdering Idaho's governor.<sup>42</sup> A founding member of the IWW, he was a major leader and speaker, frequently found alongside Flynn at major strikes like Lawrence and Paterson.<sup>43</sup> In 1916 centralized his authority over the IWW from his office in Chicago, moving all IWW papers to Chicago and demanding that all IWW funds, whatever their purpose, be sent to his office. Flynn was skeptical of Haywood's actions, believing it was dangerous to "put all our eggs in one basket for the government to scoop up at one blow."<sup>44</sup> In other words, Flynn worried that the IWW faced real legal danger and Haywood's centralization of authority and records only imperiled them further.

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37. Flynn, *The Rebel Girl*, 112–113.

38. Flynn, *The Rebel Girl*, 113.

39. Flynn, *The Rebel Girl*, 162–163.

40. *Industrial Worker*, April 25, 1912; *Industrial Worker*, July 25, 1912. These two editions of the *Industrial Worker* provide some examples of the IWW's frequent calls for money to support legal defense funds.

41. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement* vol. 4, 365–367; Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 281.

42. Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 25–27, 98–105.

43. Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 76–81, 237–256, 271–282.

44. Flynn, *The Rebel Girl*, 213–215.

Flynn's concerns about sabotage and Haywood's actions show how Flynn began to step outside her role as the Rebel Girl and questioned both the ideology and the leadership of the IWW.

A climactic confrontation between Flynn and Haywood in 1917 demonstrates how gender and virile syndicalism in the IWW limited Flynn's leadership and contributed to the IWW's legal difficulties. On her way to visit workers in Seattle, Flynn stopped at the IWW headquarters in Chicago for what turned out to be her last visit. She met with the board of editors, including Haywood, and asked that they stop printing her pamphlet *Sabotage* in order to orient the IWW more toward "job organization and mass action and away from individual action."<sup>45</sup> Flynn saw sabotage as a liability and proposed that the IWW focus less on virile syndicalist direct action and more on organization. After the discussion, Haywood replied in "an unfriendly tone," asking, "What's the matter, Gurley? Are you losing your nerve?" and ordered the editorial board to print a new version of *Sabotage* with a "lurid cover" adorned with "black cats," a symbol of sabotage.<sup>46</sup> In this incident, Flynn suggested a direction for IWW literature more consistent with building a sustainable labor organization and less likely to land them in legal trouble. She recognized that tactics like sabotage, characteristic of virile syndicalism, were at best ineffective and at worst dangerous. Haywood's response, doubling down on sabotage and questioning Flynn's dedication, reveals Haywood's preference for virile syndicalism. For him, sabotage was a gut check, a test of dedication that Flynn had failed. Her time in the IWW ended shortly thereafter.<sup>47</sup> Her concern for the IWW's legal future proved prophetic as the Department of Justice prosecuted the IWW nearly out of existence beginning in 1917.<sup>48</sup> Flynn recognized the weaknesses and dangers of the IWW's virile syndicalist tactics like sabotage and proposed a broader organizational vision, but her warnings fell on Haywood's deaf ears. Her experiences and perspectives show that the Rebel Girl image limited her role, particularly as she grew critical of virile syndicalism and the IWW's limited gender ideology. Haywood ignored Flynn, preferring the tactics of virile syndicalism, opening the door to the IWW's future legal troubles. It is impossible to say what would have happened had Flynn stayed, but the IWW clearly lost an important voice of reason.

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45. Flynn, *The Rebel Girl*, 226.

46. Flynn, *The Rebel Girl*, 227.

47. Flynn, *The Rebel Girl*, 246.

48. Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 398–468.

## Matilda Robbins: An Organizer at Heart

There is relatively little scholarship on Matilda Robbins. Joyce Shaw Peterson's 1993 biographical article "Matilda Robbins: A Woman's Life in the Labor Movement, 1900–1920" focuses less on Robbins' actual activity with the IWW and more on her own struggle to reconcile her class-based radicalism with her own feminism and how working as an organizer in the IWW helped her find greater meaning.<sup>49</sup> Peterson focuses on Robbins personally, looking at her own motivations and challenges, instead of solely focusing on her contributions to the IWW. Anne Mattina's 2014 article "Yours For Industrial Freedom: Women of the IWW, 1905–1930," argues that Robbins was an effective organizer who grew disillusioned with the "flamboyance and egos" of IWW leaders and that she faced condescension because she was a woman.<sup>50</sup> While Robbins did face condescension based on her gender, there was more to her distrust of IWW leadership, which was rooted in her background as an organizer.

Matilda Robbins's background as an immigrant and factory worker naturally led her to socialism. In her memoir, *Immigrant Girl, Radical Woman*, Robbins traces her story from childhood immigrant, to labor organizer, to mother and activist. Born Tatiana Rabinowitz in the Ukraine, she left at twelve years old along with her mother and the rest of her siblings to join her father in New York City, where her name was anglicized to Matilda Robbins. Living in poverty in Manhattan, she started working in a shirtwaist factory, clipping threads off of the finished products for ten hours a day. Because her employment was illegal, she sat at the bottom of a crate covered in shirtwaists whenever an inspector came by. She later found employment in a corset factory in Bridgeport, Connecticut.<sup>51</sup> All of these experiences led her to socialism. She remembered that her "frustrated dreams for an education," the struggle of her family to survive, and the need to work as a young child made her aware of "economic conditions as they affected the working class."<sup>52</sup> These realizations "opened [her] road to socialism, never to be closed."<sup>53</sup>

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49. Joyce Shaw Peterson, "Matilda Robbins: A Woman's Life in the Labor Movement, 1900–1920," *Labor History* 34, no. 1 (1993): 33–56.

50. Anne Mattina, "Yours For Industrial Freedom: Women of the IWW, 1905–1930," *Women's Studies* 43, no. 2 (2014): 170–201.

51. Matilda Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl, Radical Woman: A Memoir from the Early Twentieth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017), 3–88.

52. Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl*, 88.

53. Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl*, 88.

Unlike Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Robbins did not find socialism through reading Bebel or Bellamy, but through living the working-class life.

As she moved into labor organizing, Robbins focused on workers at the ground level. Working in a corset factory, she tried unsuccessfully to approach her fellow workers about organizing, so she turned to the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) for assistance. Together they drew up a leaflet and went directly to her coworkers but failed to put anything substantive together. She tried working through her Socialist Party local but found them thoroughly dedicated to craft unionism with little interest in the corset industry. Robbins did not spend much time making speeches, instead focusing on approaching fellow workers one at a time in order to try and organize them. She was not so concerned with ideology as she was for what was effective. Her associations with the WTUL helped her get various jobs doing statistical and organizational work throughout New England.<sup>54</sup> This like brought her into contact with many women workers throughout the region, solidifying her association with everyday workers. Robbins grew up a worker, identified as a worker, and lived among workers. After doing statistical work for the WTUL she wanted to attend college, a path that perhaps may have taken her beyond the working class.

It is impossible to say, however, because towards the end of 1912 her life took a dramatic turn when she assumed leadership of the Little Falls, NY strike. As an organizer, she focused more on the practical needs of the strike, rather than ideology and speechmaking. Inspired by Lawrence, Little Falls textile workers struck in 1912.<sup>55</sup> Her friend and lover, fellow Wobbly Ben Legere, rushed to the city in hopes of assuming a leadership position. When he was arrested on the picket line, she wired the IWW office for more information; they instructed her: "Go to Little Fall at once. Name N.O (National Office) as authority."<sup>56</sup> Suddenly, Robbins was in charge of the strike. She went straight to work, organizing a kitchen and donation center and ensuring their consistent operation. In her memoir, she recalled her daily schedule: "The picket line at six in the morning. . . . The daily meeting with the strike committee in the forenoon with a report on the response to appeals, funds, developments. Correspondence and bookkeeping; details of the office."<sup>57</sup> Robbins maximized her time as an organizer and focused on the strike's administration and logistics, rather than the

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54. Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl*, 89–107.

55. Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl*, 113.

56. Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl*, 113.

57. Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl*, 118–119.

drama of the picket line. Her own recollection of the strike stands in contrast with how the Wobbly press reported it. Coverage of the Little Falls strike in the *Industrial Worker*, an official IWW organ, tended to focus on the violence and drama of the strike. Reports on the strike include cases of "clubbing and beating from the police," "assaults from above and underminings from beneath," mass arrests and imprisonments, poor prison conditions, and women subjected to "constant insults and indignities."<sup>58</sup> Such violence often brought the strike attention, sympathy, and much-needed funds. Strike reports published in the *Industrial Worker* typically ended with an appeal to send funds to Little Falls, addressed to "Matilda Robinowitz."<sup>59</sup> Robbins likely recognized the value of publicity—in one case she made a personal appeal for funds in the *Industrial Worker* that emphasized the daily beating of strikers—but she said little about these events in her memoir, suggesting that her focus was not on picket-line violence.<sup>60</sup> Violence alone does not sustain a strike, and funds need careful managing. Robbins, as a working-class immigrant with a background in organizing, focused on the practical needs and management of the strike.

As the leader of the strike, she interacted with IWW leaders like Bill Haywood, whose preference for speechmaking and spectacle reveals weaknesses in IWW leadership. In November 1912, Haywood arrived in Little Falls. The *Industrial Worker* reported that after his arrival he spoke to six hundred workers which "applauded almost continuously."<sup>61</sup> Someone who was not applauding was Robbins. She remembered Haywood as lacking "repose, concentration, patience."<sup>62</sup> Before Little Falls, she thought of him as "the symbol of militant unionism, of organizing genius, of revolutionary ardor," but when she met with him in a committee meeting she "felt the lack of constructive value in what he said" and of the "thousands of words he uttered" she recalled "very few."<sup>63</sup> Evidently Haywood's presence did not make a good impression on her. Robbins, focused on workers at the ground level, received little constructive advice from Haywood concerning organization. She found that he drew disproportionately on past experiences that added no value to the situation in Little Falls and that "his approach lacked vigor and his methods realism." In her memoir she emphasized

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58. *Industrial Worker*, Nov. 21, 1912, Dec. 19, 1912, Jan. 2, 1913.

59. *Industrial Worker*, Nov. 21, 1912, Nov. 28, 1912, Dec. 19, 1912.

60. *Industrial Worker*, Jan. 2, 1913.

61. "Liberty is Dead in Little Falls," *Industrial Worker*, Nov. 28, 1912.

62. Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl*, 121.

63. Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl*, 123.

that even though Haywood was at the height of his prestige, coming off the heels of the successful Lawrence strike, she “felt the weakness of the man. He wrote a leaflet . . . he made some short speeches . . . and then he was gone.”<sup>64</sup> Robbins felt that Haywood lacked substance. His appearance may have temporarily boosted morale, which the presence of six hundred applauding workers suggests, but it seems he did little to support the strike effort. A strike’s success depended on numerous factors, including organization and administration, which were Robbins’ strengths. Standing on a stage and making men feel good about themselves, Haywood’s preferred method, was insufficient.

Virile syndicalism offers one possible explanation of Haywood’s approach. In his Little Falls speech, Haywood declared that the class struggle would not end until “overalls are put on every capitalist in the country.”<sup>65</sup> With this analogy, Haywood asserted a working-class masculinity, represented by overalls; the success of the class struggle results in the triumph of true masculinity over the capitalist class. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn commented on this vision of working-class masculinity in a speech she gave towards the end of her life at New York University. She remembered that, as far as the IWW was concerned, in order to belong to the working class “you had to wear overalls, you had to be muscular, you had to work.”<sup>66</sup> In other words, the working class bore a distinctly masculine identity represented in the very image of the working man, to which Haywood appealed in his speech. This appeal falls in line with virile syndicalism, which advocated a confrontational reclamation of working-class masculinity. Robbins made no such appeals to masculinity, she focused only on what it took to win the strike. Virile syndicalism, embodied in Haywood’s speech, was blind to the actual needs of the strike, making Haywood of little value to Robbins in Little Falls.

Haywood was not the only leader who failed to be of any real assistance. Prominent Wobblies like Carlo Tresca (Elizabeth Gurley Flynn’s long-term lover) showed the same preference for style over substance. Tresca, an Italian immigrant who ran a socialist newspaper in New York, joined the IWW in 1912.<sup>67</sup> He became an important speaker, appearing alongside figures like Flynn and Haywood in various IWW strikes.<sup>68</sup> He went to Little Falls in 1912, but Robbins was not impressed. She remembered in her memoir that “he was little help to us in

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64. Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl*, 123–124.

65. “Liberty is Dead in Little Falls,” *Industrial Worker*, Nov. 28, 1912.

66. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, “Personal Recollections of the Industrial Workers of the World,” EGF Papers (Tamiment), Box 15, Folder 18.

67. Flynn, *The Rebel Girl*, 152.

68. Flynn, *The Rebel Girl*, 166.

Little Falls. He gave one or two speeches, but whatever effect he may have had in the union halls of New York City, he fell flat in Little Falls."<sup>69</sup> The reason for this, according to Robbins was that, "this was not a dramatic situation involving thousands of strikers. These 1,600 mill workers were dogged, humble strikers unable to appreciate his sophistication."<sup>70</sup> Robbins points out the divide between the better educated leadership class of the IWW and the uneducated workers at the ground level, suggesting that leaders like Tresca focused too much on speeches and ideology, when the needs of the strikers were more practical. Her final words on Tresca develop this more: "He talked, he ate spaghetti and drank wine, and we paid the bill. When he left I was relieved and greatly disappointed."<sup>71</sup> Tresca lacked the ability to communicate effectively with the strikers and did not seem to realize or care. Meanwhile, Robbins understood organizing work to be far more than just making speeches. She recognized that while "Haywood, Flynn, and Tresca were in the headlines and in the public eye," the outcome of a strike depended on "the work and the endurance of the strikers."<sup>72</sup> Understanding that strikes lived and died by the strikers, Robbins saw the role of an organizer to be "both administrator and teacher," "to lay the groundwork for a union, to develop the meaning of economic solidarity, to organize relief, to publicize the strike, to assume various and innumerable administrative details. The daily picket line, the nightly meeting, the reports, the negotiations, at last."<sup>73</sup> In short, Robbins was an organizer and the IWW leaders who stood on their soapboxes were not. While Robbins preferred practical organization and addressing real needs, Haywood and Tresca preferred preaching ideology in the spotlight.

Robbins' later went to Greenville, South Carolina to organize workers on behalf of the IWW. Her experiences here confirm the gendered, organizational weaknesses of the IWW witnessed in Little Falls. Arriving in the spring of 1914, Robbins described Greenville in her memoir as the most difficult assignment she faced as organizer. The workers had no union background and she faced fierce resistance from bosses. After six weeks of hard work she had established a small local of about one hundred workers but asked the national office to be relieved due to exhaustion. No one was willing to take her place. Joe Ettor, an IWW organizer best known for his role in the Lawrence Strike, went to Greenville, but stayed only a few days. He promised to send another organizer to relieve her,

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69. Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl*, 142.

70. Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl*, 142.

71. Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl*, 142.

72. Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl*, 149.

73. Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl*, 151.

but that never happened.<sup>74</sup> Remembering her interactions with Ettor, Robbins felt that he “preferred the platform of the large industrial centers to the squalid isolation of the hinterland.”<sup>75</sup> The lack of institutional support Robbins received in Greenville suggests that the IWW indeed prioritized spectacle over substance. The workers of Greenville were far away from major industrial and were not even on strike, so there was little press coverage, no drama, and no room for grandiose speeches. The dramatic, masculine speeches of Haywood likely would have fallen flat. After six weeks of struggle without relief, Robbins burned out. The local she had established “disintegrated,” and “the IWW abandoned the Southern textile field.”<sup>76</sup> It was her last major project with the IWW; she later took a job with the AFL.<sup>77</sup> Her experiences in Little Falls and Greenville indicate that the leaders of the IWW were often concerned more with dramatic speeches and spectacles, a characteristic of virile syndicalism, than they were with the actual process of organization, a focus that contributed little to organization and allowed workers like those in Greenville to fall by the wayside. No one wanted to lay the necessary organizational groundwork. Robbins’ experience suggests that the preference of IWW leadership for the gendered tactics of virile syndicalism limited their ability to effectively organize workers.

## Jane Street: Denver’s Rebel Maid

Like Robbins, there is little scholarship on Street. Foner spares a few pages to highlight her accomplishments, but says relatively little of the resistance she faced from the IWW, arguing that the IWW’s legal perils at the end of World War I brought Street’s union down.<sup>78</sup> Tax contextualizes Street’s local within a distinct, masculine, western IWW culture, suggesting this unique setting may have contributed to the strong opposition Street faced from male Wobblies.<sup>79</sup> In *Union Maids Not Wanted: Organizing Domestic Workers, 1870–1940*, Donna Van Raaphorst briefly covers Street and the IWW, arguing that the opposition Street faced, along with the IWW’s domestic ideology of womanhood, “clearly indicates that the Wobblies were not as different from the AFL in their views

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74. Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl*, 168–170.

75. Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl*, 171.

76. Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl*, 171.

77. Rabinowitz, *Immigrant Girl*, 171, 235.

78. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, 410–411.

79. Tax, *The Rising of the Women*, 133–134.

about women as they would have liked to believed."<sup>80</sup> While both the AFL and IWW were misogynistic, Street's experiences suggest that gender functioned in different ways in the two organizations.

Street faced unique organizational difficulties and limits. As domestic workers do not share a single place of employment or a single employer, conventional means of organizing and striking were not an option for Street. In a letter to a Mrs. Elmer F. Buse, a woman in Tulsa, Oklahoma who was also trying to organize domestic workers, Street explained her tactics. She started by placing ads for domestic services in newspapers and recruiting the women who responded. After a year of this kind of recruiting, Street had interviewed, by her own account, "about 1500 or 2000 girls, telling them about the I.W.W. and making them more rebellious, and placing over 1000 in jobs. We have on our books the names of 155 members, only about 83 of whom we can actually call members."<sup>81</sup> The transient nature of the work made it hard to find reliable members, so 83 is no small accomplishment. Aside from that, the sheer number of domestic workers coming through their office, interacting with Street, learning about the IWW, and finding jobs shows that Street had created a serious, robust union. Furthermore, Street's description of her union's tactics suggests that she and her fellow workers bore legitimate economic power. Street described her tactics to Mrs. Buse: "with our handful of girls and our big expenses, we have got results. We actually have POWER to do things. We have raised wages, shortened hours, bettered conditions in hundreds of places."<sup>82</sup> In order to accomplish these things, Street's union kept track of all the domestic jobs posted in city newspapers. When a job opened up, a union worker responded to the ad, but made certain demands about what she would and would not do. If the employer objected and put out another ad, the union would catch the ad again and send out another worker who would make the same demands, forcing the employer to either accept the demands or go without a worker. In short, according to Street, "If you have a union of only four girls and you can get them consecutively on the same job you soon have job control. The nerve-wrecked, lazy society woman is not hard to conquer."<sup>83</sup> Street and the union women also assembled a card catalog of domestic jobs in the Denver area, centralizing job

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80. Donna L. Van Raaphorst, *Union Maids Not Wanted: Organizing Domestic Workers, 1870-1940* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 174.

81. Jane Street to Mrs. Elmer F. Buse, 1917, IWW Historical Archives. <https://www.iww.org/history/library/Street/letter>

82. Street to Buse, 1917.

83. Street to Buse, 1917.

control within their office.<sup>84</sup> These women used their ability to refuse work in order to exercise collective power over their employers, acquiring greater control over their work and lives.

In addition to her innovative tactics, Street also advocated a unique kind of sabotage. In an interview with Street reported in the *Washington Post*, she said that they intended to challenge the oppression of domestic workers “by a system of our own. You may call it sabotage or what you please. We will not poison food nor resort to any crude methods of violence. Members of the Housemaids’ union will resent ill treatment and quit.” The article clarifies that “the kind of sabotage used will be for domestic workers to quit without notice.”<sup>85</sup> Quitting without notice, refusing demands on the spot, and blacklisting employers fit the IWW’s vision of sabotage. Indeed, many of Street’s tactics were consistent with Elizabeth Gurley Flynn’s pamphlet on sabotage. Street took the principle of sabotage to heart and used it as a tool to exercise power over employers. She checked all the boxes that ought to please the IWW: she organized those considered unorganizable and used direct action to undermine employers and interfere with the labor process.

Despite her success and affinity for IWW tactics, Street faced significant opposition, the strongest of which came from local male Wobblies. Unsurprisingly, a coalition of Denver upper-class women, the YWCA, and domestic employers strongly opposed the union and used intimidation to try and curb their activity.<sup>86</sup> In November 1916, someone stole the union’s card catalog, a significant setback. Both Foner and Tax attribute this theft to the antiunion coalition of women, but both cite the same article in *Solidarity*, which does not actually identify a culprit, and this coalition of women was not Street’s only enemy.<sup>87</sup> Street’s letter to Mrs. Buse identifies another group whose opposition had been far more vicious: “The Mixed Local (of the IWW) here in Denver has done us more harm than any other enemy. . . . They have cut us off from donations from outside locals, (and) slandered this local and myself from one end of the country to the other.” Local Wobbly men had issues with Street’s work and took measures to limit it. Whatever their motives, their measures went

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84. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, 408.

85. “How a Cold Storage Egg Started the Servant Girls’ Union,” *Washington Post*, September 24, 1916.

86. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, 410.

87. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, 410; Tax, *The Rising of the Woman*, 137; “Denver Housemaids’ List Stolen,” *Solidarity*, November 11, 1916.

beyond slander. Street told Buse: "they have assaulted me bodily and torn up our charter."<sup>88</sup> Violence was not out of the question for male Wobblies opposed to Street's activities. As bitter as Denver housewives may have been about the union, there is no indication that they ever went so far as to physically attack Street. The article in *Solidarity* that reported the theft of the card index also mentioned that Street "had been sleeping in the headquarters at night with a 'gatt' under her pillow and a section of gas pipe within easy reach guarding against just such an occurrence."<sup>89</sup> Street expected some kind of violence which, along with her insistence that Wobbly men had done the union the most harm, suggests that she may have suspected her fellow Wobblies of the theft. Whoever the thief, the local men of the IWW were not friends of Street and their seditious activities likely limited her ability to effectively organize women.

While the motives of these male Wobblies are not clear, the IWW's emphasis on virile syndicalism may have played a role. Street reported to Buse that, "Phil Engle, a soap boxer, told me about nine months ago that he 'would see me on the outside of the I.W.W.' before he got through with me, and he has worked with maniacal fervor toward that end ever since." During a local free speech fight, Street and her union held a street corner until Engle "and his bunch took it away from us and held it down for months."<sup>90</sup> To the Wobblies, street corners were valuable spaces where they could speak and attract listeners; the right to speak on street corners was the key motive of the IWW's free-speech fights.<sup>91</sup> Why would Wobbly men take a street corner that their Wobbly allies already possessed? If virile syndicalism is any indication, street corners were the perfect place for male Wobblies to assert their masculinity; they were visible, confrontational, and attention-grabbing, a situation that allowed for the kind of masculine posturing associated with virile syndicalism. From a street corner, Wobbly men could preach sabotage and direct action, reclaiming their masculinity. Street and her domestic workers holding a street corner prevented Wobbly men from reclaiming their own masculinity. Whatever their precise motives, Wobbly men directly undermined Street's union and threatened her organization. Somehow, however, Street remained optimistic about the IWW. In her letter to Buse she despaired "these very men who forget their I.W.W. principles in their opposition to us," but declared that "the Method of Emanci-

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88. Street to Buse, 1917.

89. "Denver Housemaids' List Stolen," *Solidarity*, November 11, 1916.

90. Street to Buse, 1917.

91. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement* vol. 4, 173–205.

pation that we advocate is greater any or all of us and that the great principles and ideals that we stand for can completely overshadow the frailties of human nature.”<sup>92</sup> Street kept her faith in the IWW, but her experiences suggest that the IWW’s gender ideology limited her effectiveness.

## Conclusion: The Legacy of the Rebel Girl

There is little doubt that the IWW was radical and visionary for its time; its supposed willingness to organize all workers regardless of skill, race, or gender was a radically inclusive vision, even it only ever existed on paper. But for all its radical talk, there was often little substance beneath. Lawrence, Massachusetts may have been a major success, but it does not make up for a decade and a half of the IWW’s failure to build a sustainable organization of workers. The IWW failed for many reasons and women’s experiences suggest that gender was one of those reasons. The Rebel Girl stereotype confined women like Elizabeth Gurley Flynn to a pedestal, limiting women’s abilities to play an active role in the IWW. Still, the Rebel Girl remains the most enduring image of Wobbly women. People sing Hill’s song today and Flynn’s legacy, in particular, is closely tied to the Rebel Girl, as her memoir’s title, *The Rebel Girl*, indicates. What then was the overlap between the Rebel Girl and virile syndicalism? Perhaps the Rebel Girl was only a traditional wife and mother recast in socialist terms, conjured up to give working men an ideal helpmate. What does this mean for IWW conceptions of the home? What was the role of home and family in the IWW’s socialist vision? How much of the social order remained essentially the same in the Wobbly future, merely recast in class language? How much did the IWW’s class-only approach to resistance limit their ability to envision a more radical alternative? Perhaps their vision was not as radical as they would have liked to believe. Class and sex overlap and intersect in a variety of ways and any social movement that does not understand these intersections will likely struggle to enact change.

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92. Street to Buse, 1917.

# Isolation, Inferiority, and Illness

## The Widespread Effects of the Nineteenth-Century Mormon “Adoption” Program on Native American Children

Taylor Tree

**T**HIS IS THE STORY OF MARY MOUNTAIN, AN INDIAN MAIDEN WHO chose and preferred the life of the white people to the life of the wandering red men, and the story of the white people who gave her that home.”<sup>1</sup> Thus begins the biographical manuscript narrating the story of one of the many Native children brought into the homes of white Mormon settlers in Utah territory during the mid-nineteenth century. According to this manuscript, after a skirmish between the Timpanogos tribe and the Mormon Battalion in 1849, the men fled, leaving women and children hidden in their valley encampment. Elnathan Eldredge, a Mormon soldier, noticed a Native child who he described as being “a sad, dark eyed girl about nine years old, holding herself aloof from both Indians and white men.”<sup>2</sup> Elnathan took the girl home to his wife, Ruth, who called her “Mary Mountain.” The biography notes that Mary was well cared for and soon learned to “set the table, go to the stream for water” and tend to the Eldredge’s baby.<sup>3</sup> Eventually, Mary learned to fear the Natives that passed by the town, and chose to stay with the Eldredge family rather than rejoin her tribe. Mary Mountain never married, and lived to be around the age

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1. Mary Mountain, typescript, 1950, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 1.

2. Mountain, 1950, 4.

3. Mountain, 1950, 4.

of thirty, before she “began to get sickly and pale, developing a slight cough, and in a short time died with consumption.”<sup>4</sup>

Mary Mountain, along with hundreds of other indigenous children, became entangled in the collision of cultures that followed the settling of Mormon pioneers into Utah Territory in 1847. The relationship between these pioneers and the indigenous tribes native to the land was complex and largely guided by the beliefs and teachings of the Latter-day Saint church. The Book of Mormon, a Latter-day Saint scriptural text, documents the lives of a family who migrated to the Americas the Middle East. This family becomes split into two groups, the Nephites and the Lamanites, with the Nephites following the commandments and the Lamanites rejecting them. The Book of Mormon records how as a result of separating themselves from God, the Lamanites were cursed with dark skin.<sup>5</sup> Up until 2007, the introduction to the Book of Mormon stated that the Lamanites are “the principal ancestors of the American Indians.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, most early Mormon settlers believed that Native Americans descended from the Lamanites, and it was their duty to “accomplish the redemption of these suffering degraded Israelites.”<sup>7</sup>

Mormon interactions with Native Americans in the mid-nineteenth century was characterized by a desire to convert them, as well as by religious figurehead and Governor of Utah Brigham Young’s maxim that “it was cheaper to feed the Indians than fight them.”<sup>8</sup> When settlers first moved into the Utah territory, they hoped to remain uninvolved in the preexisting slave trade carried out between slave trading tribes and Mexican buyers. However, this was easier said than done, as Native slave traders stopped at almost nothing to expand their markets to the newly arrived Mormon population. Daniel Jones recorded an instance where Mormons declined buying Native children for sale, to which the slave trader responded by “[taking] one of these children by the heels and dash[ing] its brains out on the hard ground” and then telling the settlers that they “had no hearts, or [they] would have bought it and saved its life.”<sup>9</sup> Seeing

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4. Mountain, 1950, 5.

5. Alma 3:6 (The Book of Mormon).

6. Book of Mormon Introduction, 1981.

7. Orson Pratt, “Salvation of the House of Israel to come Through the Gentiles” (1855), in *Journal of Discourses* 9, (1862), edited by Brigham Young, G.D. Watt, and J.V. Long, 178.

8. Lawrence G. Coates, “Brigham Young and Mormon Indian Policies: The Formative Period, 1836–1851,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (July 1978): 428.

9. Daniel Jones, *Forty Years Among the Indians: A True yet Thrilling Narrative of the Author’s Experiences Among the Natives* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1890), 53.

Native children treated with such cruelty within the slave trade evoked sympathy within the white settlers. One traveler observed two Native children, who “were on the open, digging with their little fingers for grassnuts, or any roots to afford sustenance. They were almost living skeletons.”<sup>10</sup> After seeing the poor treatment of these indigenous children, there was a shift in the mindset of Mormons regarding purchasing Natives. This transition is marked when Brigham Young proclaimed that Mormons should purchase Native children so that they might be “redeemed from the thralldom of savage barbarity.”<sup>11</sup>

In 1852, the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah passed the “Act for the Further Relief of Indian Slaves and Prisoners” which established a legal system for what Brigham Young referred to as “purchasing [the Natives] into freedom.”<sup>12</sup> Through this act, any white person living in Utah territory with “any Indian prisoner, child, or woman, in [their] possession, whether by purchase or otherwise” could receive approval by a probate judge and then indenture the Native person for up to twenty years, with the only caveat being that they must send children between the ages of seven and sixteen to school for three months of the year.<sup>13</sup> This act provided the legal framework for the Eldredge family to bring Mary Mountain into their home, as well as led to the indenturement of hundreds of other Native children.

It must be noted that through buying indigenous children from slave traders, the Mormon settlers became complicit in human trafficking. Despite intentions to save children from the harsh conditions they faced, they became a new market for the slave traders to profit off of, and thus fed the slave trading system and allowed it to continue thriving in the Utah Territory. Although the slave trade existed prior to the Latter-day Saint arrival, the settlers provided a closer market for Native children than buyers in Mexico or California. Additionally, the poverty that they were attempting to save children from was in part caused by their settlement of the land traditionally belonging to Native tribes. Through claiming the best land and water sources, Mormon settlers exacerbated indigenous peoples’ struggle of having access to adequate amounts of food and water.

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10. Solomon Nunes Carvalho, *Incidents of Travel and Adventure in the Far West* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1954), 260.

11. Brigham Young, “Governor’s Message: to the Council and House of Representatives of the Legislature of Utah,” *Deseret News*, January 10, 1852.

12. Young, “Governor’s Message.”

13. “Act for the Further Relief of Indian Slaves and Prisoners,” Utah State Constitution and Historical Statutes (1852), 93–94.

One sympathetic settler recorded the concerns voiced to him by an indigenous man, who plead “my corn is Dying for water what will I feed my chidrin next winter the Mormonas are youseing the water in Pine vally you Said tey would not youse it thare onley for cutting pine logs we once could feed our children on Radits when they was hunry now thare is no Rabits for us what do you think about it.”<sup>14</sup>

Although the system of indenturement was widespread—one man traveling through Utah noted that most Mormon families had “one or more Pah-Utah children”—the current historiography on the topic is limited.<sup>15</sup> Early written works about the Mormon “adoption” program tend to be extremely forgiving of the Mormon settlers, arguing that they saved the Natives from both themselves and from the Mexican slave trade.<sup>16</sup> In recent years, historians such as Andrés Reséndez have condemned the settlers for their evil intentions of exploiting and enslaving the Native populations.<sup>17</sup> Although historians differ in their interpretation of the morality of the settlers, they are all similar in that their writings focus mainly on the Mormons, whether it be the settlers’ motives for indenturing Natives, or the effects of this system on white society. Overall, the historiography on this topic neglects analyzing the Native children themselves and the ways in which they were affected.

The purpose of this paper is to contextualize Mary Mountain’s biography within a broader understanding of the time period in order to analyze the common experiences of the hundreds of Native children brought into Mormon settlers’ homes in the mid-nineteenth century. Regardless of the intentions of Latter-day Saint’s settlers, the “Act for the Further Relief of Indian Slaves and Prisoners” inevitably had many harmful consequences. Although the effects of this act were numerous, this essay will focus on three central consequences faced by the indentured Native American children: isolation from their own culture, confinement within a racial hierarchy in Mormon communities, and premature deaths.

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14. Jacob Hamblin, Journals and Letters of Jacob Hamblin, 1969, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 43.

15. Gwinn Harris Heap, *Central Route to the Pacific* (Glendale: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1957), 224.

16. Juanita Brooks, “Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier,” *Utah Historic Quarterly* 12, no. 1–2 (1944).

