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Earnest women: The white woman's club movement in Progressive era Texas, 1880–1920

Seaholm, Megan, Ph.D.

Rice University, 1988

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RICE UNIVERSITY

EARNEST WOMEN: THE WHITE WOMAN'S CLUB MOVEMENT
IN PROGRESSIVE ERA TEXAS, 1880-1920

by

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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1988
Abstract

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by

Megan Seaholm

In the late nineteenth century the lives of many white middle- and upper-class women were transformed by the woman's club movement. The club movement became the crucible in which the ideology of "true womanhood" was infused with new content, relevance, and meaningfulness for non-wage-earning women in modern America. As a significant, but largely unchronicled, aspect of both the turn-of-the-century "woman's movement" and the early-twentieth-century Progressive movement, the work and the experience of club women constitute an important aspect of the history of American women, the history of Progressive Era reform, and the cultural history of the United States.

White middle- and upper-class women in Texas were enthusiastic participants in this movement beginning with the creation of self-culture clubs in the 1880s and 1890s and continuing into the twentieth century with a dynamic, elaborately organized, and reform-oriented union of clubs, the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs. Texas club women energetically committed themselves to the reclamation of their communities convinced that womanly values were
crucial for enlightened progress.

At the municipal, state, and national level, white Texas club women were among the most ardent of Progressive Era reformers. Texas club women maximized their resources of leisure time and class status to compensate for their political disabilities. These resources enabled club women to initiate projects that they would later become public responsibilities. The prodigious activity of the state federation emerged from an unarticulated quartet of political strategies: the Politics of Righteousness, the Politics of Enthusiasm, the Politics of Harmony, and the Politics of Influence.

In their study clubs Texas women found a space for reflection upon the essential and instrumental aspects of womanhood. In their club work they created new opportunities for their talents and gained new recognition for their accomplishments. Most important, as white club women altered the geography of woman's sphere, they rehearsed a significantly modified model of womanhood. They created a new norm—that of professional volunteer—for subsequent generations of non-wage-earning women.
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My first acknowledgement must be to the two women who introduced me to the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century white women’s club movement. I met Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Linda D. Vance at a conference on women’s history hosted by Texas Woman’s University in 1983. Dr. Fox-Genovese, whose scholarship in women’s history—and especially on theoretical and methodological issues—has been an extremely important contribution to the field, encouraged me to investigate the Texas club movement as a dissertation topic. She later provided critical guidance as I began formulating my conceptual hypotheses and research plans. Dr. Vance presented the results of her preliminary research regarding the accomplishments of white Texas club women at the TWU conference. With no plans to pursue the history of the club movement in Texas, she generously provided me with suggestions and advice. She has since published a biography of an early-twentieth-century
Florida club woman: May Mann Jennings: Florida’s Gentle Activist (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1985). I have not always followed the advice of Fox-Genovese or Vance, but they introduced me to a fascinating area of study and helped me discover important issues at an early stage in my work.

Once I had settled upon a topic, my dissertation committee provided valuable guidance and criticism. John B. Boles, dissertation director, consistently amazed me with his unflagging enthusiasm, his expert editorial skills, and his bibliographic sophistication. Thomas L. Haskell, my tutor and mentor through my first years of graduate study in history, was a careful reader who challenged me to sharpen my analysis of the club women and their work. Elizabeth Long, sociologist and colleague in feminist studies, helped me explore and develop certain arguments. All three were magnificently patient with me. Understanding the vicissitudes of life and work and parenthood, they allowed me to set my own deadlines and were generous and reassuring when I never met a single one.

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Introduction

On October 13, 1905, Saimah McCaulley Bell addressed the Hesperian Club of Colorado City, Texas, at the first meeting of their fifteenth year. As the newly elected president, she reflected on the accomplishments of her club and on the progress of the women's club movement:

Fourteen years ago clubdom had not advanced and inhabited the many places it does today. Even fourteen years ago woman's sphere was not nearly so broad as it is at the present time. We have but to glance backward at the history of women to see the progress she has made. Ages ago she was a slave: today nothing in the universe stands higher than woman whose influence is unlimited. 1

Following this note of pride and optimism she welcomed new members to the club and informed them that the purpose of the club, simple and complete, was "the perfecting of ourselves and the happiness of others." 2

The Hesperian Club was not unique in Texas, for by 1905 almost 200 clubs including over 5,000 white women existed all over the state and had joined their efforts in a state federation. 3 Club mottoes suggest the determined character of these sororial organizations. The Cum Concilio Club of Nacogdoches in East Texas proclaimed a slogan consistent with its name: "A purpose is the eternal condition of success." 4 The Sorosis Club of Sweetwater had as its motto: "What others have done, we can do," 5 and the
Denton Woman's Shakespeare Club inspired its members with "Step by step, we gain the heights." The Woman's Club of Waco, in central Texas, held to the simple admonition, "If we rest, we rust."  

From the 1880s white women in Texas like white women in other southern states responded to the national contagion known then as now as the women's club movement. When Saimah Bell addressed her west Texas group of nineteen in 1905, the total membership in the General Federation of Women's Clubs—the national umbrella organization—was 500,000. The club movement grew rapidly in the late nineteen and early twentieth century and its growth in numbers paralleled its expansion from literary or "self-culture" clubs to clubs that entered the public sphere for philanthropic, civic, and political work.

Though largely unknown to Americans less than a century later—despite the continued existence of many of these clubs and their state and national federations—the women's clubs movement was widely acknowledged, with praise and ridicule, by contemporaries. Club news was a standard feature in many daily newspapers, and national publications from Harper's Bazaar to The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science commented on the new and growing phenomenon. In 1915 Mary Ritter Beard, ever the champion of female achievement, noted the accomplishments of women's clubs in her book, Women's Work
in the Municipalities. Hailed as no less than a "renaissance" by more than one contemporary commentator, the women's club movement is a hallmark in the history of American women, American culture, and American reform movements. With the exception of David Thelan in his book The New Citizenship: Origins of Progressivism in Wisconsin, 1885-1900, the women's club movement is rarely mentioned by historians of the Progressive Era.

The club movement, as well as the spate of women's organizational activities in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century, has received some attention by historians of women. William O'Neill's 1969 book on the history of American feminism includes club women in his discussion of "social feminists"—women who, while not necessarily avowed feminists, converged upon the public sphere to pursue an agenda of social reform. While noting the value of club work to individual women as an "antidote to boredom" and conceding the possibility that club women may have had a hand in certain reform victories like the Pure Food and Drug Act, O'Neill assesses the growth of the General Federation of Women's Clubs as having "stemmed from the sheer pleasure women derived from bureaucratic minutiae." A year later, in 1970, Anne Firor Scott gave a more sanguine perspective to women's clubs in her now classic book The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics.
Scott claims that women's clubs in the South, organizing in the 1880s, were "a bold, even a radical departure." Her discussion highlights the role of women's clubs as a vehicle for female participation in the public sphere: "a training school for women who wanted to serve in public life." In later works, Scott discusses the solid achievements of women's clubs in the South.

