

# Education, Experience, and Exchange: The Hull House Women, an International Network, and Chicago's Immigrant Population

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This paper explores the creation and purpose of Chicago's Hull House. It provides an overview of volunteer work by women in the US and addresses the European influence on Jane Addams's idea for Hull House and the various educational aspects and approaches used by the Hull House educators.

Founded, funded, and administered by women, the Hull House settlement is shown as a prime example of the nascent spirit of American volunteerism that epitomized that era. Women were able to participate in the settlement because of the evolving perception of their role in society. It was possible to devote one's life to charity and not to marriage and child-raising. The force of the Hull House residents was to combine their individual skills and strengths to work as a united group of very dynamic and talented women. Education, experience, and exchange were the three pillars of their very successful settlement home. In their efforts to reform and better the living conditions in the rundown Chicago neighborhood, the Hull House women became involved in politics and policymaking. Thereby, they began to have a voice which became louder and louder and could not be silenced.

**Keywords:** international network, women, Hull House, immigrants, community service

The Hull House was a settlement founded in Chicago's 19<sup>th</sup> ward by social reformers and activists Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr in 1889. It was unique in that it was a service organization founded and run by women. The changing position of women in American society at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the interna-

tional connections these women had allowed them to profit from the experience of their European counterparts in applying new progressive methods of education and social work. Although Hull House was initially inspired by Toynbee Hall in London, it evolved differently because it was run by women and was also confronted with the needs of the newly arrived European immigrants in the United States. Most of the women working at Hull House were well educated and from affluent backgrounds; as such and because of the gradual acceptance of charity work as a viable career choice for women rather than marriage, they were able to dedicate their time and energy to helping others. Their efforts to better working and lodging conditions for families and women, in particular, naturally brought them into the political arena where they were able to make a difference on the local, national, and international levels.

The rapid industrialization of the Atlantic coast and the Midwest in the United States after the Civil War was accompanied by growing poverty and unemployment, uncontrolled urbanization, and an influx of European immigrants. From 1880 to 1890, the population of Chicago doubled. By 1890 Chicago had become the second largest city in the United States with a population of over one million, 40.5% of them foreign immigrants (Garza). The settlement movement, which began in the United States in 1886 when Stanton Coit founded the University Settlement in New York, was an attempt to confront the social problems created by the Industrial Revolution by helping the poor living in inner-city areas (Barry). It was a volunteer movement funded by private philanthropists, churches, and local educational institutions, which established settlement houses offering food and lodging as well as language and vocational courses to help those in need—both Americans and European immigrants. The English language courses allowed the foreign immigrants to develop communication skills. The vocational courses allowed them to find work. The clubs and social activities gave them access to American culture and a shared sense of belonging.

Hull House came at a time when volunteerism was becoming popular in the United States. The volunteer movement, which has since become such a part of American values and culture, began with the first volunteer firehouse founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1736. By the time Hull House was founded in 1889 the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) had already started in Boston in 1851, William and Catherine Booth had established the Salvation Army in 1865, the American Red Cross had opened its doors in 1881, and the United Way was organized in 1887 ("History of American Volunteering").

In “Volunteerism and US Civil Society,” Susan N. Dreyfus refers to the various volunteer organizations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and notes that:

In the 1800s, the rise of the social reform movement around issues like poverty, temperance, women’s rights, and the abolition of slavery mobilized a new generation that had not previously been involved in civic life, including women and young people.

The Hull House appeared at a very opportune time for volunteerism; its singularity was that it was founded by women. At that time in the United States, increasing numbers of women were obtaining university degrees. Many of them turned to volunteer work as a means to use their newly acquired knowledge and skills. As Christine Whittaker Sofge points out in her article “To Be of Use: Women of the Settlement House Movement:”

Noble causes—such as working to improve the lot of the disadvantaged—had acquired a romantic status. It became acceptable, and even noble, to pursue an altruistic career in place of the traditional romantic ideal of marriage and children. (23)

To serve others, to help the poor and disadvantaged, was a worthy cause, and it was possible and socially acceptable for women to do so as a career.

Various articles and books have been written about the Hull House settlement from different perspectives. Katheryn K. Skiar’s excellent 1995 biography *Florence Kelley and the Nation’s Work: The Rise of Women’s Political Culture, 1830–1900*, outlines the evolution of women’s rights activism in the United States during that period. Eleanor J. Stebner’s *The Women of the Hull House: A Study of Spirituality, Vocation, and Friendship* maintains that Hull House was a Christian venture and that the women volunteers attempted to serve the community in a Christian context. Mary Jo Deegan’s article, “W.E.B. Du Bois and the Women of Hull House,” comments on Du Bois’s theories of professional socialization and his interactions with the women sociologists of Hull House.