17. Andrés Reséndez, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), 272.

## Interpreting Sources

The narrative of Mary's life is solely derived from a six-page typescript, titled "Mary Mountain." According to the Harold B. Lee Special Collections, this document was likely created around 1950, and the author is unknown. The lack of information surrounding the biography presents a multitude of challenges. First, one must question the existence of the characters mentioned in the story. However, a census record confirms that Mary, an indigenous girl, was living with the Eldredge family in Salt Lake County.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the official census record substantiates the biographical timeline of events as well as the people themselves. Although the author is not known, one can infer that they are most likely a descendant of the Eldredge family, due to their in-depth knowledge of the Eldredge family history presented at the beginning of the biography as well as the diction lauding Ruth, Elnathan, and their descendants. Furthermore, the biography romanticizes the way by which Mary came to live with the Eldredge family. Although the biography notes that Mary and other Native women and children were abandoned by the men in their tribe after a conflict with the Mormon Battalion, the diary of Hosea Stout, one of the Mormon soldiers present during this skirmish at Battle Creek, reveals a much darker narrative. He wrote that the Native men "fought with the most determined resolution to die rather than yield."<sup>19</sup> After the battle, all but one of the Native warriors were dead, and thirteen women and children of the Timpanogos tribe were left hiding in a freezing creek and then rounded up by the Mormon Battalion and brought to their camp.<sup>20</sup> This is the more likely story of how Mary Mountain came into contact with the Eldredge family.

The typescript narrating Mary Mountain's story, similar to most other sources written by settlers, comes from an extremely biased perspective. The author of the biography constantly praises the Eldredge family, seemingly attempting to make them the hero of Mary's story. The biography begins with three pages describing the lives of Ruth and Elnathan Eldredge; it is not until the fourth page that Mary is mentioned in any detail. A page and a half later, the typescript addresses Mary's death. However, it continues after Mary's own

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18. 1850 U.S. Census, Utah, Salt Lake County, population schedule. Digital Images. Familysearch.com.

19. Hosea Stout, *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout*, vol. 2, ed. Juanita Brooks (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), 346.

20. Coates, "Brigham Young and Mormon Indian Policies," 437.

death in order to more fully discuss Ruth Eldredge. Although Ruth and Elnathan are directly quoted on multiple occasions, the writing does not contain a single quote from Mary but is rather riddled with assumptions of her feelings. This presents another difficulty in determining the effects of the system of indenturement on Native children: of the evidence used, there are very few written sources directly from the children themselves. When the children are quoted, the references come from oral histories that have passed down their dialogue through generations.

It is likely that the reason for the lack of written sources from the Native children is due to the system of indenture itself. The “Act for Further Relief’s” sole requirement for schooling mandates “The master . . . to send [indenture] to school, if there be a school in the district, or vicinity, for the term of three months in each year; and at a time when said Indian child shall be between the ages of seven years and sixteen.”<sup>21</sup> These education stipulations did not provide ample educational opportunities for Native children to become fully literate. Conceivably, this is a contributing factor to the lack of primary source documents written by the children themselves.

Although the biography provides useful information on the life of Mary Mountain, it cannot be taken at face-value and instead must be analyzed in conjunction with other sources from the time period. These sources include diary entries from settlers mentioning the children they acquire, newspaper articles, and speeches given by authorities from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Although census records occasionally mention Native children in Mormon homes, the records are not exhaustive, and the children were oftentimes not included. Due to the lack of systematic records surrounding the children, it is impossible to cite numerical statistics, but rather patterns and trends must be gleaned from small anecdotal information. Mention of Native children are most often found in Mormon journals; however, the children are most always mentioned briefly, with nothing more than a sentence or two documenting their obtainment or, more often, their death. The few lines of information found in settler’s journals must be combined with each other in order to create broader pictures and observe commonalities. Through diving in-depth into Mary Mountain’s life, the experiences felt by indigenous children indentured according to the “Act for Further Relief” will be personified and brought to light.

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21. “Act for Further Relief,” 94.

## Isolation from Native Culture

As a direct result of being indentured, Mary Mountain faced isolation from other Natives as well as a loss of her cultural identity. The “Act for Further Relief” was once described by a man traveling West through Utah, as “a system which ameliorates the condition of these children by removing them from the influence of their savage parents.”<sup>22</sup> Erasure of the Native children’s cultural identity was inevitable, as one of the fundamental purposes of the Mormon system of indenture was to redeem them to the Latter-day Saints’ ethnocentric and white standard. Ezra T. Benson, a man involved in both the leadership of the Latter-day Saint church and the Native American indenture system, exhorted, “It is our duty, brethren and sisters, to go to work and bring these natives to an understanding of the principles of civilization. . . . In a short season we shall be rewarded for all that we do to civilize this lost and fallen race.”<sup>23</sup>

As a result of constantly being told of the inherent sinful nature of her people, Mary Mountain was conditioned to fear Natives. The author of the biography describes how “when she saw any of the Indians [Mary] would go and hide.”<sup>24</sup> Although no more information about this is given, it can be assumed that she hid from members of her tribe out of fear for them. A couple of settlers’ diaries note that their indentures would hide when members of their tribe came near them, for fear of being sent back to live with them. It is possible that Mary was afraid of her tribe due to their past mistreatment of her, however a likely possibility is that she hid from her tribe because she had been taught to negate their “savage” influence in favor of white Latter-day Saint culture. The author then champions this avoidance of her own tribe members as proof that “Mary didn’t belong with these Indians,” rather than recognizing the harm in teaching children to fear their own culture. As Mary grew older and Native men attempted to court her, she “would have nothing to do with [them].”<sup>25</sup> After being raised in a white household, Mary held herself to a standard that excluded Native men because they were not as “white” as she was. Undoubtedly, the quagmire of believing her own culture to be inferior to that of white society resulted in an abundance of complex emotions, including a fear and distaste of

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22. Heap, *Central Route*, 224.

23. Ezra T. Benson, July 13, 1855, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 3:64; George A. Smith, Journal, typescript, 12, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, HBL.

24. Mountain, 4.

25. Mountain, 5.

Native people, and likely, a sense of personal inferiority to the white children she was raised around.

Mary's experiences of isolation from Native culture was a commonality in the lives of most indentured children. Historian Juanita Brooks postulated that "the [Native] children growing up among white [children] . . . must have sensed their differentness . . . Some were afraid of Indians . . . and often, with characteristic thoughtlessness, their playmates made sarcastic comments. Everything combined to create a feeling of inferiority."<sup>26</sup> The official act itself consistently describes Native people as being "degraded," and while discussing the act, Brigham Young stated that one of the goals was to redeem the children from the "thralldom of savage barbarity."<sup>27</sup> Regardless of the living situations of the indentured Native children, and regardless of if their foster parents were loving, the experience of being one of these indentured children inescapably resulted in a sense of inferiority due to the racist principles of the "Act for Further Relief."

From examining anecdotes of different Native children, a common reaction to this isolation and instilment of racist ideologies was a fear and shame of Native people. Just as Mary would run and hide when Natives passed by, so too did other Native children. Rhoda, another Native indentured girl, similarly ran and hid when any of her own race came around.<sup>28</sup> Undoubtedly, Native children grew up hearing the Mormon belief that Native Americans were a degraded people who needed to be redeemed. This racialized perspective barraged the children at church, at school, and in their homes, teaching and conditioning them to internalize the racism, reject their own cultural identity, and fear indigenous people.

## Confinement within a Racial Hierarchy

Despite being taught to despise her own culture and to strive for whiteness, Mary Mountain did not receive the same opportunities as other children. The biography notes that "Mary remained Mary Mountain to Ruth—solid and dependable in practical things, but not a daughter for solace and comfort in things near her heart."<sup>29</sup> Perhaps this admission reveals that Ruth, the woman

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26. Brooks, "Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier," 47–48.

27. "Act for Further Relief," 93.; Young, "Governor's Message."

28. Michael K. Bennion, "Captivity, Adoption, Marriage and Identity: Native American Children in Mormon Homes, 1847–1900" (Master's thesis, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2012) 84.

29. Mountain, 5.

who was supposed to assume a motherly role towards Mary, viewed Mary as being too different from her to be considered a daughter. It appears as if Mary was thought of as someone who was practical to have in the home due to her ability to cook, watch the children, and clean. The official “Act for the Further Relief of Indian Slaves and Prisoners” does not refer to this system as an adoption process, but rather a system of indenture, with the white families being specified as the “masters.”<sup>30</sup>

As previously discussed, Mary Mountain refused romantic advances from Native men. However, when “the white men came courting . . . Father Eldredge advised them against taking an Indian maiden for a wife.”<sup>31</sup> It is hard to comprehend that a father would advise men to avoid dating his daughter due to her race. This further proves that Mary was not the Eldredge’s daughter, rather an indenture they viewed as inferior.

Despite claiming that the purpose of the indenture program was to help the Natives to become white, many settlers continued to reinforce racial hierarchies through avoiding marriages with Native Americans. When Susie, a Native indentured girl, was called to answer for her sins of having children out of wedlock, she bravely told church authorities, “I have a right to children, no white man will marry me. I cannot live with the Indians. But I can have children, and I will support the children that I have.”<sup>32</sup> The testimony of Susie confirms that Native children were isolated from their Native roots while simultaneously refused the opportunities that other white children would have. A common trend seen among Native children indentured in Mormon families was the frequency by which they remained single, almost never marrying white Mormon settlers. Even some Latter-day Saint men married more than one wife, they were still hesitant to take on a Native woman as an additional bride.<sup>33</sup> In a study of 174 indentured Native children, historian Brian Cannon found that of the indigenous males raised under this system of indenture and chose to stay in white society, just one fifth of them married. Most of the children who chose to remain in white settlements upon reaching adulthood never married, and occupied a “lonely, liminal state on the margins of society.”<sup>34</sup>

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30. “Act for Further Relief,” 93–94.

31. Mountain, 5.

32. Brooks, “Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier,” 44–45.

33. Brooks, “Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier” 39.

34. Brian Q. Cannon, “To Buy Up the Lamanite Children as Fast as They Could: Indentured Servitude and Its Legacy in Mormon Society,” *Journal of Mormon History* 44, no. 2 (April 2018): 20.

In settler's journals, it is evident that they did not view the Native children they "adopted" the same way in which they viewed their own children. While listing who was present during a journey to a new house, Mormon settler Mary Minerva Dart Judd wrote in her journal, "It consisted of myself, one daughter, Lucinda, our son Zodac and the Indian boy Lamoni."<sup>35</sup> If the Native children were truly adopted into Mormon families, why would they be listed not as children, but as adjuncts to the family members?

Brigham Young, in his proclamation regarding the "Act for Further Relief," declared that although they should treat Natives with humanity, they must not "elevate them . . . to an equality with those whom nature and nature's God has indicated to be their masters, their superiors."<sup>36</sup> This telling statement reveals the prevailing perspective that governed how these indigenous children were raised. The children were kept isolated from their tribes while simultaneously being restricted from fully becoming a part of the white Mormon community.

## Premature Deaths

Mary Mountain died around the age of thirty due to consumption and was buried in the Salt Lake City Cemetery. Although dying at the age of thirty was a premature death—Elnathan lived to be sixty-one and Ruth lived to be seventy-four—many Native children died much earlier on in their lives.<sup>37</sup> All too often, the children indentured by Mormon families faced early deaths, most likely due to their bodies vulnerability to the foreign European pathogens.

Of the previously mentioned study of 174 indentured Native children, Cannon discovered that twenty-five percent of them died before the age of twenty, with a median death age of twelve.<sup>38</sup> Offhand comments mentioning the early death of indentured Native children frequent settler journals. In many cases, the "adopted" Native children remain unmentioned in settler journals until their premature deaths. In one striking instance, Mary Minerva Dart Judd recorded in her journal that as Lamoni, a Native boy she indentured, was dying, he told Nellie, a Native girl indentured by the same family that "she would die as he was going to die, if she remained with the white folks [because] the food

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35. Mary Minerva Dart Judd *Autobiography*, 1885, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 19.

36. Young, "Governor's Message."

37. Mountain, 5.

38. Cannon, "To Buy Up the Lamanite Children," 19.

of the white folks would kill the Indians if they eat it.”<sup>39</sup> With his dying breath, Lamoni warned other Native children of the harsh realities of being a Native child indentured in a white home. Regardless of whether or not the families indenturing the Native children were loving, an inevitable result of bringing Native American children into white homes was the increased possibility of the child contracting diseases that their bodies were not equipped to handle and dying at a young age.

## Conclusion

While on her deathbed, Lucy, an indentured Native girl, remarked that she was mistaken to ever believe she could become a white girl. “Indian children,” she said, “should be left with their own people where they could be happy; when they were raised in white homes they did not belong anywhere.”<sup>40</sup> After experiencing being indentured by a Mormon family in the nineteenth century, Lucy came to the conclusion that she would have rather been left with Natives. Often, the Native children who felt similarly to Lucy took their fate into their own hands and chose to run away from the white families in favor of living with other Natives. Examples of Native children succeeding or attempting to run away are regularly seen in settlers’ journals. Mary Minerva Dart Judd noted that Nellie took heed of Lamoni’s advice, and in the middle of the night, ran away to rejoin her tribe.<sup>41</sup> Native children were not passive victims, but actively made decisions with their best interests in mind. Oftentimes, Mormon families allowed them to leave on their own free will, however, there are multiple instances of families forcing children to stay with them. A descendant of a Mormon family who indentured an Native girl recalled that when her family first purchased a young girl, she “did not want to stay, but cried so and tried so hard to get away that they had to lock her in a back bedroom.”<sup>42</sup> Additionally, a local newspaper article from 1852 titled “Ran Away” offered a reward to anyone who could help return “an Indian boy, about 12 years old” who “supposed to have gone back to Parowan.”<sup>43</sup>

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39. Mary Minerva Dart Judd *Autobiography*, 31.

40. Brooks, “Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier,” 38.

41. Brooks, “Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier,” 33.

42. Brooks, “Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier,” 46.

43. Christopher Merkley, “Run Away,” *Deseret News*, September 18, 1852.

When bringing Native children into their homes, Mormon settlers were often blinded by their own religious fervor, causing them to overlook the inevitable damages inflicted on the Native children themselves. Through taking a closer look at Mary's story, the wider experiences of Native children are brought to light and can be more fully understood. The experiences of these children have largely faded from public memory. It is essential that the effects of the "Act for the Further Relief of Indian Slaves and Prisoners" are acknowledged, and the story of these children gets told. When the lives of these Native children are ignored, it invalidates their experiences as well as impedes our ability to learn from the past in order to avoid its repetition. The history of the Mormon indenture system of the nineteenth century must be confronted head on in order to adequately heal from its scars.

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## Eternal Victims

### The Sufferings of the Twa People from Their First Contact with Other Peoples until the Present Day

Travis Meyer

**I**N 1994, AN ESTIMATED EIGHT HUNDRED THOUSAND RWANDANS WERE systematically killed over the course of three months.<sup>1</sup> Born out of the aftermath of a three year long civil war between Rwanda's two principal ethnic groups, the Tutsi and the Hutu, the Rwandan Genocide has pushed the nation into the spotlight of scrutiny as historians, humanitarians, and everyday people ask themselves how one group of people could commit such an atrocity against another. Since the genocide, countless researchers have explored the history of Rwanda and the infamy of the centuries-old Tutsi-Hutu rivalry, while honoring the Hutu and the Tutsi victims of both the genocide as well as the decades of war and civil unrest that preceded it. However, far less focus has been placed on Rwanda's third principal ethnic group, who have arguably suffered more than either the Hutu or the Tutsi. Though the Hutu and the Tutsi have alternated between being in power and being oppressed, there is one group that has only experienced the latter: the Twa. This paper aims to pull back the curtain to expose the reality that the Twa have been victims of centuries of oppression.

Before the genocide, relatively little historical research had been conducted concerning Rwanda, as it was neither a particularly large nor populated country,

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1. Kyrsten Sinema, *Who Must Die in Rwanda's Genocide?* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 131.

not politically powerful, and was, in reality, just another face in the crowd of African nations making efforts at democratization. Following the genocide, however, many publications were written with the aim of discovering the causes, details, and outcomes of the killings that took place at the close of the twentieth century, such as J. J. Carney's *Rwanda Before the Genocide* (2013), André Guichaoua's *From War to Genocide* (2015), and Christopher Taylor's *Sacrifice as Terror: The Rwandan Genocide of 1994* (1999). However, these books nearly always exclusively focused on the Hutu and the Tutsi, with minimal mention of the Twa. This is likely due to the fact that the Twa have kept no written records, and rely on oral tradition to maintain their history. It is the aim of this paper, therefore, to use the research of Rwandan historians, the oral histories of the Twa, and modern-day interviews and interactions to chronicle the struggles of the Twa from the time of first contact with other peoples to the mistreatment they receive today, both by non-Twa citizens and by the governments who have ruled them.

It is true that in modern-day Rwanda, the Twa make up less than one percent of the country's population, but it was not always so. According to both oral history and anthropological research, the Twa are the original inhabitants of the African Great Lakes region.<sup>2</sup> No historical evidence has been discovered suggesting that they migrated from any other region. Imagine their reaction, then, when around 1100 AD, the ethnic groups known as the Hutu and the Tutsi began to arrive in their land.<sup>3</sup> From their first contact, the Hutu and the Tutsi immediately began to subordinate the Twa, and would continue to do so for centuries to come. The Twa have become the forgotten victims of the assertion of dominance perpetrated by both the Hutu and the Tutsi from precolonial times, by the Europeans as colonization of the country began, and during armed conflicts after Rwanda obtained independence.