Sheila Rothman, Lois Banner, and Margaret Gibbons Wilson have all written on American women in the modern period and have noted the work of women's clubs. Rothman cites the "female fellowship" engendered by these clubs and concurs with the assessment of Charlotte Perkins Gilman that the club movement was "one of the most important sociological phenomena of the century--indeed of all centuries, marking as it does the first timid steps toward social organization of those long unsocialized members of our race." Wilson discusses the club movement as a late-nineteenth-century urban phenomenon; concerns about the urban environment and changes in the material circumstances of middle-class white women were the impetus for club work. Banner gives a brief chronicle of the reform efforts of white women's clubs, calling particular attention to their influence in the creation of juvenile courts and the passage of the federal Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906. Banner also describes the social service work of black women's clubs and their federation, the National
Association of Colored Women (NACW), formed in 1895. Gerda Lerner, in one of the few published monographs on black club women, called attention to the work of the NACW and particular local clubs such as the Neighborhood Union, organized in 1908 in Atlanta, Georgia.

William Chafe and Stanley Lemons also acknowledge the importance of the club work of white women. Chafe remarks that the astounding growth of the General Federation from 1890 to 1920 indicated the way in which Progressivism became a "vehicle" for the politicization of millions of middle-class women. Lemons discusses the role of the club movement in the women's reform coalition of the 1920s and concludes that this decade's social feminism was a significant antecedent to New Deal programs.

Several general histories of American women include discussions of the women's club movement. Mary Ryan observes that the turn-of-the-century club movement was part of a "rationalized organizational network that was nearly as sophisticated in its own way as the corporate business world." Nancy Woloch, in her recently published text, *Women and the American Experience*, devotes several pages to the club movement in her chapter on "The Rise of the New Woman." Woloch comments, as have previous historians, that the club movement provided middle-class women with a relatively non-threatening entrance to public
life: theirs was a genteel approach to reform that left domestic values in place and avoided the stigma assigned to more aggressive groups like the Women's Christian Temperance Union or the National American Woman Suffrage Association.\textsuperscript{25}

Karen J. Blair is the first among the new scholars of American women's history to devote an entire book to the women's club movement. In \textit{Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914}, published in 1980, she traces the history of the club movement from the voluntary associations of the early nineteenth century to the early work of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Blair uses the term "domestic feminism" to denote "the extension of women's domestically nurtured traits into the public sphere." For Blair, domestic feminism was a sort of "trojan horse" victory for women. She concludes her study with the assertion that club women "rendered obsolete the notion that 'woman's place is in the home,' and thereby made a significant contribution to women's struggle for autonomy."\textsuperscript{26}

The club movement of white women in Texas merits scholarly attention for several reasons. Until a few years ago, most of the work in women's history focused on northern or northeastern populations. Kathryn Kish Sklar, Barbara Welter, and Nancy Cott are among scholars who have provided keen insights and persuasive new interpretations.
Their explication of "woman's sphere" and the origins and significance of the "cult of domesticity" has illuminated our understanding of the lives of middle- and upper-class women in the nineteenth century. The ways in which these Victorian conceptions of womanhood both circumscribed and expanded female roles has been a dominant theme in the history of American women. Yet we are just beginning to test the fit of these interpretations with white women of the South. Julie Roy Jeffrey's important work Frontier Women established the significance of the "cult of domesticity" for women migrating westward in the mid-nineteenth century. Studies of women in the lower South and Southwest are needed to determine the geographic breadth and the longevity of Victorian ideologies for women in these regions.

As to the women's club movement in particular, it is essential that neither the work of the national federation nor the experience of the earliest and most reknown clubs be uncritically extrapolated to represent women's clubs everywhere. The congruence of the club movement in Texas with that in northeastern or mid-western states cannot be assumed. It is true that something like a national club culture did exist, but without close studies of specific states or localities, it is impossible to predicate either a shared culture or regional distinctiveness.
In addition to investigating the influence of the "cult of domesticity" and the ideal of "true womanhood" in other regions, their survival into the twentieth century must also be questioned. Before women's history became a discrete field of inquiry, it was popularly believed that the 1920s was the dividing line that marked the emergence of the modern woman. Of course, the "new woman" was identified by contemporaries as early as 1893, and the spectre of the "new woman" evoked both enthusiasm and alarm. The scope of woman's sphere was changing, but we do not know if the much publicized "new woman" had supplanted the "true woman" of the nineteenth century. We do not know the extent to which the cult of domesticity was transformed during the turn-of-the-century decades or what aspects of earlier notions of womanhood continued to have a following among middle-class white women. From the "new woman" of the 1890s to the "feminine mystique" of the 1950s, there is a growing field of scholarship about the changes in women's lives and the controversies these changes provided; but we still know relatively little about how scores of early-twentieth-century women, and club women in particular, viewed "the woman question" or whether "womanhood" was a category that demanded definition as it did in the previous century.

There exists in women's history the seductive potential to interpret female activity—and especially
organized activity--as a persistent "chafing at the bit" in
the move toward autonomy. It is of crucial importance,
however, that concepts such as "autonomy" or "woman's
status" be viewed in their proper historical context.
Saimah Bell of the aforementioned Hesperian Club considered
woman's emancipation complete though few second-wave
feminists would agree with her. A study of clubwomen in
Texas during this critical period provides many clues as to
whither the "cult of domesticity" in the lower South, what
transformation it may have sustained, and the meaning of
womanhood.

The place of club women in the history of Progressivism constitutes another compelling reason for
this study. Club women in Texas clearly believed that they
were among the vanguard of progressives in their state, and
they were undoubtedly a factor in the achievement of
certain reforms. The extent of their contribution should
be documented. Even more interesting, however, is the
question of how Texas club women--a disfranchised and only
recently organized group--were able to wield the influence
they did. It is also instructive to note the issues they
chose to address and those they avoided. That Texas club
women, by and large, focused on public welfare issues
rather than on business reform issues is not surprising,
but it is still open to additional interpretation.
Woven throughout the chapters in this history of white club women in Texas during the formative and early activist years of Texas clubdom are several arguments. The first and most obvious claim is that an extensive club movement of white women existed in Texas from the 1880s and thereafter. There are indications of regional distinctiveness, but the Texas movement was clearly connected to the contemporaneous national women's club culture. Second, the appearance and rapid proliferation of women's clubs is in large part explained by what club life offered individual women. While sustaining many aspects of the ideology of "true womanhood," the club movement challenged certain nineteenth century shibboleths regarding women's intellectual abilities: the need to shelter women from the world and the prevailing view of non-wage earning women as decorative, frail, and useless. The woman's club offered women a forum for their talents, a way to be "useful," a space to evaluate changing views of womanhood, and a platform from which to call attention to the value of woman's contribution in a rapidly changing society.