This short study proposes to concentrate on the women of Hull House from yet another perspective. It will demonstrate how the group of women residing in Hull House used their combined abilities and international networks in a unique way to help those around them who were less fortunate and in need. Unlike their predecessors and many of their contemporaries, the Hull House women rejected their traditional roles and strove to create a new place for women in the domestic, social, and political arenas. They reached out, not only in their own communities, but also across the Atlantic to their European counterparts to share and exchange their ever-evolving progressive ideas. Their specific form of community service—providing both cultural and vocational education, emphasizing the

importance of past experience and its link with the present, and encouraging exchange on personal, national, and international levels was unique. Their dedication and work in the settlement movement eventually led to their active involvement in local politics, then national politics, and finally international politics.

The story of Hull House is inseparable from that of Jane Addams, who was an activist, social reformer, and social worker. In her seminal book, *Twenty Years at Hull House*, she describes her early years and the events leading up to the founding of the establishment. Born into a wealthy Quaker family, she was taught that all people are equal regardless of their social position and education (1). She attended the Rockford Female Seminary and noted the missionary spirit of the institution, the desire to help others. With a group of classmates, she participated in the early efforts to give women access to a full college education (53–55). After receiving her degree from Rockford, Addams enrolled in the Women's Medical School of Philadelphia. Although she passed her exams, she was not really interested in medicine as a career. In 1893, after an operation on her back kept her bedridden for a number of months, she left for a two-year trip to Europe (Addams 65). In East London she witnessed the sale of rotten vegetables auctioned to the poor; in Saxe-Coburg she saw a group of women struggling under the weight of the wooden tanks on their backs as they carried hot beer to a cooling room for a brewery. On returning home, Addams reinforced her European experience by attending lectures at Johns Hopkins University by Rodolfo Lanciani of Rome and learning about the United Italy movement and Giuseppe Mazzini's theories on the working man (Addams 77). It was during her second trip to Europe in 1897 that Addams came up with the idea of Hull House. She attended a meeting of the London match girls, who were on strike, and visited England, France, Greece, Italy, Germany and Spain before returning to London to visit Toynbee Hall and the People's Palace; in so doing she found her real vocation (Addams 81–88).

When she returned to Illinois, Addams founded Hull House with Ellen Gates Starr, a good friend and classmate from Rockford. The settlement home was a large mansion originally built by Charles Jerald Hull, a wealthy real estate developer in Chicago. On his death Hull bequeathed the house to his niece, Helen Culver, who in turn granted the house to Addams and Starr with a 25-year free lease. By 1911, Hull House had developed into an expansive complex containing thirteen buildings that was to continue functioning in one form or another for over one hundred years until it was finally closed in January 2012 to become a museum (Schulte 212–13).

Most of the residents of Hull House were highly educated young women from affluent middle-class backgrounds. They shared a common desire for social reform and engagement with those living in less fortunate circumstances in the surrounding tenements. The Hull House settlement was distinct from other settlement houses because it was truly a women's venture. It was not only founded by women; it was also largely funded by women. It was thus independent and able to function without being subject to male domination. Louise de Koven Bowen, Mary Rozet Smith, and Helen Culver gave significant financial support to the institution (Bobick 5, 58). Addams should be credited for her foresight and sense of organization. She gathered around her a very dynamic group of professional women. Each had her own specialty, and Addams encouraged them to do what they did best. Some of these women founded the Jane Club, a cooperative living arrangement. In the conclusion to her article "The Jane Club of Hull House," published in *The American Journal of Nursing* in 1901, Eliza P. Whitcombe remarks that the singularity of the Jane Club was that the women living there all had very different interests and skills:

I think we have one advantage which a club for nurses or for any set of people of the same occupation can never have: that is, that we have all sorts and conditions of people, . . . I mean, people of all sorts and conditions of occupation. This must, I think, tend to broaden the interests, which, after all, is what makes for real living. (88)

The list of the many women who lived and/or gave their time to Hull House is long. All of them were dedicated to community service and gave their time and specific skills to help the less fortunate around them. Over time the settlement movement became more politicized, and many of the women who lived or had lived there were appointed or elected to important government positions where they were even more influential in their community service. Florence Kelley, a children's rights activist, helped Addams investigate the health conditions of the children living in the tenement houses (Bobick xi). Alzina Parsons Stevens worked with Kelley on regulation for child labor and went on to become the first probation officer of the Juvenile Court in Cook County and organize the Juvenile Protective Association (Addams 323–24). Dr. Alice Hamilton's research on disease linked to houseflies was instrumental in establishing new sanitation measures both at home and in the workplace (Addams 297–98). Mary McDowell used European models to work on reforming waste management in the city (Ryerson). Julia Lathrop was a public welfare worker (Addams 311). From 1908 to 1917, Grace Abbott lived at the Hull House where she became Director of the Immigrants' Protective League (Bobick 118).