## Precolonization

The Twa have always been viewed in the Rwandan community as lesser than the Tutsi and the Hutu, not only socially and politically, but even theologically.

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2. Jerome Lewis, *The Batwa Pygmies of the Great Lakes Region* (Minority Rights Group, 2000), 6–7.

3. Timothy Longman, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 10.

According to religious oral tradition, the Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa are the descendants of three brothers, Gatutsi, Gahutu, and Gatwa. These brothers were the children of Kigwa, who had fallen from heaven and created Rwanda. When time came for Kigwa to choose the successor to his throne, he did so by entrusting a pot of milk to each of his sons, instructing them to guard the pots overnight. When Kigwa returned to his sons the following morning, he discovered that Gatwa had drunk his pot of milk, Gahutu had fallen asleep and knocked his pot over in the night, and Gatutsi had faithfully watched over his pot. For these actions, he determined that Gatutsi and his descendants were destined to rule over the other two and that Gahutu was consigned to hard, manual labor. As for Gatwa, he was to be cursed for his gluttony, condemned to be a clown and a slave to his brothers.<sup>4</sup> There have been variations on this creation myth throughout Rwandan history, but the common factor linking the stories together is the hierarchy that the myth establishes; that the Tutsi are destined to rule, the Hutu are to perform hard labor, and the Twa are base creatures, almost less than human, and good for nothing but servitude.<sup>5</sup>

The ethnic and social structures implicit in this origin story accurately reflect the early interactions between the two upper classes and the Twa lower class. The Twa were the original inhabitants of what is present-day Rwanda. They were a pygmy people, short in stature, and surviving as hunter-gatherers living in the forests. They came into contact with the Hutu and the Tutsi between 700 and 1500 AD, as the two groups migrated to their territory from northern parts of Africa. When the groups arrived, they began to clear the forests where the Twa lived in order to make space for herding (the Tutsi form of livelihood) and agriculture (the Hutu form of livelihood).<sup>6</sup> When the Twa were forced out of the forests and as the Tutsi rose to power in the region, the Twa had to find occupations besides hunting and gathering. However, they were only permitted by the Hutu and the Tutsi to perform the lowliest of jobs, largely becoming potters or servants of the Tutsi, acting as their executioners, jesters, and torturers.<sup>7</sup>

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4. Sinema, *Who Must Die?*, 46

5. Aimable Twagilimana, *The Debris of Ham: Ethnicity, Regionalism, and the 1994 Rwandan Genocide* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003), 36.

6. Twagilimana, *The Debris of Ham*, 38–39; Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 61.

7. Christopher C. Taylor, *Milk, Honey, and Money: Changing Concepts in Rwandan Healing* (Washington D.C. and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 14–15, 38–39.

Even as the Tutsi became the dominant group in the region over the Hutu and Twa, their relationship with the Hutu was one of some level of equality. The two groups socially interacted and even intermarried. However, neither group extended the same courtesy toward the Twa. It was common practice for the Hutu and the Tutsi to share meals together, but to refuse food to the Twa and exclude them from social gatherings. The idea of intermarriage with a Twa was unthinkable.<sup>8</sup> This view of the Twa as creatures of a lower status than themselves is most shockingly apparent in royal religious rituals. Early Rwandan kings practiced sacred rituals, including “the path of inundation,” a ritual designed to curb excessive rainfall. The process included sacrificing a breastless or infertile Twa woman. This specific type of person was chosen because she was an ultimate demonstration of unproductivity, being unable to create or support new life, and being a member of a social caste that is considered to be lazy and wild.<sup>9</sup> The common consensus of the non-Twa in the region was that the Twa were savage, uncivilized and related more closely to wild creatures than to human beings.

## European Colonization

This perception of the Twa’s inhumanity by the Hutu and the Tutsi, unfortunately, was shared by the first Europeans that came into contact with these ethnic groups. In 1699, the English scientist and father of modern anatomy Edward Tyson penned a book entitled, *The Anatomy of a Pygmie Compared with that of a Monkey, an Ape, and a Man*, in which he studied the anatomy of pygmy peoples such as the Twa in order to determine whether they were human or animal in nature. After careful examination, Tyson concluded “That our *Pygmie* is no *Man*, nor yet the *Common Ape*; but a fort [*sic*] of *Animal* between both.”<sup>10</sup> This inhuman sentiment was shared by the first Europeans to colonize Rwanda, who arrived with preconceived notions about racial hierarchies. The European idea of evolution taught that some races were more evolved than others, and in a place where there were multiple races, the most evolved race was sure to

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8. Alison Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999), 22.

9. Taylor, *Milk, Honey, and Money*, 37.

10. Edward Tyson, *Orang-Outang, sive Homo Sylvestris: or, the Anatomy of a Pygmie Compared with that of a Monkey, an Ape, and a Man* (London: T. Bennet and D. Brown, 1699), 91.

dominate. Within Rwanda, Europeans separated the inhabitants into three racial groups with the Hamitic race (the Tutsi) being the most evolved, the Bantu race (the Hutu) being second, and the Pygmoid (the Twa) being the least evolved. The placement of the Twa in the most inferior racial group influenced Europeans to view “the Twa as savage, dirty, and dishonest.”<sup>11</sup> This offers an explanation as to why the Europeans were willing to lend their support to the Tutsi in early Rwandan colonial history, and the Hutu in later history, while never attempting to ally with or support the Twa.

In addition to racially driven attempts to marginalize the Twa, the European treatment of the different ethnic groups was influenced by the political situation of Rwanda upon the European’s arrival. The first large groups of Europeans to arrive in Rwanda were the Germans in 1897, with the aim to obtain political power, and the Society of Missionaries of Africa, also known as the White Fathers, in 1900, there to convert the native inhabitants to Catholicism.<sup>12</sup> Though these two groups had different goals, they contrived the same means to achieve their ends. The founder of the White Fathers, Charles Lavigerie, believed that successful mass conversion would be achieved by focusing on converting the politically powerful.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, the Germans sought dominance over Rwanda by means of indirect rule, aiding the already ruling Tutsi king of Rwanda in fixing Rwandan borders and exerting political dominance over all who lived within those borders. This same line of thinking was followed by the Belgians, who took Rwandan control from the Germans following World War I. It is evident then that the earliest European colonists sought to meet their goals by allying themselves with the politically elite. These politically elite were, at the time of first colonization, the Tutsi. Over the years, however, leading into the late 1950s, power would shift to rising Hutu political parties. The Belgians, wary of anticolonial sentiment amid the Tutsi, shifted their support to the Hutu.<sup>14</sup> In either case, this plan of action necessitated, to a degree, following the agenda of those in power, even when it meant subjugating the lower classes, which always included the Twa.

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11. Longman, *Christianity and Genocide*, 61.

12. Longman, *Christianity and Genocide*, 38.

13. J. J. Carney, *Rwanda Before the Genocide: Catholic Politics and Ethnic Discourse in the Late Colonial Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 27–28, 32.

14. Christopher C. Taylor, *Sacrifice as Terror: The Rwandan Genocide of 1994* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 77.

## Rwandan Independence to Rwandan Genocide

Tensions between the growing Hutu power and the Tutsi monarchy came to a head in 1959, when the Hutu political leaders led by Grégoire Kayibanda overthrew the Tutsi monarchy and the Belgians and established Rwanda as an independent state. When this happened, the Twa, who had possessed some sympathy from the Tutsi for their role as servants, fell into worse conditions than they had already lived in. The Hutu recognized the servant-master relationship that had existed between the Twa and the Tutsi and treated the Twa as allies of the Tutsi. Many Twa were forced from their land to make way for Hutu who wanted it. During the 1960s, Kayibanda, now president of Rwanda, initiated the “peasant revolution,” distributing land among all Rwandans who had not fled the country during the revolution. However, the Twa were ignored during this process.<sup>15</sup> In 1973, Kayibanda was overthrown by a more moderate Hutu leader, Juvénal Habyarimana, who promised reform, specifically in the job market. Under Kayibanda, non-Hutu were often rejected job opportunities and were frequently in danger of being fired. Habyarimana created a policy that, in theory, would apportion government jobs, jobs in education, and some private jobs to Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa individuals based on their representation in the population. This policy, though fairer to non-Hutu, was still racist in nature, and would only offer about 1% of these jobs to people of Twa ethnicity. Sadly, even this tiny number of jobs promised to the Twa population ultimately went unrealized.<sup>16</sup>

Over the next twenty years, the Twa and the Tutsi would suffer together as the Rwandan government grew increasingly hostile towards all non-Hutu. Anti-Twa sentiment increased due to a rise in a Hutu-extremist ideology that labeled all non-Hutu as inferior. In 1993, the Twa were experiencing “land-grabbing; physical and verbal abuse; denial of access to vital local resources such as land, clay and water; denial of effective access to education, health care and legal redress.”<sup>17</sup> When the Hutu-led genocide began in April of 1994, many Twa were targeted and killed by Hutu extremists. Most Twa did not listen to radios, and they often did not know about the killings until they became eyewitnesses.

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15. Jerome Lewis, *The Twa Pygmies: Rwanda's Ignored People* (London: University College London, 2006), 5–6.

16. Taylor, *Sacrifice as Terror*, 79–80.

17. Lewis, *The Twa Pygmies*, 7.

One Twa woman reported, “When the war started all we could hear were the gunshots. So we tried to run away, myself, my husband and my five children. But then my husband was killed, my children are here with me. We have no clothes, we are hungry . . . A lot of people died because they refused to become [Hutu extremists].” This woman’s remark about becoming Hutu extremists is in reference to the fact that many Hutu forced groups of Twa to participate in killing Tutsis under threat of death if they refused.<sup>18</sup>

In order to escape the terrors of the Hutu, many Twa were forced to flee their homeland. Many did not survive the journey, having to evade the Hutu as they navigated their way outside of the country. Those who successfully escaped were able to reach refugee camps controlled by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a militant group of Tutsis who would eventually put an end to the Rwandan Genocide. Sadly, many RPF soldiers discriminated against the Twa within the refugee camps and threatened the Twa with violence if met with protests.<sup>19</sup> At the start of the genocide, an estimated 30,000 Twa lived in Rwanda. By 1995, only forty percent of the Twa from a year before remained in the country, with thirty percent having fled, and thirty percent having been killed.<sup>20</sup>

## Aftermath of Genocide and the Present Day

On 18 July 1994, the Rwandan Genocide ended. Since the beginning of the genocide in April, the RPF had begun making advances into Rwanda in order to take control of the state and end the killings. Over the next few months, they would conquer Rwanda piece by piece, ending their conquest in the Rwandan capital of Kigali in late July. The Tutsi were now safe, and efforts to help those Tutsi affected by the tragedy would begin immediately and continue to the present day. However, the same could not be said for the Twa. Though only a very small minority of Twa participated in the killings (and often at gunpoint), the RPF arrested and put to death all Twa males of particular communities where a few Twa had been known to be participating in the genocide. One Twa woman reported, “[After the war], when there were no authorities here, they didn’t want any men left in the commune. Every man, and even some boys, were

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18. Lewis, *The Twa Pygmies*, 10.

19. Lewis, *The Batwa Pygmies*, 24.

20. Lewis, *The Twa Pygmies*, 19.

caught and taken away. [The Tutsi] would come and take them to the soldier's camp nearby. The other survivors didn't want any men left in the villages."<sup>21</sup> The woman's designation of the Tutsi as the "other survivors" reveals the self-perception of the Twa as co-victims with the Tutsi in the genocide. Rwanda's central government today, unfortunately, does not share that view. In 1998, The Fund for Neediest Survivors of Genocide in Rwanda (FARG) was created by the Rwandan government "to provide assistance to survivors of genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi in Rwanda."<sup>22</sup> However, aid from this fund was and is only extended to Tutsi victims of the genocide. The Twa are excluded from receiving any support from this government-created program.<sup>23</sup>

The largest roadblock, perhaps, that the Twa face in receiving governmental aid is the fact that according to the government, the Twa do not exist. In 2003, the Republic of Rwanda created a new constitution that was geared towards national unity between all Rwandans. The constitution states that one part of this goal was the, "eradication of . . . divisionism based on ethnicity."<sup>24</sup> This has been interpreted to mean that there no longer exist different social or ethnic classes such as the Tutsi, the Hutu, or the Twa. The intent behind officially disintegrating ethnic groups is to promote unity between all Rwandans, but this policy is more hurtful than helpful to the Twa. The Rwandan government prohibits activist groups seeking to improve the quality of life for the Twa from making references to the Twa as a distinct people, under penalty of losing governmental support. For example, in 2007, the Community of Indigenous People of Rwanda, a pro-Twa organization, was forced to change their name to the Community of Rwandan Potters to avoid using the word "indigenous."<sup>25</sup> Whenever discrimination takes place, the government refuses to intervene, for by doing so, they would have to recognize the Twa as an ethnic group being discriminated against.

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21. Lewis, *The Batwa Pygmies*, 24.

22. Republic of Rwanda, "Historical Background of FARG", *FARG*, <http://www.farg.gov.rw/index.php?id=11>, (accessed 6 June 2019).

23. Minority Rights Group International, "Twa," *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous People*, <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/twa-2/> (Accessed 6 June, 2019).

24. Constitute Project, *Rwanda's Constitution of 2003 with Amendments through 2015*, 10, [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Rwanda\\_2015.pdf?lang=en](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Rwanda_2015.pdf?lang=en), (Accessed 6 June 2019).

25. Minority Rights Group International, "Twa."

## Conclusion

Rwanda has undergone many changes in the past five hundred years. Since 1500, it has transformed from a Tutsi kingdom, to a country ruled indirectly by Europeans, to an independent Hutu nation, and finally to a democratic republic claiming that its citizens carry no ethnic identity other than “Rwandan.” But what has not changed from that first interaction between different ethnic groups to the present day is the treatment of the Twa as outcasts, unequal with other Rwandans.

It was previously mentioned how in precolonial times, the Hutu and the Tutsi would share food and dine with each other, but not with the Twa. Sometime near the end of the twentieth century, before the Rwandan Genocide but during a period of tension between the Hutu and the Tutsi, an anthropologist named Christopher Taylor traveled to Rwanda and had a meal with Rwandans of various ethnic identities, including a Twa man who sat beside Christopher. When Christopher received a cup of drink that was being passed around the group, he took his portion and attempted to pass it to the Twa. A friend in the group stopped him and said, “No. He receives his portion separately.”<sup>26</sup> Through the hundreds of years of power exchanges, bloodshed, and governmental reform, the tradition of excluding the Twa has endured. The Twa remain social outcasts and a people disregarded by their government. The Twa remain the lowest of classes and, regardless of differences, the Tutsi, Hutu, and governmental authorities work in harmony to ensure that they do not forget it.

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26. Taylor, *Milk, Honey, and Money*, 75.



# Winning Souls unto Christ

## The Meanings of Missionary Board Games, 1980–2008

Rachel Felt

THE FIRST MISSION TRIP THAT YOU CHOOSE IS TO CHINA. YOU CONVINCE the other players to come with you. All of you land in jail and the trip is over. All of the other players are looking at you in a very unchristian-like way.” The back of the *Missionary Conquest* box continues to outline the rest of the gameplay: you dupe fellow players into investing in a flimsy financial opportunity, then land on Mission Board Hearing where opponents choose judgment “in the name of spiritual growth,” losing you a claimed country and “Blessing Points.” Throwing caution to the wind, you venture forth to proselyte in foreign lands and end up martyred for the missionary cause.<sup>27</sup> *Missionary Conquest* may not hold the prestige of *Clue* or *Candyland*, but religious theming has long been a major part of societal games and pastimes.

Religious board games have a vast history, dating back to Ancient Mesopotamia. These ranged from role-playing as nuns and priests to basic competitions of scriptural knowledge.<sup>28</sup> Board games were a common facet of popular religious practice well before the rise of the commercialized games in nineteenth century America. Yet, while many board games shifted away from an

27. *Missionary Conquest*, (D&E Enterprises, 1992).

28. See Steve Craig, *Sports and Games of the Ancients* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002) and R. C. Bell, *Board and Table Games From Many Civilizations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

overtly religious tone in the early twentieth century, missionary-themed games saw an upsurge in production post-1980.<sup>29</sup> Previous games that centered on missionaries were usually historically based (about Saint Paul's missionary journeys, etc.), rather than themed after contemporary experiences.<sup>30</sup> However, Protestant and Latter-day Saint game makers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries attempted to transform their understandings of current missions into a competitive pastime. This included encouraging members to support or become missionaries themselves. Mission board games certainly fill a niche category of entertainment but are largely ignored even among religious board game scholarship.