A third argument establishes white club women in Texas as a part of Texas and national Progressivism. Club women shared many progressive-era assumptions such as the value of organization and efficiency, and Texas club women were involved in many reform efforts. Also, while the motivations of these women can, in part, be explained by
Robert Wiebe's "new middle class" or Richard Hofstadter's "mugwumps," 33 club women had an additional motivation that transcended class. The work of club women to conserve and cultivate "culture" in a developing state, their work to improve Texas institutions, and their work to temper progress with a female hand invigorated the view of woman as guardian of civilization and, thus, sought to enhance women's status. There was a gender tradition to preserve status just as established elites or the rising middle-class struggled for position in a fading frontier.

The most important argument I shall make has to do with the way in which Texas club women were both traditional and progressive in their outlook and in their work. The club movement in Texas, like the club movement elsewhere, introduced women to the public sphere in new and significant ways. It also never wavered from promotion of woman's role as wife, mother, and homemaker. Attention to domestic science, child study, and home decoration aggrandized the profession of homemaking. As club women said themselves, club work did not erode, nor was it intended to erode, the distinction of the separate spheres. Rather, it moved woman's sphere into the world. The club movement in Texas did not redefine "true womanhood" so much as expand its perimeters. While extending woman's work into the public arena, the club movement in Texas
revitalized the ideology of "true womanhood." The German proverb and motto of the Tyler, Texas, Quid Nunc Club exemplifies the new sentiment: "Keep your eyes on the stars, but do not forget to light the household candles on the way."  

The expansion of woman's sphere from the home to include the public sphere does not mean that club women sought involvement in all areas of public life. Rather, certain aspects of public life or community work were claimed by club women because these activities were compatible with still widely held beliefs about gender-specific talents and abilities. The public woman's sphere that club women defined was still a "separate sphere." Club women exuberantly celebrated womanhood, but it was as the genteel activist rather than the suffragist that most club women entered public life. The large numbers of women involved in club work, the strategies used by club women, and the kind of projects they undertook established a new socially legitimate framework for women's work in the public sphere. Certain kinds of public activities became not only acceptable but normative. Woman was not only "angel of the house"; she was also the "angel of the world."

Club women demonstrated the value and effectiveness of women in the public sphere and thus created numerous opportunities for women outside the home. They effectively
buried the once prevalent view of woman as frail and ineffectual beyond the realm of hearth and home. At the same time, club women in Texas augmented women's responsibilities within the home. The legacy of the energetic club movement in Texas was the creation of a new norm, in behavior and ideology, for white non-wage-earning women. The development and legitimation of woman's public sphere established the volunteerism of the homemaker as a normative activity and helped create a new ideal of womanhood for white women in the twentieth century.

This analysis of the white women's club movement in Texas is presented in seven chapters. Chapters One and Two briefly review the historical developments from the early national period through the late-nineteenth century to explain the material and ideological contingencies that helped shape the lives of white middle- and upper-class women and that prepared the way for the development of women's voluntary associations and for "social feminism." Chapter Two goes on to discuss the specific origins of the club movement and its transformation into a national movement that encouraged reform and social amelioration.

In Chapter Three I turn my focus to Texas to chronicle the appearance, proliferation, and significance of white women's study clubs in the late-nineteenth century. These women's clubs soon became active in "municipal
housekeeping" and local community building. This transition and a description of these activities is presented in Chapter Four. Chapter Five widens the lens of this analysis to consider the organization, development, and work of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs. In this chapter I also evaluate the role and contribution of the Texas club movement in Progressive Era reform.

In Chapter Six I describe the strategies of the club movement in Texas: the politics of righteousness, enthusiasm, harmony, and influence. I conclude the study in Chapter Seven by stepping back from the specific contributions and strategies of the Texas club movement to analyze the conception of womanhood and woman's duty wrought by club women and the club movement's legacy to the twentieth century.

It is important to note that black women in Texas also organized women's clubs. These clubs were allied with the national black women's club movement and were responsible for significant developments in black communities. A truly comprehensive study of club women in Texas during the Progressive Era would, of course, include black women's clubs and would compare their concerns, achievements, and strategies with white women's clubs. Being unable to locate records of black women's clubs, I have limited by study to the club work of white women. This limitation is a reflection of a failure in research and of the necessity
to construe a topic narrowly enough to be manageable. The story of black club women in Texas will be an important contribution and awaits the efforts of committed and ambitious scholarship.

One last note of explanation is necessary in this introductory statement. Whenever possible, I have used the first names of married women instead of their husband's first names or initials, as in Saimah Bell. Most married Texas club women, however, identified themselves—or were so identified by others—by their husband's first, as well as last, names, as in Mrs. J.C. Terrell. Therefore, both forms of address are used.
Endnotes to Introduction

1 Saimah McCaulley Bell, "The President's Greeting," The Hesperian Club of Colorado City, Texas, 13 Oct. 1905, p. 3. Mrs. John W. Mooar Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas.

2 Bell, p. 5.

3 Texas Federation of Women's Clubs (hereafter TFWC), Yearbook, 1904-05, Austin American History Club Papers, Austin History Center, Austin, Texas.


6 The Woman's Shakespeare Club of Denton, Yearbook 1899-1900, The Woman's Shakespeare Club of Denton Papers, Special Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas.

7 The Waco Woman's Club, Yearbook 1897-98, Waco Woman's Club Papers, The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.


11 For example, Sarah S. Platt Decker, "Meaning of the Woman's Club Movement," The Annals, 199-204.


32Higham, "Reorientation."

Quid Nunc Club, *Yearbook 1904-05*, Smith County Historical Society, Tyler, Texas.
Chapter One

Woman's Sphere and Gender Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century America

"The true arena for woman's awakened intellect is, as we hold, at home, and in promoting the progressive improvement of her sex."

Sarah Josepha Hale, 1843¹

The emergence and role of secular women's clubs in late-nineteenth-century America is, of course, best explained by the social and material circumstances of middle- and upper-class white women in the nineteenth century. In order to provide such a context, one must discuss, however briefly and derivatively, several of the most enlightening and controversial topics in the recent scholarship in women's history. The female experience of the pre-Revolutionary past; the effect of the American Revolution and republicanism on white women; changes in women's economic, domestic, and familial functions; the development and elaboration of the ideology of separate male and female spheres and the cult of domesticity; changes in female education throughout the century; the appearance of female voluntary associations and eventually the woman's rights movement; the impact of westward migration; the experience of the Civil War and

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Reconstruction, and, most assuredly, the significance and extent of regional differences, will be considered in the following pages. The dramatic changes in nineteenth-century American society affected the experience of white middle- and upper-class women, and these women, in turn, effected profound changes in American culture and in American womanhood. American women responded and adapted to a changing cultural and physical environment. Just as important, they sometimes unwittingly and sometimes intentionally brought innovation to the social and cultural landscape.