In 1903 Mary Kenney, with the help of Addams and Kelley, was instrumental in the founding of the National Women's Trade Union League which helped working women defend their rights (Bobick 74). The fact that these women worked together as a group, sharing their individual skills and encouraging each other, was an important factor in the success of Hull House and one of the things that made it unique. Their economic independence allowed them to develop the settlement house according to their own ideas. They were able to capitalize on the newly acquired possibility for women to devote themselves to a life of service rather than one committed to marriage and raising a family, which until then had been nearly their sole possibility. During the Progressive Era, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, the traditional roles of women were in fact changing. The dedication of Hull House women to serving their community and their nation and their subsequent accomplishments were a result of this auspicious era as well as a sustaining force. Moreover, the fact that Hull House women were financially independent and could devote themselves to local, national, and international service set a precedent for other women to come.

## **Education**

For Addams and Starr, education was the key to helping European immigrants adapt to the American way of life. They turned to Europe for inspiration. At the time Hull House was founded, the Sloyd system, a system of handicraft-based education which had developed in Scandinavia, was introduced in the United States and became very popular. Melvin L. Barlow describes this new educational system in his article "The Vocational Education Age Emerges, 1876-1926." The Sloyd system aimed to instill a love of work and a respect for honest labor. It proposed to develop self-reliance, independence, and habits of order, exactness, and neatness. Finally, it proposed to cultivate manual dexterity (47-48). The importance of taking pride in one's work and active manual learning projects were also in line with John Dewey's principle of "learning by doing" (Bobick 58).

This new emphasis on manual labor contributed to the development of new trade schools and opened the subsequent debate about the value of apprenticeship versus in-class instruction. Addams and Gates were able to appreciate the importance of apprenticeships and manual labor as well as the necessity for in-class instruction. The combination allowed immigrants to complete their instruction with practical work while also gaining professional experience.

In his article, Barlow outlines the different educational trends at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the United States, a time when industrial employers started supporting industrial education. As early as 1872, the R. Hoe Company of New York encouraged their employees to attend night school twice a week. The subjects offered—English, mechanical drawing, arithmetic, geometry, and algebra—could afterwards be applied to their work in the company (49–50). The Hull House also opened evening classes to allow the people who worked to continue their instruction. However, Hull House offered more than just an industrial education. The philosophy of the establishment was to open the minds of the poor in the community. Courses were offered in art, music, and theater, and the residents could also attend a variety of lectures on different cultural topics. In her description of Hull House, Addams credited Starr with the development of arts in the settlement house:

Miss Starr always insisted that the arts should receive adequate recognition at Hull House and urged that one must always remember “the hungry individual soul which without art will have passed unsolaced and unfed, followed by other souls who lack the impulse his should have given.” (372)

Another new aspect in American education at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the development of home economics as a subject to be taken seriously. The New York College for Training Teachers was founded in 1888, one year before Hull House. This institution offered classes to teach “the household arts to children in the form of play” and to teach “the poor of the city how to sew” (Barlow 50). Addams and Starr were quick to follow this example. The Hull House curriculum was expanded to include courses in sewing and needlework that accorded new value to domestic chores as well as helped settlement residents develop new skills, which they could use as future workers in the garment industry.

Educational and social services, leisure activities, and group meetings were organized to help the less fortunate residents of the surrounding tenements. Assisted by Jenny Dow, Addams opened a kindergarten and day-care, enabling mothers to work outside the home (Polikoff 73). Boys’ and girls’ clubs were organized to keep children off the dirty city streets. A summer school for young girls was established on the campus of Rockford College. Health clinics were organized to give medical care to those in need. Hull House also facilitated the organization of women’s trade unions—the bookbinders, shoemakers, shirt-makers, and cloak-makers—by offering them rooms for meetings. What had started as an attempt to organize and facilitate life in the domestic sphere carried over into the public sphere. The skills used in sewing, cooking, and child-rearing not only gave more

time to women to indulge in other activities; they inspired ideas on how to make these same activities more productive in the public sector. Hence, the new trade unions and organized public meetings were a natural evolution of the accomplishments of these women dedicated to service.