The important research by Nikki Bado-Fralick and Rebecca Sachs Norris is the most thorough exploration of religious board games to date.<sup>31</sup> In *Toying With God*, they noted the tendency of religious scholars to disregard games and toys. Bado-Fralick and Norris emphasized the significance of these pastimes as a part of the source base for historical religious research. Despite the innovative approach to expanding research avenues, modern missionary games are vastly underrepresented and unexplored. Only one uniquely missionary-themed game is mentioned in their work. Too often dismissed as childish, board games are often revealing of a community's standards, aspirations, and sense of place in the world.

From the production of the first such game nearly 165 years ago to the present, missionary board games have remained remarkably consistent in their portrayal of missions. Latter-day Saint and Protestant missions board games rely on militaristic rhetoric, missionary identity, and specific depictions of needy converts that are rooted in each religious group's lived and perceived experiences. The rich collections of missionary board games at the L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Church History Library, and Yale Divinity School's Special Collections deepens our understanding of how popular conceptions of missionaries

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29. See Philip E. Orbanes, *The Game Makers: The Story of Parker Brothers, From Tiddledy Winks to Trivial Pursuit* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2004) and Robert Rath, "Board Games Were Indoctrination Tools for Christ, Then Capitalism," *Waypoint*, last modified November 30, 2017, [https://waypoint.vice.com/en\\_us/article/vb38gj/mansion-of-happiness-board-game-history](https://waypoint.vice.com/en_us/article/vb38gj/mansion-of-happiness-board-game-history).

30. There are a few examples of seventeenth century Italian Catholic missionary games (*Il Giuoco Del Missionario* and *Viaggi Missionari*) that follow a *Game of the Goose* board—a simpler version of *Chutes and Ladders*.

31. Nikki Baldo-Fralick and Rebecca Sachs Norris, *Toying with God* (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2010.)

reveal the complicated nature of religious identity, one that is inseparable from contemporary political and social ideologies.

## Start on “Go”: The Mission Board Game in America

Religious themes permeated the earliest American board games. In 1843, William and Stephen Bradshaw Ives created the first popular, manufactured board game in the United States, the *Mansion of Happiness*. This “instructive moral and entertaining amusement,” involved players landing on either virtues or sins that affected their progress to the mansion.<sup>32</sup> *Mansion of Happiness* marked the beginning of the marketed, mass-produced commodity in pastime amusements and set the stage for missionary-themed games, as the Ives brothers then released *The Game of Pope and Pagan, Or Siege of the Stronghold of Satan, by the Christian Army* a year later. As the title explains, a Christian army of “devoted missionaries” moved toward Satan’s fortress, guarded by his supposed allies of Pope and Pagan.<sup>33</sup> In this game, one player acted as the missionary force in an attempt to defeat their opponent who manipulated Satan’s “defenders.” It was a battle between good and evil, where the devil’s side would almost always lose.<sup>34</sup>

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32. Margaret Hofer, *The Games We Played: The Golden Age of Board & Table Games* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2003), 78. Based on The Royal Game of the Goose, imported from Italy to England in the sixteenth century, with goose-pictured squares allowing players to take another turn. See R. C. Bell, *The Boardgame Book* (New York: Exeter Books, 1983), 141.

33. Based on the Middle Ages game, *Fox and Geese*, in which one player controls sixteen “geese” in attempt to trap the other player’s solitary “fox” figure, which may jump over geese pieces to an empty space to eliminate them (akin to checkers). The odds are in favor of the geese, where if played right, the fox will almost always lose. See R. C Bell, *Board and Table Games*, 76. It evolved gradually to capture a more militaristic attitude in Asalto, where game pieces now represented soldiers attacking a fort. Success was always severely slanted in favor of the soldiers. The object of the game for the attacker is to use fifty soldiers to either surround the defender’s three officers or invade the fort. The defender wins when they have killed enough soldiers, leaving less than the requisite nine to invade the fort. This version attempts to ease the disadvantages of the defending position. However, the attacking player continues to have the upper hand.

34. However, should the person playing as the devil’s cohorts win, they “are expected to be very liberal in his or her contributions to the missionary cause, for having dared to defend a bad cause.” With this encouragement of financially supporting missionaries, the devil would never truly win, a justification for play-acting as the demonic.

The missionaries did not defend their convictions against malicious hordes of enemies, but rather proactively worked to destroy the fort of Satan. Here they ventured forth, not necessarily in pursuit of converts, but to siege the garrison of Satan and his supporters.<sup>35</sup> *Pope and Pagan* paved the way for future games to follow suit in crafting proselytizing into pastime.

Yet missionary-based games mostly disappeared from public view until the 1960s. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, board games became less religious as a whole. The only appearances of those based on missions were found at Protestant mission fairs. For example, a 1930s British game, *Snapshots* was available for purchase. Similar to Go-Fish, it includes cards with depictions of people, nature, characteristics, and missionary progress of twelve international nonwhite missions.<sup>36</sup> These kinds of games were found at exhibitions to raise both money and awareness for missionaries. Other products paraded at these events included calendars, trading cards, prints, coloring books, and other small items representing different cultures and lands of established Protestant missions.<sup>37</sup> However, board games intended solely for entertainment were not available for decades. Only in the 1980s did the number of Latter-day Saint and Protestant board games exponentially increase, and many of them were specifically missionary-themed.<sup>38</sup>

## Onward, Christian Soldier: The Mission as a Battlefield

When mission-based games resurfaced, they remarkably resembled the lost *Pope and Pagan* thematically. It is unlikely that any of the modern game makers

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35. William and Stephen B. Ives, *The Game of Pope and Pagan, or Siege of the Stronghold of Satan by the Christian Army* (Salem: W. and S.B. Ives, 1844). The famed Parker Brothers would eventually buy out the Ives' holdings, making the Ives truly the forefathers of American board games.

36. See *Snapshots* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1935). The twelve country divisions are Japan, N. India, S. India, Sudan, Palestine, Persia, W. Africa, South Sea Islands, Egypt, N.W. Canada, S. China, W. China.

37. See "Japan: A Missionary Color Book for Children' by Theodore W. Engstrom and Paul Hubartt, 1948" and other examples in Yale's Archive [https://archives.yale.edu/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&op%5B%D=&q%5B%D=221+OV1&limit=&field%5B%D=&from\\_year%5B%D=&to\\_year%5B%D=&commit=Search](https://archives.yale.edu/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&op%5B%D=&q%5B%D=221+OV1&limit=&field%5B%D=&from_year%5B%D=&to_year%5B%D=&commit=Search).

38. There are a few examples from around 1960, such as *Golden Converts*, yet only post 1980 is there an upsurge in the amount of mission-themed games.

ever knew about this century-old game, yet many new missionary games still relied on a militaristic setting for gameplay. An example from an Latter-day Saint background, *The Greatest Mission Is the World*, produced by the Missionary Novelty Company in 1989, was essentially a rebranding of RISK marketed for an Latter-day Saint audience.<sup>39</sup> The description read, “You [and your opponents] have been called as Mission President for Planet Earth,” wherein you must “convert the world” by using your “missionary army [to] determine who’s [sic] missionaries will be sent home.” The use of “missionary army” did little to hide the aggressive tone of the game. *The Greatest Mission* displayed missions as a strategic field for world domination. The board game used the exact country breakdown and language as RISK, merely putting “Mission” after each region name. The same rules for gameplay applied to “calling” missionaries and strengthening missions.<sup>40</sup> Missionaries replaced soldiers for a competitive exploit in beating fellow players by capturing all countries. Even though *Pope and Pagan* and *The Greatest Mission* existed in a different time period and came from a different theological background, the concept of a mission was explicitly rooted in imperialism and war.<sup>41</sup>

Three years later, a Protestant missionary board game surfaced and likewise framed missions as a colonialism pursuit. Entitled *Missionary Conquest*, players competed to claim a certain number of missions around the world with the requisite accompanying “Blessing Points.”<sup>42</sup> Squares lined the perimeter of the board, while the center contained a map of the world awaiting mission establishment. The map divided the world into sixty-four countries ready for

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39. Originally a bumper sticker company, selling over 50,000 “\_\_\_\_\_ is the greatest mission in the world,” the founder started creating board games to fill a “niche . . . market . . . for the Latter-day Saint consumer.” His plan was to “take the most popular games and make them with an Latter-day Saint theme,” selling to several Latter-day Saint bookstores, including Deseret Book, the BYU Bookstore, and at one point talking with Walmart about selling there. After games were discontinued in 2010 due to low popularity, the company switched to app games that now boast about 4,000 users. Bruce Hammond, email to the author, March 10, 2019.

40. Apparently the game did not achieve much success, as there was no copyright lawsuit filed. *The Greatest Mission is the World*.

41. Bruce Hammond, *The Greatest Mission Is the World* (Missionary Novelty Company, 1989).

42. Winning the game is possible by making four successful mission trips in one area of the world and earning 700 Blessing Points; six successful mission trips in any part of the world and earning 500 Blessing Points; or a successful mission to Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia with 400 Blessing Points.

the taking.<sup>43</sup> In the midst of world domination, players landed on squares that bring “Blessings,” “Temptations,” “Financial Opportunities,” “Mission Trips” and “Mission Board Hearings.”

Mission trips were a central part of the game. When a player landed on a mission trip square, they selected which country they want to claim. Other players could elect to join as a “fellow missionary.” All missionaries helped pay for the cost and received any Blessing Points gained in that country. There were a number of possible Mission Trip outcomes, themed according to each country, and determined by rolling a dice. The most common results affected Blessing Points, but occasionally players could be sent to “Bad Stewardship,” where they would lose a turn.<sup>44</sup> If a Mission Trip was successful (i.e. the player was not expelled), only the primary missionary would take control and claim the country. To win, a player had to proclaim “Missionary Conquest!” and then take their final turn. As long as they still had the requisite number of Blessing Points and controlled territories by the end of their turn, they would win. If this was not uttered, the player could not win, even if all other requirements were met. Mission trips were the best way to earn Blessing Points, but conscious declaration of conquest was the final, necessary key to win.

The game was committed to deliberately conquering the world. Players consciously strategized in selecting which countries to claim. This was a stark difference from similar board games, such as *Monopoly*, where so much depends on the luck of landing on certain properties. These missions became a place of competition, a colonial battle to claim countries and impede a competitor’s progress. For this Protestant board game, preaching the gospel was secondary to dominating and controlling the most countries, a continuation of the military-mission concept.

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43. The divisions include North/Central America (Canada, Cuba, El Salvador, Haiti, Mexico, Nicaragua Panama, United States), South America (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay), Europe (Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden), Arabian Peninsula/Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey), Northern Africa (Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Sudan), Sub-Saharan Africa (Angola, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire, Zimbabwe) Middle East/Asia/Southeast Asia (Afghanistan, China, India, Japan, Mongolia, North Korea, Russia) and the clumped group of Islands (Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Solomon Islands). *Missionary Conquest*.

44. Most often for refusing to take criticism or advice or for spending mission funds irresponsibly. Examples include buying excessive souvenirs, financing a yacht, taking side trips to Mount Fuji, and selling items on the black market.

Mission-themed imperial conquests persisted with the 2008 Latter-day Saint *Build the Kingdom* game, based on *Settlers of Catan*. Whereas *Catan* involved claiming natural resources to build roads, settlements, and cities, *Build the Kingdom* allowed players to use “Principles of the Gospel” cards (faith, repentance, baptism, prayer, Preach My Gospel) to set down copies of The Book of Mormon, converts, and wards. *Build the Kingdom* presented missions as an invasive expansion of religion. The title itself contained a double meaning. Reinforced by Latter-day Saint rhetoric of “building up the Kingdom of God,” as a drive for spiritual development, the direct implication of a religious *Catan* posited the notion as a literal empire rather than a figurative one.<sup>45</sup> Even into the twenty-first century, board games established missions as conquests.

The appearance of this theme is directly connected to the political underpinnings of religious identity. As game makers combined light-hearted pastimes with a religious proselytizing theme, they continually returned to the global domination model. Militaristic rhetoric has been commonplace in religious discourse and continues to be used by leaders today.<sup>46</sup> Missions have a long tradition of being connected to militaries and colonialism. Yet these games were produced soon after formal colonialism began to be disestablished after World War II. Consequently, this reliance on militaristic imagery came from the conflation of religious and political identities. Most games have been produced at the end of the Cold War and during the increased involvement of the United States in the Middle East. These military engagements had a decisively religious tone. In his first speech after 9/11, President Bush identified the War on Terrorism as a “crusade.”<sup>47</sup> Harkening back to the aggressive, religiously backed military campaigns of the Middle Ages, Bush framed current events as no longer uniquely political. The blur between state and religion, between military and missionary, had not disappeared in the twentieth century.

Christian churches often came out in support of these administrative decisions. While there were factions of more liberal Protestants opposed to war, a

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45. Bruce Hammond, *Build the Kingdom* (Missionary Novelty Company, 2008).

46. “The prophet of God called for an army . . . when you enlist in military service, or as a full-time missionary, your life is drastically different . . .” See David Dickson, “How to Enlist (and Stay Enlisted) in the Youth Battalion,” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2019, accessed January 2020, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/youth/article/how-to-enlist-and-stay-enlisted-in-the-youth-battalion?lang=eng>.

47. George W. Bush, “Remarks by the President Upon Arrival,” *The White House*, September 2001, accessed January 2020, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html>.

large number of Christian denominations retreated to a conservative political stance.<sup>48</sup> Many church leaders backed President Bush and his policies of military involvement. He “received spiritual solace and counsel, and crucial public support,” from local leaders as well as public figures, such as Billy Graham and Robert Schuller.<sup>49</sup> Latter-day Saint Church leadership also appeared to be more supportive than derisive, as shown by President Gordon B. Hinckley during the 2003 April General Conference. While he directed his audience to love people of all religions and nations, he did not condemn the war and was careful to align the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint’s position in compliance with the government.<sup>50</sup> The lay members of the Church likewise were generally supportive of the war. Members of the Church participated in the military as soldiers and nurses.<sup>51</sup> Attitudes trickled down to lay members of Protestant and Latter-day Saint congregations, including those who produced and purchased missionary board games. The militaristic-based, missionary-themed board games reflected the fact that these political tensions were linked with religious identity.

## More Than A Pawn: The Gender and Race of Missionary Identity

Missionary board games also exemplified the cultural perceptions that defined the concept of a missionary. One of the earliest Latter-day Saint mission-themed games is *Missionary Zeal*, “fun for all ages.” Created in 1981 by Latter-day Saint

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48. “. . . leaders of more than 20 major Protestant and Orthodox Christian denominations, joined by 15 Roman Catholic bishops, have reaffirmed their opposition to the war and called for a cease-fire.” Peter Steinfels, “WAR IN THE GULF: The Home Front; Church Leaders Reaffirm Opposition to War,” *New York Times*, last modified 1991, accessed January 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/02/15/us/war-in-the-gulf-the-home-front-church-leaders-reaffirm-opposition-to-war.html>.

49. Andrew Preston, “The Politics of Realism and Religion: Christian Responses to Bush’s New World Order,” *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 1 (2010): 99.

50. Gordon B. Hinckley, “War and Peace” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, April 2003, accessed January 2020, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2003/04/war-and-peace?lang=eng>.

51. Patricia Rushton, Lynn Clark Callister, Maile K. Wilson, comps., *Latter-day Saint Nurses at War: A Story of Caring and Sacrifice* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2005), 199–270.

couple Scott and Marcia Richards, this game required players to set an individual mission baptismal goal to be met in a certain number of rounds, emphasizing the societal understanding that missions had specific deadlines. Cards and instructions were written in second person, but visual representations clearly demonstrated identity. Even though the game was created by a couple, all missionaries shown on the board are white males.<sup>52</sup> This imagery was perpetuated throughout subsequent decades.

For one game, the attention on male missionaries was an essential part of play. Happy Valley Publishing founder Mike Agrelius noted the lack of Latter-day Saint board games, particularly those of a mission theme.<sup>53</sup> After he returned from a mission, he created a card game called *Missionary Blues* (1981).<sup>54</sup> Some of the cards included “Zone Leaders,” “Assistant to the President,” and “District Leaders,” all of which impeded another player’s progress. Titles of power played an important role in establishing identity in the mission field. For Latter-day Saint missionaries, these titles are reserved for males only.

While most cards depicted male missionaries, there was one sister missionary in the deck. The “Lady Missionary” card reversed the order of play. The commentary is not subtle. A sister missionary was a reverse of the norm; a retreat from what a missionary was expected to be. “Lady Missionary” had been rarely used to describe sister missionaries since the 1910s.<sup>55</sup> Using this term further alienated women as missionaries, and their inclusion in the game seemed to only point out their absurdity in the mission field. While percentages of Latter-day Saint missionaries were heavily skewed to males in the 1980s, sister missionaries still made up about thirty percent in the field.<sup>56</sup> Certainly, Agrelius’

52. Scott and Marcia Richards, *Missionary Zeal* (Randall Publishing, 1981).

53. At one point, 4,500 of his games sold in a year in only six stores. See Mike Drysdale, Interview with Mike Agrelius, *Mormon Game Design Blog*, modified November 2009, accessed March 2019, <http://mormongamedesign.blogspot.com/2009/11/mike-agrelius-from-happy-valley.html>.