The historiography of white women in the North American colonies is far from complete but has recently been enriched by persuasive revisionist scholarship. Colonial historian Mary Beth Norton has taken the lead in denouncing the "golden age theory," the dominant theme that has held sway since the 1920s in the history of American white women. According to this theory, which until recently has been the starting point for historians writing about white women in the nineteenth century, the colonial period represented a sort of "golden age" for white women in America. It was formerly believed that the relative scarcity of women in the colonies, especially the southern colonies, and the fact of their essential economic function within the families of subsistence farmers, provided white
colonial women with a measure of equality and status in the family and in society not shared by their nineteenth-century descendants. Industrialization, the theory holds, stripped women of their economic function as it removed household production to the factory. This loss precipitated a loss in status for women.³

The work of Norton and others has revealed the "golden age theory" as a myth. The economic contribution colonial women made to their families required almost endless physical labor: maintaining a household, caring for gardens and farm animals, making cloth and clothes. Added to this work was an almost constant cycle of child-bearing. Not only was woman's "economic function" significantly more arduous than the glib use of that term may imply, but there is no evidence that being a productive helpmate gained a woman anything resembling equality with her mate. Colonial society, in both the North and South, was thoroughly patriarchal, investing all authority in the male head of the household. Patriarchy had always been the norm in the North and became entrenched in the South along with slavery and the development of the plantation family.⁴ Sex roles were rigidly defined in the patriarchal family, and it was generally understood that adult women, like children, were inferior to men. It followed, of course, that women were subordinate to men, only slightly higher than children in the hierarchy of family and society. It is important to
note, however, that subordination does not connote the same things in all times to all peoples. In Puritan New England, subordination was considered to be a natural fact of life. Worldly subordination was rationalized as comparable to obedience to God and was, in turn, linked to salvation. The Puritan corporate view of society, moreover, validated the role of subordinate groups, such as women, and provided for certain rights and protections for subordinate groups. It is not known how wholeheartedly Puritan women embraced this situation. There was certainly evidence of insubordination, but one does not find the record of discontent that appears after the American Revolution.

Patriarchy was also reflected in the legal status of colonial women. Contrary to previously held beliefs, colonial law did not favor or enhance female economic independence. For example, the purpose of a widow's "dower right" was to save her from the necessity of public relief and was in no way intended to leave her as primary heir to her husband's estate. The same pattern is observed with religion, as the example of Anne Hutchinson and the various witch hysteria testify.

The colonial period was certainly not static, and there were significant changes in family structure, domestic manufacture, the law, and religion that affected women's
lives more than this brief account reveals. Some of these changes will be discussed later, as certain nineteenth-century developments are traced to their pre-Revolutionary roots. The point, for now, is that the once-believed declension from an egalitarian pre-industrial past before white women were banished to the Victorian hearth and home is a myth that obscures the reality of the colonial experience and the changes within that experience. Domesticity and maternity were the essential functions for white women in the colonies.

For the purposes of this study the first relevant turning point in the lives of white women in the colonies came with the American Revolution and the period of the early Republic. Linda Kerber has argued that the American Revolution had a profound impact on women. Women organized economic boycotts, petition campaigns, and even led mobs. During the fighting, patriotic and loyalist women were active: they worked to maintain their homes or farms, they served as nurses, they followed troops and helped with the care of soldiers, they did laundry and cooked. As is so often the case during war, white colonial women gained a new confidence that undermined traditional gender stereotypes. This engendered a new consciousness in women that was due not only to the exigencies of Revolutionary times but also to the egalitarian philosophy that supported the Revolutionary effort. It is no surprise that women
would find the new natural rights philosophy as infectious and attractive as men did, especially since women were aware of the important, if not directly political, contribution they had made. Inspired by the rhetoric of the American and French revolutions, a debate ensued over woman's political capacity.  

What truly distinguished the Revolutionary era from preceding decades was that Americans initiated a public dialogue on the subject of women and their public roles. In the colonies, women had been viewed as wholly domestic beings whose influence in the world was confined to their immediate families.... During and after the Revolution that topic aroused considerable public comment for the first time as Americans argued about such subjects as woman's basic nature, the proper aims and content of women's education, and the intellectual abilities of females.... The Revolutionary generations, therefore, became the first to define a public role for women.  

The result of this debate fell far short of the expectations of many Revolutionary-era women. The colonial emphasis on domesticity and maternity prevailed but was redefined and fraught with political import. A consensus developed around the notion that a mother committed to the service of her family and to the nation might serve a political or patriotic service: women would have no direct role in the public sphere or political arena, but women could raise virtuous republican children. The "Republican Mother," to use Linda Kerber's term, would guide her
children in the paths of morality and virtue. As Kerber explains,

The ideology of Republican Motherhood seemed to accomplish what the Enlightenment had not by identifying the intersection of the woman's private domain and polis. The notion that a mother can perform a political function represents the recognition that a citizen's political socialization takes place at an early age, that the family is a basic part of the system of political communication, and that patterns of family authority influenced the general political culture....

The ideology of Republican Motherhood had contradictory consequences for white women. On the one hand, it provided new recognition and value to women long enmeshed in maternity and domesticity. It recognized as virtue what had once seemed only a necessity. On the other hand, with the idealization of motherhood came a new psychological burden. The rearing of patriots to preserve the new nation could seem both an exhilarating and an ominous task. In any case, it would require special effort, much self-sacrifice, and most probably preparation or supervision. In fact, in this early republican period much of the agitation for female education was justified by the claim that education would make women better wives and mothers.

"Republican Motherhood" was the transitional ideology that connected the experiences and expectations of eighteenth-century white women with those of nineteenth-
century white women. In the nineteenth century the role and nature of woman would be idealized in the "cult of domesticity" or the "cult of true womanhood." Before discussing the evolution of this idea, however, one must discuss the material and social changes that fostered its development.

The situation of white women in the nineteenth century was quite different from that of their early-eighteenth-century forbears, and the transformation in the female roles was underway long before the impact of industrialization. In fact, the household remained the primary site of American manufacturing until 1820, and as late as 1850 predominately rural America was far from being a thoroughly industrialized land. It was the intrusion of the commercial economy into the previously self-sufficient household that "made possible a dissociation of home and work," hence "open[ing] a chasm between male and female spheres." Participation in the commercial economy or disruption by the commercial economy gradually transformed women's lives. As Mary Ryan explains,

The integral totality of woman's place in the little commonwealth had...been shattered. Between 1750 and 1820 the role of the mistress of the household splintered away, leaving little more than a core of private domestic responsibilities. This disintegration of woman's social role was further advanced in the uppermost regions of the American leisure class, among those southern
ladies and the wives of wealthy merchants who could devote themselves to displaying the wealth and status of their husbands. 11

The change in the lives of upper-class white women was not a change from a position of relative equality to one of submission, and domestic responsibilities in the home sphere were not new. But the scope and meaning of domestic responsibilities were changing.