## Experience

Hull House also gave new value to experience and cultural differences. The immigrants who attended classes at Hull House not only learned about American culture; they were encouraged to educate others concerning their own cultures. Greeks put on Greek plays, Italians held reading groups about Dante, Germans sang folksongs and had poetry readings, thus cross-culturally sharing their national literatures and histories (Addams 233, 389, 435). Hull House honored many of the national events and holidays of the immigrants' home countries. Garibaldi's birthday was celebrated, and Hellenic meetings were held with presentations by both Greek and English scholars. In *Twenty Years at Hull House*, Addams wrote of the importance of preserving the cultural heritage of immigrants:

One thing seemed clear in regard to entertaining immigrants; to preserve and keep whatever of value their past life contained and to bring them in contact with a better type of Americans. For several years, every Saturday evening the entire families of our Italian neighbors were our guests. These evenings were very popular during our first winters at Hull-House. Many educated Italians helped us, and the house became known as a place where Italians were welcome and where national holidays were observed. (232)

In the same chapter, Addams describes how her idea for the educational objective of Hull House and the Labor Museum came to her when she saw an old Italian woman spinning her yarn on a street corner.

It seemed to me that Hull-House ought to be able to devise some educational enterprise which should build a bridge between European and American experiences in such wise as to give them both more meaning and a sense of relation. I meditated that perhaps the power to see life as a whole is more needed in the immigrant quarter of a large city than anywhere else, and that the lack of this power is the most fruitful source of misunderstanding between European immigrants and their children, as it is between them and their American neighbors; and why should that chasm between fathers and sons, yawning at the feet of each generation, be made so unnecessarily cruel and impassable to these bewildered immigrants? (236)



Hull House became an institution that valued the experience of immigrants and helped them to keep and transmit their cultural heritage to future generations. Addams recognized the alienation of first-generation immigrants who were unable to adapt to a new country and a new language, and the growing problems of first-generation and second-generation immigrants who were no longer connected to their past. The Labor Museum was created to show that factories and industrialization were part of a process that would have been impossible without the traditional crafts of the past. For example, the old European spinning wheels had evolved over time in different countries, eventually leading to the technology that would be employed in America's weaving and clothing factories.

The women's clubs that had originally been founded to give lectures on American culture and art appreciation evolved into groups centered on social reform concerning child labor, establishing public libraries, and promoting housing regulations. The political and social reform movements addressed various needs such as waste disposal, sanitation, education, and housing, in addition to advocating for children's rights and women's rights. A common problem for many immigrants was that they could not take advantage of the education offered because their need to work and earn a living took precedence. Thus, the settlement was naturally drawn into the world of labor law, trying to encourage legislation to limit working hours for women and children and to create better working conditions. The art lovers who had originally been attracted by the lectures and presentations on paintings, decoration, and culture found themselves gradually involved in discussions impacting other social spheres. Education at Hull House not only served to instruct members of the working class but also raised social awareness in the middle and upper classes of what life was like for the less well off.

## Exchange

In 1891, Dorothea Moore published an article titled "A Day at Hull House" in *The American Journal of Sociology*. In her description of the institution, she stresses that it was not just a place to receive help; it was also a place of exchange:

Hull House stands not so much for a solution of problems as a place of exchange. The demands which are brought to it are varied enough. One man wants to be "shown the sense of poetry," another wants his wife "converted to the evangelical religion" for the sake of a peaceful fireside, and a third wants just the patrol wagon. One mother leaves her baby "while she goes to the matinee," and another hopes to find her boy, arrested she knows not where, for what, or by whom. Often the effort put forth in return is unwise or inadequate, but the exchange is the vital thing. This is the heart of the movement. (640)