54. Can be played nine different ways. The box provides many examples: “Crazy Zone Leaders” for Crazy Eights, “Oh Fetch” for Go Fish, “Non-Alcoholic Gin” for, yes, Gin, and many more. See Mike Agrelius, *Missionary Blues* (Happy Valley Publishing, 1981).

55. “Women with a Mission,” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, last modified June 15, 2012, <https://history.Latter-day Saint.org/article/women-with-a-mission-overview?lang=eng>.

56. Clint Kimball, Figure 4i, “New Missionaries Breakdown,” Estimated *Latter-day Saint Membership Statistics*, modified August 20, 2018, Accessed March 2019, <http://www.fullerconsideration.com/membership.php>.

perceptions of gender informed his decisions as he made his game. He felt that the few Latter-day Saint trivia games that already existed were not popular: “the girls that hadn’t been on missions thought the questions were too tough and the guys that had been on missions thought the questions were too easy . . . nobody played them.”<sup>57</sup> Even when he tried to create a game that would interest both genders, *Missionary Blues* catered mostly to returned male missionaries. Other games from around the same time were similarly designed. Despite the presence of women in the mission field, board games were targeted to the larger demographic of white male missionaries.

In the 1990s, Latter-day Saint mission-themed board games began to change the gender dynamic. In 1995, the Mountain Top Game Company produced *The Missionary Game*, an almost exact replica of the Richards couple’s *Missionary Zeal*. This updated version switched between gendered pronouns in the instructions, but still retained the white male missionary images on the board. By changing the wording but maintaining the stereotypical missionary visual, the game served to include female players but not female missionaries.<sup>58</sup>

While attempts at inclusion of women began to appear, the overwhelming theming remained largely male. A slight change was made in the Latter-day Saint game *Missionary: Impossible* (1996), as they switched between gendered pronouns and included photographs of both male and female missionaries in the instructions. However, the telltale symbols of a shirt, tie, and badge show up in the dots of the “i” letters in the logo, which emphasized the male missionary outfit. The object of the game also skewed to the male missionary experience. This involved laying down “Week” cards to be the first team of two to reach 100 Weeks. Latter-day Saint missions are for a set period of time, eighteen months for women and twenty-four for men. The game’s victory is measured closer to the 104 weeks males serve, again underscoring the pressured notion that missions are defined by length of service. The game expanded missionary identity with an intentional presence of women, but its core design still valued male missionary service as the goal.<sup>59</sup>

Further inclusion in *Missionary: Impossible* (1996) came with the depictions of nonwhite missionaries. After Church leaders rescinded the priesthood and temple ban for those of African descent in 1978, all members were finally

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57. Drysdale, “Interview with Mike Agrelius.”

58. *The Missionary Game* (Mountain Top, 1995).

59. Aspen Books, *Missionary: Impossible The Game* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1996).

allowed to serve missions.<sup>60</sup> *Missionary: Impossible* acknowledges this change with diverse depictions on the cards. It is important to note the ratios: white males appeared on five and a half of the cards (one half of a companionship), versus the three white females, and the one and a half black male cards.<sup>61</sup> It took eighteen years after the lifting of the ban for black missionaries to appear in games, and still only on seventeen percent of the cards. While there were strides to create a fuller representation of missionaries, the white male still dominated the public imagination.

The most recent Latter-day Saint missionary board game redefined this concept altogether. *How to Host the Greatest Mission in the World* (2008) encouraged players to fill out ballots about their missions and takes turns telling stories. Those voted as “Best” for various categories received blue ribbons provided in the game, implying missions are only as good as the stories they make. However, nonmissionaries were invited to participate in the game as well, by sharing any missionary experience they had. The game redefined “missionary” in citing President David O. McKay’s “every member a missionary” mantra.<sup>62</sup> The back of the box made this clear: “everyone has served a mission even those who didn’t serve a full-time mission. Everyone lives in a mission and can talk about their missionary efforts.” McKay’s intentions were to increase “missionary work” by encouraging lay members to approach nonmember family and friends with gospel invitations. *How to Host* took this proverbial quote further by equating simple, religious conversations with full- or part-time service.

This is a fundamental shift from all previous representations of missionaries. Nearly fifty years of Church leaders and members employing the phrase has made it commonplace. But its presence as the justifying backbone for a new party game somewhat alters the original message of trying to be more open to discussing spiritual beliefs. According to this definition, no longer do individuals have to go through a process of spiritual, physical, and financial preparation; receive a formal call; be ordained and set apart; or temporarily ignore vocational and educational pursuits in order to be considered a missionary. While the board

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60. As the Church does not keep statistics of racial identities, black missionary numbers are difficult to trace. Armand L. Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 241.

61. *Missionary: Impossible*.

62. David O. McKay, *One Hundred Twenty-ninth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Report of Discourses*, (1959), accessed March 2019, <https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1959a/page/n123>.

game was really intended for returned missionaries, the caveat of “life is a mission” was included to reach a wider audience. It reconstructed the definition of missionary to include all lay members for the sake of entertainment and profit.

Yet, even with its inclusive redefinition, the intended audience was unmistakably male. The back of the box was careful to point out it was fit for any gathering from “a small group to a big Elders or High Priests Quorum social.”<sup>63</sup> Despite the “every member a missionary” attitude, the game was still intended for mostly men. While there was a significant difference in the numbers of male and female missionaries, there were still over five thousand sister missionaries serving that were largely ignored or belittled by the time of the game’s release.<sup>64</sup> Even in the twenty-first century, Latter-day Saint board games continued to deal with missionaries in very gendered terms.

For Protestant board games, missionary identities were a bit more ambiguous. In *Missionary Conquest*, there were references to gender-neutral spouses and children coming along on Mission Trips, a common occurrence for foreign Protestant missions. Different power struggles were also present in the form of “Mission Board Hearings.” A player was sent to a *Monopoly*-like jail by landing on the square or rolling an unlucky number on a mission trip. Once here, the player defended his/her case of excellent missionary work while the other players voted to pardon or punish. Unlike *Missionary Blues*, this game allowed all missionaries to be in a role of power, rather than only those with appointed, gendered titles.

This move away from specific missionary identification was a stark difference from the male-heavy imagery of Latter-day Saint games, a reflection of the different cultures surrounding missions that defined who was eligible or likely to serve. Most of the Latter-day Saint games were produced years after President Spencer W. Kimball’s 1981 address concerning the expectation that every male member should serve a mission.<sup>65</sup> As social and ecclesiastical pressure grew, so did the number of male missionaries serving. It became standard for

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63. Bruce Hammond, *How to Host the Greatest Mission in the World Party Game* (Missionary Novelty Company, 2008).

64. Sister missionaries made up about 20% of the mission field in 2008. Clint Kimball, “New Missionaries Breakdown.”

65. Spencer W. Kimball, “President Kimball Speaks Out on Being a Missionary,” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, May 1981, accessed March 2019, <https://www.Latter-day Saint.org/study/new-era/1981/05/president-kimball-speaks-out-on-being-a-missionary?lang=eng>.

nineteen-year-old males to venture forth to proselytize, deeply influencing public notion of what defined a missionary. Missionary depictions remained largely unchanged over time. Although later games tried to break the white male mold, the image was inescapable. Popular conceptions of missionaries continued to promote an unchanging standard, even as the mission field grew more diverse. Nonwhite female missionaries were not depicted anywhere, and little attention was given to any ethnicity outside the few token black males.

Because Protestant missionaries often included young husbands and wives as well as a large number of single female missionaries, the term did not become as synonymous with the male gender. The Protestant versions therefore did not include gender as a major part of the games. Condensing missions into 30–90-minute amusements revealed the limitations of popular understandings of missionaries. Board games reflected the social pressures and expectations surrounding missionary service, caught up in a default construction of the modern missionary.

## Cannibals as Converts: The Missionary's Audience

Game boards carefully created specific depictions of the kinds of people missionaries would come in contact with. Yet, regardless of production date or religious background, board games emphasized common themes of a cultural, religious, and/or ethnic other. The way converts were included by each game revealed a great deal about the religious cultural attitudes.

The few mission-themed board games preceding the 1980s upsurge clearly outlined who the converts were, echoes of common societal discrimination. The nineteenth century game *Pope and Pagan* provided examples of non-Christian peoples, including “A Hindoo woman.” An etching on the board portrayed the sati ritual, emphasizing the exotic, barbaric, pagan, and ritualistic nature of the racial, and specifically noted, religious other. This echoed many popular New England images that portrayed Hinduism as “bloody, violent, superstitious, and backward” in need of Christianity’s light and order.<sup>66</sup> This paganized conception of converts was echoed in another game created in the early twentieth century. Produced by the Embossing Company of New York, *Missionary*

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66. Michael J. Altman, *Heathen, Hindoo, Hindu: American Representations of India, 1721–1893* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 30.

*Puzzle* intentionally aligned with the company's motto "toys that teach."<sup>67</sup> The game advertised five puzzle games in one, but only one game has a name, "Missionaries and Cannibals." The game was merely a mathematical puzzle, moving all pieces across an imagined river without leaving a solitary missionary alone with a cannibal at any time.<sup>68</sup> These small cubes had no resemblance to any human figure, whether missionary or cannibal, and there is little reason for such theming to be applied. This fantastical, exotic vision of the people that missionaries interacted with was evident in a simple, rebranded logic puzzle. It feeds into heavy-handed, rhetorical explanations of superstition and inhumane cultural practices in depicting a missionary's "heathen" audience. For "toys that teach," *Missionary Puzzle* certainly promoted a specific understanding about the missionary experience and their converts.

While games from post-1980 were not so blatant about heathenism, they continued to tap into a history of hierarchical divisions of power and importance. The 1992 Protestant board game *Missionary Conquest* emphasized religious and cultural differences from all around the world. The categorizations of people include Muslims, Buddhists, Catholic monks, Communists, Atheists, Hindus, Romani ("gypsies"), children, taxi drivers, civil servants, college students, Jews, refugees, alcoholics, cult members, ship builders, businessmen, old men, bus drivers, herdsmen, soldiers, Indians, local tribesmen, and construction workers. Muslims tended to appear the most frequently, both as opposition and converts. As the Persian Gulf War ended a year prior to the game's publishing, it comes as no surprise that the Middle East would be of particular interest to the game makers.

The Middle East stood out in the game thanks to the presence of martyrdom. Protestant missionary board games frequently referenced martyrdom. *Pope and Pagan* used names of well-known Protestant martyrs and allowed the Missionary Player to make necessary sacrifices to win the game. This reflected the deep

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67. "The Embossing Company," *Old Wood Toys*, Accessed March 2019, [http://www.oldwoodtoys.com/the\\_embossing\\_company.htm](http://www.oldwoodtoys.com/the_embossing_company.htm). See also Richard Gottlieb, "Toy Companies That No Longer Exist: 'The Embossing Company of Albany,'" *Global Toy News*, November 20, 2017, <https://www.globaltoynews.com/2017/11/educational-toys-a-look-back.html>. The company began in 1870 by John Wesley Hyatt, specializing in wooden toys and later shifting to plastics. *Missionary Puzzle*, (Albany NY: Embossing Company). It would have been made before the Halsam Products Co. purchased the company in 1955, see Gottlieb.

68. In fact, a version involving husbands and wives existed a thousand centuries before the 1800s iteration of missionaries and cannibals appeared. See Ian Pressman and David Singmaster, "'The Jealous Husbands' and 'The Missionaries and Cannibals,'" *The Mathematical Gazette* 73 no. 464 (1989): 81.

convictions surrounding martyrdom. Protestant missionaries viewed it as a constant threat from all barbaric others that also sanctified missions for further gospel spread. *Missionary Conquest* highlights martyrdom as a region-specific incident. Players could only be martyred in Iran, Iraq or Saudi Arabia, which would put them out of the game. However, being martyred also resulted in 150 points, so if a player had already declared “Missionary Conquest!” before the start of the turn, those points could propel him/her into winning.<sup>69</sup> In *Missionary Conquest*, martyrdom was a strategic element of gameplay, but a somewhat rare occurrence. It would only happen if a player went to a Middle Eastern country and rolled the right number. This reflected a change in the understanding of martyrs in the twentieth century. Martyrdom was portrayed as a calculated gamble with serious risks—the threat was real, but highly unlikely. While the number of real-life martyrdoms officially recognized by leadership decreased over time, the tradition of revering martyrs and telling their stories endured.<sup>70</sup> *Missionary Conquest* reflected the retreat from a common, generalized heathenism to a specific political enemy, a shift seen in cultural attitudes of Protestants in the twentieth century. Yet rather than being a game entirely focused on converting the Middle East, the game looks to missionary work on a global scale.

While the cards depicted quite the spread of religions, occupations, and ages, they emphasized conversion numbers and reduced identity to a few characteristics. In some cases, only a specific number of people “won for Christ” were mentioned. These converts were a means to an end of getting Blessing Points. The goal of “converting,” “winning,” “accepting” and “saving” people was very much rooted in the rhetoric of ABCFM Annual Reports. Even as mission reports worked to expand home congregations’ understanding of the larger Protestant world, many stereotypes and misconceptions persist, as seen in this household amusement.

*Missionary Conquest* was emblematic of another trend found in ABCFM reports. During the mid-twentieth century, the concept of Protestant foreign missions shifted from specific, select countries to a worldwide, increased humanitarian focus instead.<sup>71</sup> This is again a drastic change from previous Protestant

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69. *Missionary Conquest* instruction manual.

70. One of the more recent popularized (and controversial) martyrdoms is that of John Chau. See Eliza Griswold, “John Chau’s Death on North Sentinel Island Roils the Missionary World,” *The New Yorker*, last modified December 8, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/on-religion/john-chaus-death-roils-the-missionary-world>.

71. William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 175.

definitions of “heathenism,” as seen in *Pope and Pagan* and *Missionaries and Cannibals*.<sup>72</sup> The humanitarian aspects of missions appear in *Missionary Conquest* as players could build wells, construct schools, give money to the poor, smuggle in vaccines, and support orphanages. Attempts to improve impoverished countries were a part of real missions. This was especially true after 1910, as more missionaries became interested in the “worldly priorities of the social gospel,” in providing temporal goods, infrastructure, and education.<sup>73</sup> Eighty years of increasing the amount of humanitarian work evidently impacted the reimagining of a mission as a board game. Yet, working to help people’s temporal well-being sometimes fell secondary to other missionary efforts in the game.

In *Missionary Conquest*, the highest singular point value (second only to martyrdom) was rewarded for being expelled out of a country for political activism. Mission trip actions included protesting governments by speaking out against communism and condemning foreign leadership in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Indonesia. There were also a few instances where opposing abortion in places such as Poland and America provided those sought-after Blessing Points. Ironically, players achieved the most Blessing Points when forced to leave rather than staying to convert or strengthen a mission.

This move to celebrate political activism mirrored real-life Protestant missions. In the 1980s, Protestant mission leaders noticed a shift from “Bible-thumpers” to “Peace Corps types” among missionaries.<sup>74</sup> These missions were framed with very Protestant American ideals and politics in place. Condemning Communism and abortions superseded denouncing the devil. As Protestant and Evangelical votes became primary targets in late twentieth-century presidential campaigns, politics were stretched to become gospel truths. According to *Missionary Conquest*, subverting the government to further Protestant politics was more important than reconciling and converting.

However, not all political action was deemed positive. Often, players could get in trouble with local authorities for various misdeeds, costing Blessing Points. Even though much of the possible Mission trip action comes from an Americanized

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72. Protestants believed heathenism was deeply connected to concepts of civilization, and unless “profound changes” occurred, pagan audiences would always remain unconverted and uncivilized. See Emily Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2015), 210.

73. Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad*, 9.

74. William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 203–4.

stance, there were examples where acting like Americans was embarrassing or negative.<sup>75</sup> Acknowledging some faults in the American psyche was a break from the pattern established by previous missionary-themed board games.

For this Protestant game, the conscious construction of identity was more important. With increased education and global awareness, the recognition of the proud American mindset was clearly represented in this 1992 game. It reflected the complicated division of varying levels of support for Middle Eastern involvement. This self-awareness derived from continued efforts of intentionally creating “alliances with nonwhite, colonized people,” or otherwise being “more globally conscious” over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>76</sup> In 1930, the ABCFM encouraged, “our new attitude . . . is not one of assumed superiority but of sharing and cooperation . . . an eager welcoming of all the riches of truth and beauty they (of other lands) may bring to our total human heritage.”<sup>77</sup> Inclusive rhetoric began to appear in limited ways in *Missionary Conquest*, but promoting Christianity over other religions and customs would still ultimately win the day. Disregard for religious groups and laws by bringing in illegal bibles, or preaching without a license were grounds for reward, not punishment. By the late twentieth century, the relationship between the missionary and the foreign other changed from fighting foes to teaching converts, although traces of superiority and exoticism remained.