As Ryan suggests, the situation of white women was far from monolithic. Since the present study focuses on club women who were, by and large, drawn from the middle and upper classes, the evolution of their situation has received more attention. It is important to note, however, that the developing commercial economy, and later industrialization, sharpened class differences among women. Gerda Lerner calls attention to the significant differences in the experience of middle-class and working-class women in the nineteenth century in her essay "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson." The image of the "lady" became the ideal that helped preserve the slave system in the South and class distinctions in the North. 12

Married middle- or upper-class women did not work outside the home but were supported by their husband's wages or farm income. This created the economic base for what has been termed the "cult of domesticity." 13 The commercial-industrializing economy did, however,
increasingly use the labor of women, primarily single women. By 1816 over half of the labor force in the United States cotton mills was female, and the largest occupation for women in the nineteenth century, outside their own homes, was domestic service.¹⁴ For wage-earning women the dissociation of home and work wrought by the economic changes of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could be seen as providing new economic opportunities and independence before marriage. For working-class women these new economic "opportunities" meant that they now had work outside the home as well as the traditional tasks of home maintenance and child-rearing. Not surprisingly, working-class married women left the labor force whenever possible. This was not only an escape from tiring wage labor and a rational response to the demands of one's situation, but it also revealed the pervasive influence of Victorian ideology about womanhood.¹⁵

Inextricably related to the changes in women's lives borne of economic transformations and dislocations were fundamental alternations in the American family that emerged between the American Revolution and about 1830. The modern American family was considerably smaller; there were fewer children and fewer older relatives residing with the family. This trend became more pronounced as the century progressed. There are numerous explanations for
this demographic transformation, including those of Daniel Scott Smith and Carl Degler that white married women enjoyed an increasing degree of autonomy within the family, but one undeniable consequence was that the family was more child-centered. Children were no longer perceived as little adults but rather as distinctly children, with special affective and instructional needs. The other major change in the American family was the changed role of women. Women remained legally, politically, and socially inferior to their husbands, but woman’s domestic role in the family elevated motherhood and homemaking. Rooted in "Republican Motherhood," woman’s role in the family took on almost beatific dimensions. She became the moral guardian of the household. This new domestic role has been described by historians as "the cult of domesticity" or the "cult of true womanhood."

* * *

One of the major efforts of historians of U. S. women has been to describe and understand the status of women, woman’s place in society, and the meaning of womanhood—especially in American’s Victorian period. The ideology of the cult of domesticity is presently the central nineteenth-century definition of womanhood and woman’s sphere. As an ideology prescribed for and even by white middle- and upper-class New England women, its reflection
in these women's lives is still an open question. And if one cannot be sure of the actual practice of this ideology among that class of women, the affect or practice of the ideology among women of different classes or races or geographic regions is an even larger question. Still, there is evidence that the cult of domesticity was a prescriptive ideology that took on normative status.

The cult of domesticity was a popular ideology professed in advice books and magazines in the late eighteenth century through the nineteenth century. As an ideology, it was not made of whole cloth—that is, it was not a purely fanciful invention of any single individual or group. It developed both as a reflection of reality and as a prescription for reality. Historian Barbara Harris defines the cult of domesticity as a blend of four ideas: rigid distinction between the home and the economic world outside homologous to a sharp contrast between the female and male natures, the designation of the private home as woman's only proper sphere, the moral superiority of women, and the idealization of motherhood. By 1850 this set of ideas was the accepted outline for behavior among the middle classes and all others who aspired to respectability. It defined an "ideal type" and was considered a hallmark of gentility and propriety. In her path-breaking article, Barbara Welter identified piety,
purity, submissiveness, and domesticity as the cardinal virtues of the "true woman." Piety and purity were essential to woman's moral superiority. Submissiveness and domesticity are consistent with Harris's definition of the cult as insisting on separate male and female spheres, on woman's place in the home, and her supreme role as mother.¹⁷

The world outside the home was man's sphere. It was the sphere of economic, political, and intellectual activity. As the nation expanded westward, the economy also expanded. Commercial and industrial capitalism created an environment of terrific competition. Opportunity for advancement, real and imagined, was the order of the day. In the male sphere of worldly activity, men were to compete, to win, to profit, and to get ahead. According to the prevailing cultural ethos of which the cult of domesticity was a significant part, man would then return from the brutal competitive world to the home for physical and spiritual refreshment. Woman was considered both ill-equipped for the helter-skelter world of business, politics, and the professions, and too good for that same crass world. Woman's sphere was the home, and her mission was to provide a tranquil and moral environment as a sort of antidote to the unscrupulous and demanding world outside.

This dichotomy between the home and the economic world
posited a separate sphere of activity for men and women. It was a rigid sexual division of labor. The reason for this strict division, these separate spheres, was held to be the innate differences between men and women. Male and female nature was believed to be so totally different that they hardly seemed of the same species. "The special temperament of the female became a scared cliche."¹⁸ One author described the true woman as displaying "purity of mind, simplicity and frankness of heart, promptness of active character, lively and warm affections, which induced a habit of forbearance and the practice of self-denial."¹⁹ These were not the qualities that prepared one for the brutal competition necessary for economic success. Rather, these were the qualities that could create a comfortable home where the needs of husband and children could be attended and where the gentler and weaker female could be protected from the harsh, cruel world. In the words of a lecturer on the sphere and duties of woman, woman "feels herself weak and timid. She needs a protector."²⁰ Or note the words of an eminent nineteenth-century physician: woman "has a head almost too small for intellect but just big enough for love."²¹ Woman’s proper sphere was the home. Woman’s nature suited her for the work of wife, mother, and homemaker. While she was constitutionally unable to do anything else without brooking natural laws and straining
her innate physical and mental capacities, she was superbly suited to be the "angel of the house." She could not do otherwise successfully, but neither could man fill her shoes.

A paradox of nineteenth-century literature on the cult of domesticity or the role of the true woman is that while it was widely proclaimed that woman was naturally endowed with the qualities of the perfect homemaker, there were hundreds of books and articles that provided her with advice on how to do what was supposed to be her natural proclivity. This paradox has led many historians to inquire about the motives of the writers of domestic literature. In other words, why the need for all the advice books, instructional manuals, and exhortations if woman's nature was really as they claimed? Were these writers telling women how they should behave because these middle-class women were not behaving in the prescribed manner? The answer is a qualified "yes." As Mary Beth Norton has pointed out, the nineteenth century did witness an expansion of opportunities for women. Many more worked outside the home for wages, joined reform groups, or became active in church societies. These departures from exclusive devotion to hearth and home aroused considerable concern and provoked the cautionary and prescriptive literature of the advice manuals. But the answer is a qualified "yes" because many of the authors of domestic literature were
women, and they were women who were interested in promoting the importance of woman's role.22

For feminists of the late twentieth century this may appear as a contradiction. How is it that educated women wrote books and articles for women that counseled them in the ways of "true womanhood?" The subservience of true womanhood and the limitations of woman's sphere strike the modern reader as adverse to women's interests. Nineteenth-century feminists struggled to expand woman's role and particularly for the liberalization of her political and legal rights but, more often than not, nineteenth-century feminists agreed on the wholly disparate natures of men and women. When nineteenth-century feminists argued for females opportunities beyond the home, or in the professions, for example, they based their arguments on the presumed special and unique qualities of feminine nature. In other words, the seeming disabilities of "true womanhood" and the "cult of domesticity" were perceived and proclaimed by many nineteenth-century women as qualities that gave women a certain moral leverage. This moral leverage could, it was believed, empower women.23