In the early days of Hull House, a large variety of entertainment was organized by well-off women volunteers. The numerous social clubs offered first and second-generation immigrants opportunities to meet and to develop and enjoy common interests. The English novelist and historian Sir Walter Besant compared this aspect of Hull House to London's People's Palace where art and cultural activities were available to all (365). An article written by Nora Marks and published in *The Chicago Tribune* on May 19, 1890 describes a typical week at Hull House. Mondays were dedicated to a young women's club and lectures on French and Italian culture. On Tuesdays the Schoolboys Club met and borrowed books from the circulating library, while a girls' cooking class worked in the kitchen. Wednesday evenings were reserved for a Workingmen's Discussion Club with debates on strikes, labor unions, working hours, and child labor. Thursday evenings were more heterogeneous with a doctor talking to women on physiology, hygiene, and raising children, at the same time a cooking class and a German evening were taking place. To complete the offering, the Schoolgirls' Club met on Friday afternoons to sew, embroider, cook, and take their turn at borrowing library books. In the evening the working girls came for a lecture or concert. Finally, on Saturdays, various forms of entertainment, such as plays, concerts, or traditional celebrations, were offered (1-2). This wide variety of events offered to many different groups testifies to a well thought out program designed to include all the different nationalities, age groups, and interests in Hull House activities. From erudite lectures to traditional handicrafts, all aspects of learning and social interaction were equally valued.

Ten years later on October 26, 1899, an article titled "Fete Day at Hull House" appeared in *The Chicago Tribune* to celebrate the Ten-Year Anniversary of Hull House. The settlement was still a place of exchange, and there were even more participants from different places of origin. Immigrants from China, Holland, Germany, Belgium, France, Greece, Poland, Russia, Scotland, Spain, Mexico, Italy, Lithuania, Bohemia, and Sweden came to participate in the clubs, entertainment, lectures, and classes. By that time there were more than 47 educational classes.

The interests of Hull House social reformers were not limited to collaboration within the United States. Addams's initial visit to Toynbee Hall continued to influence her conception of Hull House. Similar to its English counterpart, art and art appreciation were very important at Hull House. There was an art gallery in the first building erected there with the intention of making art exhibits

available to everyone. Art, like music, surpasses national boundaries and language barriers. Addams also realized that the efforts of the Hull House women to reform United States labor legislation could only be reinforced by their association with labor reform efforts in Europe.

The residents in the Chicago Settlements became pioneer members in the American branch of the International League for Labor Legislation, because their neighborhood experiences had made them only too conscious of the dire need for protective legislation. In such a league, with its ardent members in every industrial nation of Europe, with its encouraging reports of the abolition of all night work for women in six European nations, with its careful observations on the results of employer's liability legislation and protection of machinery, one becomes identified with a movement of world-wide significance and manifold manifestation (230).

These constant exchanges and comparisons with their European counterparts were beneficial to settlement houses on both sides of the Atlantic. Florence Kelley analyzed the United States labor situation and sent her findings for publication in *Archiv*, a German journal of social legislation and statistics (Sklar et al. 21). In 1912, President Taft signed the Children's Bureau Bill and named Julia Lathrop to head the federal agency. Lathrop analyzed the infant death rate by comparing it to those of other countries. Katherine Madgett explains that after establishing that six nations were more successful than the United States at keeping infants alive for their first year, and that the United States' maternal death rate was the worst amongst civilized nations, Lathrop had Mary Mills West write a series of pamphlets on prenatal and infant care.

In 1895, Addams returned to Europe where she visited Tolstoy and exchanged with Germans, British, and Americans in a remote Russian village. In England she admired the advances of the London County Council's efforts to better London by creating improved housing for the poor and technical schools for bricklayers and plumbers. She noted that they were in advance of Chicago by a decade and a half. She remarked in her memories of Hull House that when the warden of Toynbee and his wife visited Chicago on their way home from a trip around the world, they were shocked at the lack of government regulations concerning settlement houses. Other European visitors confirmed this lack of political concern and city regulations that was so surprising in a growing industrial city. When John Burns, the well-known English trade unionist and politician, made a second visit to Chicago, thirteen years after the first, he was bewildered by the lack of progress that had been made and the slowness of the Chicago political machine in such a dynamic era (294-95).

In her seminal article, "The Process of Social Transformation," Addams analyzed what she also realized was an inadequate response of the United States to the many changes brought on by industrialization. For her the great energy public-spirited citizens put into the abolition of slavery during and right after the Civil War had left little time to handle the rising political and commercial corruption created by the same war. By 1890, with slavery behind them, people could turn to the necessity for social and political reform. Addams criticized the attitude of native-born Americans to immigrants, whose population was steadily rising because of the need for both skilled and unskilled labor. In a voluntary effort to encourage inclusion, Addams compared the attitudes of the immigrants to that of the pioneer spirit during the western expansion. They were individualistic, trying to find a place for themselves in a new society. The settlements were committed to education, and this education was two-way. The volunteer residents of Hull House had as much to learn from the immigrants as did the immigrants from the residents. Addams believed that this sharing of mutual experiences would allow the immigrants to accept American ideals and ideas:

The early settlements practically staked their future upon an identification with the alien, and considered his interpretation their main business. We stuck to this at all cost, for we believed that America could be best understood by the immigrants through a connection with their past history. We extolled free association and the discussion of common problems as the basis of self-government, and constantly instanced the New England town meeting. We especially urged upon the immigrant that he talk out his preconceived theories and untoward experiences, believing that widespread discussion might gradually rid him of old compulsions and inhibitions. (244)

This excerpt suggests that the purpose of exchanging ideas with the immigrants was in fact a well-meaning attempt to Americanize them. Addams maintained that the immigrants had "preconceived theories and untoward experiences" but did not consider that perhaps the Americans did too. To her credit, Addams did realize that not all aspects of the influence of the Americanization of immigrants were positive. She noted with dismay that some of the older Slavic immigrants had fallen prey to American materialism to the depreciation of their own culture.

The early immigrants had been so stirred by the opportunity to own real estate, an appeal perhaps to the Slavic land hunger, and their energies had become so completely absorbed in money-making that all other interests had apparently dropped away. (*Twenty Years*, 234)

She was very certain about how offering an education to immigrants and teaching them English would “Americanize” them and help them to adapt to their new country. She saw this as a necessity. To belong to a culture, one must blend into it. For Addams this was another form of service provided to the immigrants, and consequently to the nation as a whole. Although the idea of how important it is to express oneself in English has come under criticism in recent years, it was not questioned at the time. Addams wanted the immigrants to share their experiences in English, not in their native languages. She and the other Hull House residents were extremely critical of the bilingual parochial schools in Chicago. She was doing her best to facilitate life for the immigrants. She relates an interesting anecdote in *Twenty Years at Hull House* revealing the difficulties and contradictions arising from this effort. Although the meals offered at the Coffee House were healthy and nutritious, they were criticized by many of the immigrants who obviously did not appreciate American cuisine as much as that of their native countries. For Addams there was no question as to the superiority of American cuisine; she did not consider for a moment that the cuisine of other countries might be as healthy and nutritious as its American counterpart (130–31). This at times condescending attitude in regard to some foreigners also appears in Addams’s description of the first Italian evenings organized at Hull House.

They come to us with their petty lawsuits, sad relics of the vendetta, with their incorrigible boys, with their hospital cases, with their aspirations for American clothes, and with their needs for an interpreter. (232)

The references to “vendettas” and “incorrigible boys” suggest that negative Italian stereotypes were not entirely overcome at Hull House. Although Addams did fall prey to reproducing some of the stereotypes of her era, she also realized the irony of certain insults made by Americans being negative only because they referred to the foreign nationality or origin of the offended person: “The Greeks are filled with amazed rage when their very name is flung at them in an opprobrious epithet” (255).

To conclude, the Hull House was an institution that greatly benefited from the new popularity of volunteerism at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; its singularity and its strength were that it was created and run by women dedicated to community service. The growing number of women with university degrees and the acceptance of volunteer service as a viable career choice allowed these women to use their newly acquired skills and knowledge to dedicate their time and energy to serving the less fortunate around them. Reaching out across the Atlantic to their European counterparts, the women at Hull House took advantage of the new

trends in vocational education at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and added to them the notion of a more well-rounded cultural education. Their unique concepts of education, experience, and exchange were used to facilitate the lives of foreign immigrants in the American society. A great variety of courses and clubs were designed to help immigrants navigate in their new country. Jane Addams and the other residents worked together to better the living conditions in the run-down tenements of Chicago's 19<sup>th</sup> district. These exchanges with the immigrants and with their European contacts were instrumental in formulating and passing new regulations and legislation concerning labor laws for men, women, and children. They worked to create a future without forgetting the past, constructing bridges across the Atlantic, across generations, and across cultures.

The notion of *service* at Hull House was manifold. The settlement was a community service that in the surrounding tenements helped immigrants and those in difficult financial situations. Inspired by the innovative educational philosophy in Europe, they combined it with American educational methodology to create vocational courses and apprenticeships tailored to their local population. Language courses were given to facilitate the lives of the immigrants and offer them the possibility to join the work force in their new country. The women volunteering at Hull House were given the possibility to use their skills to make a difference in American society. Their union was their force and gave them considerable political weight which they used for social and educational reform. The frequent exchanges with settlement homes elsewhere in the United States and in Europe, and their adamant desire to encourage the inclusion of all immigrants in American society reinforced their potential to help others—which is exactly what they did.

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