The hierarchical relationship between missionary and foreign convert also appeared in the Latter-day Saint games of the same period. Converts were a main feature for half of the Latter-day Saint games, where having the highest number of believers constituted a win. Yet most of these games did not go into detail about who the converts were. The missionary’s audience was a generic, unknown, blank slate, purposeless prior to a gospel invitation. This apparent lack of awareness of other cultures and peoples was a problematic issue that persists in Latter-day Saint attitudes to the present.<sup>78</sup> Converts were nameless, vague forms that were a means to an end. Latter-day Saint missions in real life

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75. Playing the “obnoxious,” “spoiled” American, such as refusing to accept hospitality or aid from a religious or ethnic other or being culturally insensitive will lose Blessing Points. (Even though a great deal of the game is insensitive and stereotypical). Examples include telling a rather lame joke to aborigines in Australia, “berat[ing] a tribal chief for not accepting Christ” in Mali, or singing the “Star-Spangled Banner” in a Middle Eastern airport.

76. Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad*, 1.

77. ABCFM Annual Reporting Minutes, (1930), 20.

78. *Decolonizing Mormonism: Approaching a Postcolonial Zion*, edited by Gina Colvin and Joanna Brooks, (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press), 2018.

were often reduced down to the number of individuals converted. While this was not something explicitly instructed by leadership, it was and persists to be a common social belief among lay members. Most of the Latter-day Saint games of this period reflected the mix of religious identity with a societal influence. They were based in a societal conceptualization of what a mission and converts should look like.

However, there were some exceptions to the lack of convert identity in Latter-day Saint board games, yet they stayed rooted in focusing on what the convert lacked. In *Missionary Zeal*, contacts included a name, lifestyle description, and any anticipated issues in accepting the gospel.<sup>79</sup> These cards spanned a wide range of religions, occupations, and habits. Yet, the overwhelming dominance of American names implied that the “mission” was in the United States. These converts were not foreign because of their nationality, but rather because of their religion, attitude, and lifestyle choices.

In the game, players helped convert their contacts by playing cards such as “Needs of Love,” “Inspiration,” “Gospel Knowledge,” and “Member Friendship.”<sup>80</sup> If these cards were not played in a timely manner, the convert was lost. This placed missionaries in a specific timeframe for success, something that did not change in the 1995 reissue. Again, the Latter-day Saint concept of missions being set for a specific amount of time played a key role in the design of the game. The unconverted had a limited window to become baptized, but providing love, inspiration, information, and friends are all that were required for true conversion.

Part of this generic conversion formula came from the lack of proselytizing programs, as the first universal teaching pamphlet *Missionary Guide* was not published by the Latter-day Saint Church until 1988. It did not have a big enough impact to radically alter the redesign of the game seven years later.<sup>81</sup> Without standard practices across missions, understanding what it meant to preach and convert could vary drastically across locations. That did not stop

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79. The examples range from a sixty-year-old Protestant widow, to a forty-four-year-old Jehovah's witness, to a twenty-six year-old Born Again Christian. Problems preventing conversion include resisting the ban on coffee, tea, and alcohol, having depression and suicidal tendencies, reading anti-Mormon literature, struggling to leave one's original religion, and having concerns about women's roles in the church.

80. Players can only go along specific pathways to pick up these cards by means of an Obedience Card. These cards also bring Unexpected Blessings or Trials as well.

81. Benjamin Hyrum White, “The History of *Preach My Gospel*,” *Religious Studies Educator* 14, no. 1 (2013), accessed April 2019, <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/volume-14-number-1-2013/history-preach-my-gospel>.

*Missionary Zeal* and *The Missionary Game* from striving to impose uniformity on mission experience and individual conversion. It worked to define a specific concept of conversion by depicting converts with problems and missionaries with answers.

Mission-themed board games provided a fairly consistent view of converts across Latter-day Saint and Protestant backgrounds. While breaking away from the extreme rhetoric of the subhuman, exotic, base nature of nonwhite pagans to a somewhat more respectful approach to cultural differences, converts continued to serve as the wandering, confused, and lost other. As games reduced identity to religion or occupation, converts could not escape their cultural confines. Stereotypes and presumptuous phrasing dominated the games. This created an almost voyeuristic display of cultures, a global aisle of curios for tourists. Even for the converts presumably residing in the United States, the hierarchical relationship of missionaries and their converts was clearly established. While missions and missionaries could have created positive change and growth, too often the presumptuous attitudes appeared to prevail, a reflection of cultural attitudes brought from home.

## Conclusion

Mission games were often targeted at families to encourage discussions about missions and future participation. In some ways, these games sought to normalize missions by repeating stereotypical tropes with common words, images, and symbols. They emphasized an aggressive expansion of missionary work into the world and zeroed in on conceptions of missionaries and converts. The focus of a global stage and descriptions of missionary experiences were readily found in the various games as well as in formal missionary reports and casual dialogues.

Cultural dialogues directly informed mission-themed games for both religions. Protestant mission reports were released in annual publications. They detailed the locations, programs, and experiences of various missionaries in countries around the world. Mission reports were an essential part of Protestant mission livelihoods, in raising money and awareness. The ABCFM specifically published annual reports about foreign, typically nonwhite missions. They provided details about different operations, positive stories from stationed missionaries, and information about hindrances to missionary work.<sup>82</sup> Prayer calendars

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82. See ABCFM Annual Reports from 1929–1939.

included descriptions of specific missionaries or projects that laypersons could pray for on each day of the year. The consistent output of information brought missions to the forefront of Protestant communities. Reports were divided into global regions, gave missionary families detailed attention, and emphasized stories of progress and humanitarian aid. They also noted instances of government opposition or international politics disrupting missionary goals. Mission reports clearly influenced popular understandings of how missions operated.

Missionary reports were also commonplace within Latter-day Saint Church culture. After returning from their assigned mission, missionaries reported to their local congregation about their experiences. Stories of converts and success permeated “homecoming talks” and missions were often posited as the hardest but best months of their lives. However, Latter-day Saint board game makers were usually returned missionaries themselves, and did not have to rely solely on public conversations to create a recognizable mission game. Many referred to their own missions as the background for inspiration. Yet, even as the specific objects or copied formats differed, the same clichés and themes appeared in all. Instead of representing their own distinct mission experiences, they created an amalgamation of typical missionary tropes to encapsulate a common perception of missionaries.

Cultural attitudes were deeply entrenched in the very manufacturing of a rather insignificant pastime. Something as innocuous as a board game could encapsulate so much of what leadership and congregations promoted. By transforming standard concepts into a game, complete with rules, strategy, chance, and objectives, popular notions of spreading the gospel became tied with subconscious national politics in the appearance of militaristic rhetoric. Social attitudes that usually defaulted to a tradition of whiteness and xenophobia became increasingly apparent in the depictions of missionaries and converts. The production of board games revealed inner workings of a complex religious identity, one that was inseparable from political and social movements and changes. Historical treatments of the past often pigeonhole individuals into categories of gender, race, religion, and politics, sometimes as inseparable and distinct parts of a whole. However, these board games emphasized the blending of a series of identities that are complicated. A single religious affiliation does not stand as an isolated aspect of one’s self but is conflated with political and social identities as well. This rings true as these board games represent the mix of religion and economic identities as well.

The United States religious landscape is often regarded as a marketplace. With the disestablishment of state religion, expansion of capitalism, and

development of a middle class, religiosity has become increasingly commodified. Churches enter a competitive fray against one another and other cultural distractions.<sup>83</sup> Mission-themed board games are yet another product of religious commercialization. By exploiting proselyting endeavors into profitable merchandise, board game makers capitalize on a niche market. Beyond any justifications of promoting missionary efforts, they must make games marketable, attractive, and appealing to make sales. Particularly as these games are targeted toward a Church member audience, the intentions are not to convert, but rather to add another consumerist product to the market. This is further emphasized in the amount of print-at-home-for-purchase games available on blogs and Latter-day Saint nonofficial resource websites. While historian Laurence R. Moore explained that the commercialization of religion does not necessarily “make it peanut butter,” the desire to manufacture fun through religious rebranding echoes larger ways in which individuals understand religion and culture.<sup>84</sup> Although board games became increasingly synonymous with secular, capitalist amusements, this did not stop many from creating an “-opoly” version of their own faith. Similarly, transforming missions into competitive, global conquests based on preexisting games reveals the inseparable nature of culture’s influence in religious practices and products.

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83. Laurence R. Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

84. Moore, *Selling God*, 145.



## Double Mint and Double Standard

### American Attitudes toward Women Chewing Gum, 1880–1930

Brooke Sutton

*“Look at that woman’s mouth. She’s a chewing gum fiend,” said an observant man. [The] woman’s mouth certainly was large and lop-sided, lips were thick, and skin was purplish. At the corners of the mouth were ugly wrinkles. It was a mouth that nobody would care to kiss, not even in the dark.*

—*Los Angeles Times*, 1895<sup>1</sup>

**D**ESPITE ITS POPULARITY, THE AMERICAN PRESS IN THE LATE 1800S called chewing gum a loathsome habit, expressing broad social attitudes. A Pennsylvania reporter argued that gum chewers could be found at any time and any place; the church and the den of vice, the parlor and the hovel, the schoolroom and the opera. Users included society belles, street walkers, and all grades in between. “This habit . . . finds willing devotees everywhere.”<sup>2</sup> The *New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune* represented the opinions of those exposed to the largest amount of gum consumers; Chicago and New York City chewed the most gum in the entire world.<sup>3</sup> The *Chicago*

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1. “Gum Chewing: the habit said to injure the appearance of the mouth,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 26, 1895, *ProQuest*.

2. Kerry Seagrave, *Chewing Gum in America, 1850–1920: The Rise of An Industry* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2015), 68.

3. Seagrave, *Chewing Gum in America*, 85.

*Tribune*, in 1888, reported gum to be a necessity of life while comparing it to an infection.<sup>4</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* described a much smaller population on the other side of the country also plagued by the gum mania. A man speaking from Oakland, California in 1890 said, “There is a gum craze on, and you’d be surprised at the amount of the stuff chewed in this city.” Brooklyn manufacturers reported that children first loved chewing gum, then women embraced the “enticing cud.”<sup>5</sup> Oddly, chewing gum reached all levels of society while being considered the nasty habit of women and children.

However, by World War I, the public embraced gum chewing as an American habit. It no longer held the banner of disgust due to male athletes, soldiers, and sailors enjoying the confection. Gum held little place on the printed page and articles were usually positive. The habit of chewing gum did not change its nature in order to be acceptable to Americans, but rather changed its consumer from women to men. The evolution of public thought about gum at the turn of the twentieth century reflected a contemptuous attitude toward women more than an abhorrence of chewing gum.

## Historiography

Kerry Segrave compiled a comprehensive study of chewing gum—*Chewing Gum in America, 1850–1920: the rise of an industry*. It covered its birth as well as its business potential.<sup>6</sup> While the book reported the condemnation of gum-chewing women, the unfairness of the situation, and the change in public opinion once the habit was not uniquely feminine; Segrave did not propose that the attitude towards gum, before World War I, was actually a reflection of American sentiments about women rather than any prejudice against gum.

The women’s suffrage movement and the antisuffrage movement in America gained steam at the same time newspapers berated women who chewed gum. *The Concise History of Woman Suffrage: Selections from the Classic Work of Stanton, Anthony, Gage, and Harper*, offered a complete history of the Women’s Suffrage Movement. One of the selections used in this publication was *Preceding Causes*; written in 1881 by Matilda Joslyn Gage. In the text, she placed

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4. “Gum-Chewing the Rage: The Peanut and Banana Men Left in the Shade,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*. September 23, 1888, *ProQuest*.

5. Segrave, *Chewing Gum in America*, 68.

6. Segrave, *Chewing Gum in America*, 51.

the nineteenth-century women's movement within a larger historical context spanning centuries. Among other issues, she recognized the double standard between men and women. She criticized Guizot, another historian, for failure to recognize the caste system that existed everywhere; the caste of sex which created a "diverse code of morals for men and women."<sup>7</sup> Anne M. Benjamin wrote *A History of the Anti-Suffrage Movement in the United States from 1895 to 1920*. She detailed the antisuffrage movement from the Referendum of 1895 to the passage of equal suffrage in 1920.<sup>8</sup> Is it a coincidence that the antisuffrage movement lasted from 1895 to 1920; the height and reversal of chewing gum animosity? Just as equal suffrage was passed, gum transformed from a negative female vice to an encouraged American pastime. While this connection deserved more research, this paper instead focused on the social contempt of women who chewed gum rather than the women's movement.

## The History of Chewing Gum and its Consumer

Chewing gum appeared early in the new republic and first attracted children. In 1848, John Curtis produced it commercially in Bangor, Maine from the sap of a Spruce tree. In 1869, the famous Santa Anna offered a chunk of the "treasure of Mexico," a dirt-like substance made from the sap of the Naseberry tree, to Thomas Adams. After attempting to make rubber, Adams produced a marketable chewing gum still in stores today.<sup>9</sup> Later that landmark year, Dr. William Semple, a dentist from Mount Vernon, Ohio received the first patent for chewing gum. His gum consisted of rubber dissolved in naphtha and alcohol; flavored with licorice. Although intended as a dentifrice, children delighted in chewing gum. An anonymous American rhyme sang, "The gum-chewing kid and the cud-chewing cow are somewhat alike, yet different somehow. And what is the difference? I think I know now—it's the clear thoughtful look, on the face of the cow." The American public disparaged the practice; naming gum

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7. Mari Jo and Paul Buhle, *The Concise History of Woman Suffrage: Selections from the Classic Work of Stanton, Anthony, Gage, and Harper* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 52.

8. Anne M. Benjamin, *A History of the Anti-Suffrage Movement in the United States from 1895 to 1920: Women against Equality* (Lampeter, Dyfed, Wales: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 1–18.

9. Cyril B. Kanterman, D.D.S., "Something to Chew On," *Tic* 45, no. 2 (1986): 1.

an offense against society to chew it in public and too silly to do it in private.<sup>10</sup> The public considered it to be not only childish, but repugnant.

Despite social censorship, gum continued to grow into a powerful industry and became very popular with women. In 1897, the *Los Angeles Times* reported on the largest chewing gum factory in the world, located in Cleveland, Ohio. The owner started his factory in the basement of a building. He began a poor man with 100 dollars to invest; his wife his sole assistant. After ten years, the company had manufactured 50,900 miles of gum; 13.5 miles sold each day. The enterprise made six brands of gum and its owner a millionaire.<sup>11</sup> Brooklyn manufacturers reported that children first loved chewing gum, then women embraced the “enticing cud.”<sup>12</sup> The use of bovine metaphors when describing the habit proved society’s disgust with it and those that used it. William Wrigley also profited from this unsuitable female commodity. He started selling his father’s soap at the age of 13. At age 29, he added free baking soda to his product-package to increase sales. Wrigley found consumers wanted baking soda more than soap, so he sold baking soda and threw in free gum to increase sales. Finding gum more popular than either soap or baking soda, he turned his attention to gum and marketed it heavily. By 1893, he had two brands; Wrigley’s Spearmint and Juicy Fruit. In 1908 Wrigley’s Spearmint topped \$1 million.<sup>13</sup>

By 1900, opinions began changing about gum. An advertisement by the Adams Chewing Gum Company found its home on the walls of the New York Theater. It pronounced gum as the ideal habit of the lively. The author of “The Chewing Gum Drama” in *Comedians All*, George Jean Nathan, remarked that since ads were placed where they would most impress, the New York Theater audience must not complain about the advertisement. His conclusion: the audience believed Dr. Beeman was greater than Beethoven.<sup>14</sup> Although a bit disparaging, Nathan did not single out women in his critique; proof that the habit was gaining acceptance by upper class society and was not uniquely feminine.

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10. Lisbeth A. Cloys, B.S., D.D.S., Arden G. Christen, D.D.S., M.S.D., and Joan A. Christen, B.G.S., M.S., “The Development and History of Chewing Gum,” *Bulletin of the History of Dentistry* 40, no. 2 (1992): 58–60.

11. Todd E. Pleasant, “How Chewing Gum is Made,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 1987, *ProQuest*.

12. Seagrave, *Chewing Gum in America*, 81.

13. Patrick Perry, “Chew on This!” *Saturday Evening Post Weekly Newsletter*, January 18, 2016, <https://www.saturdayeveningpost.com>.

14. George Jean Nathan, “The Chewing Gum Drama,” in *Comedians All* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1919), 196.