This moral leverage, which seems inexplicable and out of historical context, followed from that aspect of the cult of domesticity that emphasized the moral superiority of women. By the nineteenth century it was widely believed
that woman had a finer moral nature than man. This followed from her increased involvement with religion, but it was also deduced from her domestic situation. Excluded from the world of truck and barter, she could not fall prey to acquisitiveness, dishonesty, and unscrupulousness. She could not be accused of devoting her life to worldly gain. At a time when this was exactly what many men were doing, and were being encouraged to do, there was still a certain squeamishness about such unbridled economic competition. The isolation of woman in the home was believed to be a national imperative. Women must remain uncontaminated from worldly cares and their temptations if they were to provide the moral gyroscope that their families and, indeed, the nation needed. Woman's hallowed separate domestic sphere allowed her to be a "handmaid to the Gospel." Her untainted piety and superior morality would allow her to guide her family in the path of true religion and to temper the apostasy of the world in general. This was as true in the South as it was in the North. Anne Firor Scott and Catherine Clinton report that an extreme religiosity and struggle for piety was an emphasized aspect of the "cult of the [Southern] lady" and that ministers and laymen alike agreed that "woman's greatest influence in the South was in the spiritual realm."

The view that women were naturally more moral than men also derived from beliefs about female intellectual
capacities and about female sexuality. For centuries women have been thought of as intellectually inferior to men; this was nothing new. But it was new to think of an intellectual disability as associated with greater religiosity. This was a complex development, but it had to do with the increasing tendency to view religion as an affair of the heart and of the emotions. Woman was considered more emotional, more intuitive, and therefore more disposed to spirituality. As men were swept up in the westward search for land, the first stages of the industrial revolution, and the tumultuous politics of the Jacksonian era, the churches were increasingly left to the women. Evangelical ministers found themselves with a growing female constituency. To attract and hold this female constituency, ministers emphasized woman’s moral nature.\(^{26}\) For example, in 1814 Daniel Chaplin addressed the Charitable Female Society of Groton, Massachusetts, with these words:

> Women are happily formed for religion. Their sensibility, their vivacity, and sprightly imagination, their sympathy or tenderness toward the distressed and those in imminent danger of distress, as natural endowments, qualify them, with the grace of God added, to make Christians of the first cast.\(^ {27}\)

Given the contemporary definitions of morality which increasingly emphasized sexual purity, woman had to be desexualized, or, as Nancy Cott explains, made
"passionless."²⁸

The belief in woman's moral superiority had far-reaching consequences. In a sense, it was a kind of compensation for women. If women were not to be allowed outside their sphere, they could at least know that woman's sphere was morally superior. The domestic literature makes much of this point and repeatedly counsels woman that her domain is of tantamount importance. As Mary Ryan, who has studied nineteenth-century domestic literature, explains, "The theory of domestic influence promised women the power to set the course of society without leaving home. By sustaining her mate through the discomforts of his modern work situation, and gently restraining him from anti-social behavior, a wife did her part to ensure the national morality."²⁹ Kathryn Kish Sklar shows how the doctrine of the separate spheres and the belief in woman's superior moral nature worked hand-in-glove in the economic setting of antebellum America:

The male and female spheres were separated to allow men to continue their acquisitive pursuits and to enable women to concentrate on their moral role. Without one the growth of society would stop, and without the other the course of that growth might be morally objectionable. ³⁰

There are other explanations for the emergence of Victorian ideologies of womanhood and the separate spheres. Authors of prescriptive domestic literature were writing
during a period of profound transition in American society. Hierarchical, patriarchal, Calvinist values were on the wane. New and unpredictable economic energies were set loose. The old order was changing; class structure was changing. In the midst of this chaos, many may have sought a way to reduce or avoid conflict. It is likely that these writers believed that their exhortations about the proper structure of the family and the role for women would reduce tension. Moreover, to believe that the essential division in society was between men and women—or the male and the female sphere—made it possible to avoid the potentially troublesome divisions of class and race.31

After 1800 the most influential writers of the subject of womanhood, woman's sphere, and domesticity were women, and many of these women were consciously looking for ways to elevate or empower the female sex. The situation of nineteenth-century white women vis a vis white men may not have been perceptibly worse than that of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century women, and by certain measurements was surely better. But the confluence of change in antebellum American—for example, the expanding franchise and the expanding frontier, the optimism borne of Enlightenment values and republican theories—imbued women as well as men with heightened expectations for personal experience and personal fulfillment.32 Sklar describes the situation of
women in this way:

The major ambiguity faced by American women in the 1830s and 1840s was...how, in an egalitarian society, the submission of one sex to the other could be justified. Women in America had always experienced such inequity, but they had never before needed to reconcile it with a growing ideology of popular democracy and equal rights. Furthermore, this contradiction was heightened as the increased options available to white males in the first decades of the nineteenth century seemed to accompany a more limited sphere designated for white women during the same period. 32

Many nineteenth-century women writers and theoreticians found in the cult of domesticity a way to deal with this ambiguity and the heightened expectations that accompanied it. Catherine Beecher, daughter of evangelist Lyman Beecher and sister to Harriet Beecher Stowe, was probably America’s foremost exponent of the cult of domesticity. Her biographer, Kathryn Kish Sklar, makes it clear that Beecher’s effort to design an ideology that gave women a central place in national life grew largely out of her personal frustration. She had been thwarted in pursuing an education and felt limited in the opportunities for usefulness open to single women. Beecher focused on the home as an integral part of national life. She saw the home as reflecting and promoting mainstream American values. She also expected the isolation of women in the home to continue, so she constructed an ideology that would maximize women’s opportunities within that realm. Beecher
singed out the quality of "submission of self to the greater good"—a trait traditionally associated with women—and heralded this quality to exemplify moral superiority and leadership. In Sklar’s words, "Catherine Beecher described female qualities of submission, purity, and domesticity as traits that placed women close to the source of moral authority and hence established their social centrality."\cite{33} Catherine Beecher did not marry and did not choose domesticity as her calling. Rather, she worked and wrote as a theoretician and an advisor of woman’s role in this new society. Beecher published her Treatise on Domestic Economy in 1841, and it was reprinted every year thereafter until 1856. This was the first text to offer a standard for domestic practice. She explained every aspect of domestic life from building a house to setting a table. She also wrote on the psychology of domesticity. Predecessor books of the 1830s had assumed a continuance of eighteenth-century gender roles. Beecher acknowledged male dominance and the likelihood of its continuation, but she also heightened gender differences and romanticized woman’s role as a way to create a new and more valued social space for women.\cite{34}

In a sense, Catherine Beecher and other female writers on domesticity and womanhood, like proponents of "Republican Motherhood" in the late 1700s, made a virtue of
necessity. Unable or unwilling to directly challenge male hegemony—as the Grimke sisters did, for example—Catherine Beecher argued vigorously for woman's separate sphere, believing that through a separate sphere woman could gain influence and leverage if not equality.