By 1916, Dr. Frank Crane extolled the warrants of gum and those that chewed it. He believed that gum chewing belonged to one class of people—the alert. Crane referred to gum in glowing terms for male professionals: soldiers, baseball players, engineers, sailors, farm hands, steel workers, automobile racers, golfers, tennis players, and marathon runners.<sup>15</sup>

Other countries resisted the gum craze, and although it became uniquely American, it maintained the stain of taboo for women. An article in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, in 1917, professed that few things were as vulgar as chewing gum in public. “A woman may retire to her home and indulge, but her secret should be dark and hidden. She does not want to be an example to young people.”<sup>16</sup> Even as the author, Elisabeth Rensselaer, affirmed that chewing gum was distinctly American, she directed these negative comments to women. By this time, men regularly used gum without censure.

Gum consumption rapidly increased and sales exceeded former years. In 1920, Chicle disclosed that consumers in the United States spent \$100 million on chewing gum that year.<sup>17</sup> By 1927, each man, woman, and child in the United States consumed 105 sticks of gum every year.<sup>18</sup>

## Chewing Gum—A Feminine Habit

Professor Charles Norton, of Harvard University, wrote an article in 1897 that harshly spoke out against gum and women. It tied the female gender to the habit and revealed the popular opinion of women at that time. The *Los Angeles Times* reported his conclusions as of the highest importance to scientists and social reformers. Norton declared that, “Chewing gum has such a large sale because young women have not risen far above barbarism.” Furthermore, he considered the habit inherently evil; existing despite our great civilization.<sup>19</sup> Norton’s article blamed the profitability of gum solely on young women and their insufficient character and evil natures. The intellectual and spiritual community concurred. In their opinion, the popularity of gum may not have been

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15. Seagrave, *Chewing Gum in America*, 143.

16. Elizabeth Van Rensselaer, “Etiquette,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 8, 1917, *ProQuest*.

17. Seagrave, *Chewing Gum in America*, 73, 75, 90.

18. “American chewing gum has taken hold abroad,” *New York Times*, June 15, 1930, *ProQuest*.

19. “Why Girls Chew Gum,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 16, 1897, *ProQuest*.

a respector of class, but it surely was of gender. While newspapers disparaged women on a regular basis for chewing gum, men were exempt from scrutiny. They simply were not singled out; thus, the numbers of men who may have participated in the habit could not be discerned.

Whether intentionally demeaning or not, gum companies associated chewing gum with women. The *Chicago Tribune* described an advertisement for gum inside a museum. A beautiful, blond woman in a rich evening gown of white satin sat inside the museum on a raised platform. She dressed her hair in the latest fashion. With an air of delicate breeding, she was perfect in her shapeliness and beautiful face. A poster behind her declared that she only chewed one particular brand of gum. Indeed, she sat on her platform and chewed gum tirelessly for twelve full hours. The article's title was: "A Chewing Gum Freak." Surely, the gum company wanted to identify their gum with female sophistication and beauty, but the printed word failed to recognize it. The paper claimed she was a freak on display; put there to engender speculation at the odd sight.<sup>20</sup>

Newspapers negatively referenced the female, gum-chewing population. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported the winner of a gum contest. The woman won because she moved her jaws 6,000 times in 60 minutes; a wild guess made to humiliate the winner.<sup>21</sup> Another article in that same newspaper speculated that aristocratic girls enjoyed gum more than country girls. "They keep time with horse racers."<sup>22</sup> The only value these topics retained in taking up valuable newspaper space was sensationalism and humor at the expense of the female population. Gum was not only placed in relation to women, but always in an unflattering manner.

In addition to demeaning women, newspapers enjoyed detailing the injuries gum caused to their beauty. In 1897, an article in the *Chicago Tribune* warned readers that chewing gum caused wrinkles at the corners of the mouth. Tutti-frutti girls (sexually provocative in attire) especially were to take warning.<sup>23</sup> This not only intimated that gum ruined beauty, it also associated gum-chewers with feminine immorality. Another article warned of the ugly results; the discolored, engorged lips, and stupid gasping expression of gum chewers. The lips twitched and the chewer acquired a sullen, discontented expression. "They might with less

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20. "A Chewing Gum Freak," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 26, 1888, *ProQuest*.

21. "A gum chewing contest," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 16, 1886, *ProQuest*.

22. "The increase in Chewing Gum," *Chicago Tribune*, June 9, 1888, *ProQuest*.

23. "Chewing Gum Causes Wrinkles," *Chicago Tribune*, July 22, 1897, *ProQuest*.

danger to health and beauty, use tobacco.”<sup>24</sup> The article referenced women negatively, elevated tobacco, and intimated that any discerning person would draw these conclusions. The public failed to acknowledge nasty habits engaged in by men, like chewing tobacco, that diminished their appearance—the puckering of the mouth as they spit; the bulbous tongue constantly tucking the chew into the lip; the spittle collecting in the wrinkles of the mouth; the flakes of tobacco accumulating between rotten teeth; or the red, inflamed gums of the tobacco freak. The public considered chewing gum a destructive habit of women while chewing tobacco remained an acceptable masculine pastime.

## Double Standard

From 1880 to 1920, newspaper articles concerning gum illustrated that Americans held women to a higher standard than men. The *Iowa State Reporter* warned that if chewing gum was a necessity for the comfort or pleasure of a woman, it should be done in the home. A Colorado Springs newspaper allowed that men chewed tobacco in public, practicing it so long, it was not objectionable. “But it does not create the painful surprise nor utter disgust that comes over one upon seeing an apparently refined bit of femininity chewing away like mad, for all the world to see as though she were a cow.”<sup>25</sup> In society’s view, masticating was an exhibition of vulgarity for women, but completely acceptable for men,

This double standard was openly discussed by men. The owner of Nasby’s Bazaar, a social club for men, defended women who chewed gum. He acknowledged that it was not very dignified, but wondered what vice a girl could have that wouldn’t be criticized, “. . . they can’t chew tobacco, smoke or drink whisky, and I say if they can derive any pleasure from chewing gum let them enjoy it.” His companions disagreed. In particular, they believed it was a disgusting and unattractive habit for women; unladylike and undignified.<sup>26</sup> Baseball fans, largely men, purchased large quantities of gum in the grandstands. They conceded it was not for indigestion, but for the habit. Men badgered and humiliated women for being addicted to gum even as they laughingly admitted their own dependence.<sup>27</sup>

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24. “Gum Chewing: the habit said to injure the appearance of the mouth,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 26, 1895, *ProQuest*.

25. Seagrave, *Chewing Gum in America*, 101.

26. Seagrave, *Chewing Gum in America*, 83.

27. Seagrave, *Chewing Gum in America*, 86.

Women also shamed women for enjoying gum. The President of the Women's Christian Temperance Union deplored the increased use of chewing gum among young ladies. No mention was made of the male consumption of gum or other masculine habits like chewing tobacco. The topic ranked high for the temperance association and was addressed at their first annual session.<sup>28</sup> Of all the habits disparaged by the temperance movement, gum-chewing among young ladies warranted first place on their agenda.

## Tobacco—Masculine and Acceptable

While society associated women with bovine metaphors, newspapers extolled men who chewed tobacco. In 1899, the *Chicago Tribune* interviewed a nostalgic man. He recalled that in the middle of the century everyone chewed tobacco. Men's cabins in ferryboats were almost impassable due to the amount of tobacco spit on the floor. At the theater, women had to sit with raised skirts and men did not place their hats under the seats because of the river of expectorant that flowed under them. "Anyone can look back thirty years—everyone chewed . . . Then, boys wanted to be manly so they chewed . . . The chewer was a good solid citizen; not light-headed or flighty. A pretty decent fellow given to solid thought."<sup>29</sup> He did not vilify the tobacco chewer but remembered him fondly while describing disgusting conditions.

Articles focusing on tobacco chew remained neutral or positive even when those articles reported a ban on tobacco. Shortly before 1900, a crusade began against spitting tobacco juice in public places. New York acquired an ordinance against spitting on the floor of public buildings, ferryboats, and street cars. Men were astonished and indignant. The police apprehended two men in the act. Once inside the courtroom, the defendants noticed court officers frequently spitting on the floor.<sup>30</sup> The article did not castigate men for this practice but reported the event with a bias against the ordinance; trying to prove the injustice of the law. Oddly, the same issue propelling government to act against tobacco could have been used against gum; both habits had unsanitary practices that spread disease. While government used legislation to curtail the use of tobacco in public places, society employed bogus scare tactics to gain conformity instead of addressing real problems.

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28. "Chewing Gum Too!" *New York Times*, June 8, 1888, *ProQuest*.

29. "Tobacco Chewers Passing Away," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 5, 1899, *ProQuest*.

30. "Crusade Against Spitting," *New York Times*, April 12, 1900, *ProQuest*.

## Wasted Newspaper Space, Wasted Opportunity

News articles used outrageous health claims to deter the population from chewing gum. The *Chicago Tribune* reported a girl suffering from facial paralysis and nerve deterioration due to her habit.<sup>31</sup> The *New York Times* announced that chewing gum caused appendicitis.<sup>32</sup> Two years later, the *New York Times* proclaimed that chewing gum was more dangerous to children than Italian ice cream.<sup>33</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* believed a woman died in her sleep as a result of swallowing a piece of gum; she did not choke, but died a month later from the shock of violently expelling it.<sup>34</sup> An article in the *Dental Herald* noted that chewing gum excited the whole glandular system and diverted attention away from clearly established uses. “The human being is not a ruminant—a cud chewer. One class of animals cannot adopt the natural habits of another without suffering from so doing.”<sup>35</sup> Science did not produce these ridiculous opinions. Newspapers carried them for entertainment and sensationalism, but only while chewing gum remained a female habit.

Before 1900, newspapers forfeited valuable editorial space about issues of gum disposal and the spread of disease. Americans chewed the same piece of gum for months on end to save money. They stored it on their bedpost at night. During the day, they placed it under counter tops, tables, and chairs for use later. A journalist in Salt Lake City wrote of a soda fountain where the “chewing gum girls” hang out. The soda jerk revealed copious wads of gum under every counter, table, and chair. “I’ve seen girls come in here a day or two after leaving their gum, and happening to think about it, reach under the counter and slip it in their mouths before going out. Of course, they might get some other girl’s gum.” This did not cause great concern because it was common to trade gum with others. A boy in California contracted diphtheria from trading wads of gum with a buddy that already had the disease.<sup>36</sup> These cases should have been foremost in print instead of focusing on the bad manners and ruined beauty of women; proving negativity to gum was more about the person consuming the gum.

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31. “Paralyzed by Chewing gum,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 31, 2019, *ProQuest*.

32. “Chewing Gum Causes Appendicitis,” *New York Times*, April 19, 1896, *ProQuest*.

33. “Against American Chewing Gum,” *New York Times*, September 11, 1898, *ProQuest*.

34. “Chewing Gum Kills Woman,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 30, 1910, *ProQuest*.

35. “Gum Chewing is Injurious,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 15, 1887, *ProQuest*.

36. Seagrave, *Chewing Gum in America*, 173, 175.

## A Change in Attitude towards Chewing Gum

Men decreased their use of chewing tobacco when public institutions began prohibiting it. In 1898, Boston University banned it from the law school and the front steps.<sup>37</sup> In 1906, the University of Nebraska outlawed chewing tobacco from campus.<sup>38</sup> The Methodist Protestant General Conference adopted an amendment prohibiting the use of any kind of tobacco for candidates of the ministry.<sup>39</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, the United States Engineer Corps threatened two soldiers with a court martial for spitting tobacco juice on a lake used for skating. The Corps also harvested ice from this lake and after a lot of expectorant, the ice resembled chocolate.<sup>40</sup> To overcome the chewing tobacco habit, men needed a cleaner alternative.

Chewing gum became not only a more sanitary choice, but a healthier one as well. Due to stomach upset that occurred when tobacco juice was swallowed, doctors suggested men decrease their tobacco use.<sup>41</sup> The *Chicago Tribune* declared that a southern congressman learned from his doctor that excessive use of chewing tobacco was bad for his health. The doctor suggested he chew gum one day and chew tobacco the next. Other congressmen tried this method and found success.<sup>42</sup> “As queer as it may be, a great many of those who buy [gum] are men. Why do they get it? They buy it to break themselves of habits.”<sup>43</sup> The *New York Times* featured an article in 1904 declaring that men buy gum as freely as women to assuage their craving for tobacco and also just for the pleasure of chewing.<sup>44</sup> The public gave men a pass for this odd (feminine) pastime, because they were breaking a habit. Only a few years earlier, gum was considered a terrible addiction for women.<sup>45</sup>

Around the same time, articles promoted the healthful effects of gum on athletes. In 1916, the *New York Times* disclosed that gum promoted greater stamina

37. “Prohibits Tobacco Chewing: Chesapeake and Ohio Road’s Efforts to Keep Stations and Cars Cleaner,” *New York Times*, December 21, 1898, *ProQuest*.

38. “Open War on Tobacco Users,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 27, 1906, *ProQuest*; “Must Give Up Tobacco or their Studies,” *New York Times*, *ProQuest*.

39. “Ministers must give up tobacco,” *New York Times*, May 25, 1900, *ProQuest*.

40. “Soldiers Chewing Tobacco by Rule,” *New York Times*, January 3, 1895, *ProQuest*.

41. “Tobacco Chewing Decreases,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 19, 1888, *ProQuest*.

42. “Gum one day, tobacco the next,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 3, 1896, *ProQuest*.

43. Seagrave, *Chewing Gum in America*, 87.

44. Seagrave, *Chewing Gum in America*, 86.

45. “Sought cure for gum chewing,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 14, 1900, *ProQuest*.

and speed for runners compared to better nutrition and rest. It also helped baseball players concentrate during games. Baseball pitcher, Christy Mathewson, stayed unperturbed during games due to his steady use of chewing gum.<sup>46</sup>

After World War I, prominent men spouted gum's importance in winning the war. Regarded as a luxury before the war, the Red Cross considered it a necessity after the war. The same gentlemen that considered gum vulgar before the war, now insisted on getting their share overseas. Two characteristics of the American soldier emblazoned themselves upon the French people; the cigarette and chewing gum. "The jaunty cigarette and the nervous habit of gum chewing is but surface indication of the highly strung and active American manhood."<sup>47</sup> At this point, gum suggested virile American manliness. Public opinion changed about chewing gum when men embraced it; transforming it into an American habit.

No longer considered obscene, gum's usefulness filled newspapers. These articles were as ridiculous as the negative ones published twenty years earlier. After the turn of the century, two separate articles credited gum with saving two little girls from rattlesnake bites. In both instances, gum distracted the snake so she could kill it.<sup>48</sup> A neurologist in Minnesota claimed it cured insane people.<sup>49</sup> The number of absurd claims denouncing it before 1900 and a similar number promoting it after 1900 proved that the attitudes about gum had nothing to do with the integrity of the habit, but with the gender who enjoyed it.

Some opinions made sense. In 1912, department stores encouraged sales ladies to chew gum to promote sweet breath and bring in more customers with a better first impression.<sup>50</sup> Sadly, employers approved of chewing gum only to exploit their female employees. In 1929, Dr. Frank McCoy, author of *The Fast Way to Health*, said the moderate use of chewing gum stimulated secretions of saliva that cleansed the teeth. Chewing gum also helped fasting patients and made their breath nicer.<sup>51</sup> Ten years after World War I, doctors embraced gum's healthful effects. This had nothing to do with changes in scientific evidence or

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46. Seagrave, *Chewing Gum in America*, 141.

47. Seagrave, *Chewing Gum in America*, 92–96.

48. "Chewing Gum Saved Girl's Life" *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 1913, *ProQuest*; "Chewing Gum for Rattlesnakes," *Los Angeles Times*, September 30, 1909, *ProQuest*.

49. Seagrave, *Chewing Gum in America*, 136.

50. "Salesladies and Gum Chewing," *Los Angeles Times*, March 11, 1912, *ProQuest*.

51. Dr. Tom McCoy, "Health and Diet Advice," *Los Angeles Times*, November 2, 1929, *ProQuest*.

the manufacture of gum; it was a change in the perception of gum due to the gender of the person who consumed it.

## Conclusion

The evolution of public thought about gum, at the turn of the twentieth century, reflected a contemptuous attitude toward women more than an abhorrence of chewing gum. Before the 1900s, society considered gum-chewing primarily a feminine habit and so vulgar, it should be kept secret. At the same time, men spit rivers of tobacco juice in public buildings without censure. As legislation banned the use of tobacco in public buildings and men connected its use with poor health, they turned to gum. The military became dependent on the relaxing effects of gum-chewing, making it a masculine habit. No one denied the bravery of America's rugged soldiers and sailors. Gum chewing not only became ultra-male, but uniquely American and an acceptable public pastime for men. Sadly, society continued to excoriate women for partaking, not because the habit of chewing gum was vile, but because society did not respect women. Gum did not ruin the character of women; women had devalued gum. The character of gum did not change, but rather its consumer.

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