* * *

Women's lives were not, however, completely defined by their families or their family roles. School, church, and new voluntary associations were three institutions that were changed or created by women and which, in turn, influenced women's situation in society and, inevitably, their sense of themselves.

There was a new interest in female education in the early nineteenth century. This new interest dated from the early republican period when women like Judith Sargent Murray and Abigail Adams argued that women were the intellectual equals of men and had a right to cultivate their minds. Benjamin Rush aided the cause when he published *Thoughts on Female Education* in 1787. These claims aroused much controversy and the suspicion that educated women would lose their charm and contentment. Emma Willard in the early 1800s sought sponsorship from the New York legislature for female education, but she was unsuccessful in gaining support despite her argument that education for women would assure the social reproduction of
virtuous children. She later operated a well-subscribed private school that became a model for others. The early nineteenth century witnessed new educational opportunities for women even as the female seminaries carefully attuned their instruction to the goals of preparing girls for domesticity.\textsuperscript{35}

By 1815 or 1820 female academies or "seminaries" for the daughters of the aspiring middle class appeared. Most were in New England, but new academies were also situated in Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Ohio. More female academies appeared in the Northeast, Southeast, and Midwest between 1830 and 1860. The expansion of education for girls and young women was a national phenomenon, but with significant regional differences. The female academy movement existed in the antebellum South, but these academies were often more like finishing schools than the academies in the North were. In 1850 almost 25 percent of adult white women in the South were illiterate.\textsuperscript{36}

The new female seminaries had three overt purposes: to provide women with the basics of education, including mathematics, history and languages; to educate and socialize students for domesticity; and to train teachers. As Emma Willard's sister said in 1830, the Troy Seminary sought to make students "better daughters, wives, and sisters; better qualified for usefulness in every path
within the sphere of female exertion." The schools largely succeeded in these goals. They certainly trained scores of teachers, which was propitious as the expansion of public education had created a national teacher shortage. In 1860 one of four teachers was female, and by the end of the century most primary and secondary school teachers were women.37

In addition to these stated goals there were other important, if unintended, consequences. The segregated schooling of American middle-class young women, with its emphasis on a special female curriculum, served to create a new and unique "gender consciousness" among women. Women were "encouraged to understand gender as the essential determinant of their lives." Historians Nancy Cott and Anne Firor Scott contend that the female seminaries, despite their necessary emphasis on domesticity, fostered an incipient feminism that would emerge in women's voluntary associations and in the women's rights movements.38

Advances in education for women did not stop with the Civil War. In the last half of the nineteenth century the debate over higher education for women was renewed. Midwestern land grant colleges began admitting women in the 1860s; by 1870 there were eight state universities that admitted women. The other major innovation was the appearance of well-endowed private women's colleges: Vassar in 1865, Wellesley in 1870, Smith in 1871, Bryn Mawr
in 1885 and Barnard in 1889. Increasing numbers of women were going to college. In 1870 only 1 percent of college-age Americans attended college, but 21 percent of this group were women.39

The issue of higher education for women was still fraught with controversy. For decades large sections of the American public had been suspicious of the notion of educating women: it seemed so clearly superfluous to woman’s domestic role. As women’s colleges appeared new fears were expressed: higher education would be deleterious to female health. Physician Edward H. Clarke published Sex in Education in 1873 to proclaim that women were biologically unsuited for higher education. Women who pursued such a course imperiled their mental and physical health and did irrevocable damage to their reproductive systems. The issues raised by Clarke and others were not damaging enough to quash the experiment in higher education for women, but these concerns were reflected in the college administrations’ intense concern over their students’ health and in a certain vagueness about the goals of a college education. The world of business or the professions was hardly open to women, however well-educated. Still, women’s colleges provided a sense of sisterhood and individual self-esteem. Co-educational colleges likewise expanded a woman’s sense of herself and
her capacities. By the end of the century, 50,000 women each year were enrolled in some form of higher education. But in a sense the detractors of female education were right: what was a college educated woman to do? 40

Church and religion have been an integral part of American culture since early settlement. One of the many ways that religion, and especially Protestantism, affected the course of American history was through the relationship of religion and sex roles. The social hierarchy of American Puritanism indisputably placed woman below man, as Anne Hutchinson learned to her grief. Beginning in the mid-1700s, however, women increasingly numbered a majority in church congregations in all parts of the country. In Petersburg, Virginia, for example, the proportion of female members in white Protestant churches ranged from 65 to over 80 percent. 41 Barbara Welter gives one account of this change which she and others have recognized as the "feminization of American religion:"

In the period following the American Revolution, political and economic activities were critically important and therefore more "masculine," that is, more competitive, more aggressive, more responsive to shows of force and strength. Religion, along with the family and popular taste, was not very important, and so, became the property of the ladies. 42

As the constituency of the church changed, the message of the church changed accordingly. The church, and popular
Protestant theology, "became more domesticated, more emotional, more soft and accommodating--in a word, more 'feminine'."43 Furthermore, in the changed context of nineteenth-century America, women appeared to demonstrate better compliance with the traditional Christian virtues: self-sacrifice, piety, and concern for others.

The changing nature of women's church involvement brought the first opportunity for all-female voluntary associations. In fact, a major impetus for late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century female voluntary associations was religious enthusiasm to which women were increasingly drawn. Many American women were also influenced by the example of British evangelism and benevolence, as in the case of Hannah More.44 In nineteenth-century America the Second Great Awakening, the first phase of which began around the turn of the century and spread through the Northeast through the first half of the century, spawned a new religious institution, the voluntary association. A great number of these new religious voluntary associations were female societies of one type or another, and initially they were often organized or encouraged by local ministers. Society had grown more complex, and as men were increasingly involved in business and government, church and social welfare became a part of woman's sphere. Also, as noted above, white middle-class women often had more time to spend on
activities outside the home. Religious and benevolent work was given the gender ideology of the time, a natural consequence of woman's special moral nature, and, just as significant, it was the only avenue for involvement outside the home available to white middle- and upper-class women: "Through associations, women transformed moral superiority into a social calling." 45

Early nineteenth-century female voluntary associations were most often organized to propagate religion or to do charitable works. Early examples include the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children, begun in New York in 1797 and supporting 202 widows and 500 children by 1816; the Boston Female Society for Missionary Purposes, organized in 1800; and the "charity school" operated by the Female Humane Association of Baltimore, which also opened in 1800. Between 1800 and 1830 there was a remarkable geographic and quantitative expansion of women's charity activities and new organizations. The number of bible societies, missionary societies, Sabbath schools, and efforts for relief and uplift of the destitute proliferated in the Northeast and moved as far west as Illinois and Ohio. 46

The benevolent work of early nineteenth-century white women sanctified rather than challenged woman's sphere while at the same time it subtly, perhaps covertly,
provided women with a semipublic role. Lydia Maria Child championed women's involvement in benevolent work when she said in 1841 that female societies had "urged upon women their prodigious influence and consequent responsibility. They have changed the household utensil into a living energetic being."⁴⁷

Until recently it was believed that there was little female organizational activity in the South until the 1870s. Catherine Clinton, in The Plantation Mistress, generally paints a picture of isolation among upper-class white women. She does note, however, that women endeavored to organize various church groups like Bible classes and benevolent societies. The most significant revision to this view comes from Suzanne Lebsock in her examination of women in Petersburg, Virginia. Lebsock observes a rich field of female associationism from 1812 to 1858 that was a prominent form of public activity. Numerous societies were organized, mostly for charitable purposes or to fund missionary efforts. Lebsock also observes that the impulse for organizing was, as in the North, the influence of the evangelistic revivals of the 1820s and 1830s. The middle- and upper-middle class women in Petersburg were far from isolated, but rather were joined by kinship, shared experiences, and by their women's organizations. Lebsock argues that these associations were founded by Petersburg's first generation of educated women and deduces that
education and a sense of maternal responsibility propelled women to find a wide sphere of influence.49

After 1830 much women's benevolent work evolved into reform activities, and no antebellum reform effort involved as many women or has received as much attention from historians as that of "moral reform." Moral reform was a movement to salvage "fallen women," to attack and erode the double sexual standard, and to control male sexual behavior that was anathematized as the root evil. Their methods included material aid and moral education for prostitutes, publication of their views in various journals, public exposure of men believed to be seducers or brothel clients, and an emphasis on the education of children—especially boy children—so they would mature with a single pristine standard of sexual virtue.50

The New York Female Moral Reform Society was organized in 1834. During the 1830s and 1840s over four hundred chapters of the American Female Moral Reform Society were created in New England and the mid-Atlantic states. Mary Ryan argues that the cause of moral reform is explained by the flagging ability of either church or family to control sexual behavior and by the increased geographical mobility that cast numerous unmarried young adults in strange cities and towns where there was no family or community supervision. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg cites a different
primary motivation: she sees moral reformers as women who, being unable to defy traditional sex roles, channeled their anger and sense of righteousness into reform movements. Still another difference in interpretation is that Smith-Rosenberg sees these female moral reformers as among the first American women to challenge their passive home-oriented image, while Ryan believes that their emphasis on regulating sexual behavior "helped lay the ground work for the Victorian sexual code which placed particular stock in the purity of the females." In doing so, female moral reform "made history and reshaped aspects of the American sex/gender system." Together these interpretations reveal one of the ironies or paradoxes of the female experience in the nineteenth century: the cult of true womanhood was such that it both defined a sharply limited sphere for female behavior and impelled women to proselytize from their superior female moral wisdom.

There were other reform movements that also attracted a female constituency. Educational reform, prison reform, and temperance were popular causes, but historically the work of northeastern women in antislavery societies and later in the women's rights movement was especially important. The contribution of white women to the abolition movement has been vastly underestimated. Except for the dramatic careers of luminaries like the Grimke sisters, antislavery women have gone largely unnoticed.
Yet scores of women enlisted in antislavery work, and many formed female antislavery societies. Initially, the antislavery movement was cast as a moral crusade, and as such, naturally beckoned female involvement. The Boston Female Antislavery Society appealed to women thus:

As wives and mothers, as daughters and sisters, we are deeply responsible for the influence we have on the human race...We are bound to urge men to cease to do evil and learn to be good. 54

White female abolitionists expressed particular concern for the plight of the black female slave—under the onus of slavery and without legal or social sanction to protect her virtue or maternal rights. 55

It has long been argued that white leisure-class women who were drawn to the abolitionist cause identified with slaves and began to perceive the oppression of their own situation by analogy. Observing similarities in legal disabilities and in the condition of dependence, many female abolitionists, most notably Sarah Grimke, raised the "woman question" as their own sense of discontent and disenfranchisement deepened. It is alternatively argued that female abolitionists identified a feminist complaint not through an awareness born of identification with slaves but rather through their controversial public involvement in abolitionism. Antislavery women became radicalized regarding women’s rights when they met resistance for
pursuing a righteous cause. Acting from a sense of moral imperative, the public activities of female abolitionists created a furor over what was acceptable female behavior.56

Perhaps the major political activity of white antislavery women in the 1830s and 1840s was "petitioning." Following the call of Angelina Grimke in 1836 and the AntiSlavery Convention of American Women in 1837, women began collecting thousands of signatures on petitions that were sent to congress. Gerda Lerner contends that these antislavery petitions played an important role in "transforming public opinion" and, further, that "these activities contributed directly to the development...of women leaders, many of whom were to transfer their political concerns to feminist activities after 1848."57

Antislavery organizations did not exist in the South, but there is evidence of personal sentiment against slavery among white women. Some women opposed slavery on moral grounds, like the woman who confided to her diary that she "felt how impossible it must be for an owner of slaves to win his way into heaven."58 Others opposed slavery for the sexual license it allowed their husbands. Some found managing slaves as plantation mistresses a frustrating and onerous task. While southern women did not organize around their discontent with the slave system and, no doubt, many were among its staunchest defenders, Suzanne Lebsock's work
reveals that almost twice as many women as men used their wills to set slaves free and to give their slaves cash legacies. Lebsock interprets this as a "subversive influence on chattel slavery, not so much because they opposed slavery as a system, but because they operated out of an essentially personal frame of reference." 59

The abolition movement did, however, affect southern white women in other ways. As northern antislavery and antislavery-extension agitation increased, southern slaveowners adopted a "bunker mentality" and began a sort of cultural retrenchment to preserve the South from abolitionist contamination. Women's academies were a casualty of this reaction. The expansion of female schools that had begun after the American Revolution slowed, and many schools that closed after the financial panic of 1837 were not reopened. Women's academies that survived often dropped their emphasis on intellectual training—which southern men believed had led northern white women into abolitionism and other unwomanly activities—and resumed an emphasis on social graces. Catherine Clinton cites this development as a signal of the "ideological and practical divergence between females [in the] North and South." 60

The nineteenth-century woman's rights movement is another important example of female voluntary associationism and, in fact, its origins can be traced to
the experiences of women in female societies of the Northeast. The woman's rights movement was, therefore, both part of the growing tradition of female associationism and the era's most complete articulation of women's grievances and desired reforms.

Formally begun with the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, the woman's rights movement presented a schedule of complaints that women had with existing legal and social order. The story is better known than most aspects of women's history and requires no rehearsal here. Important for this discussion is the way in which the women's rights movement demonstrates the intense gender consciousness and gender identification of Victorian America. One could turn elsewhere for evidence of this rising gender consciousness. For example, the spate of the very popular works of the "scribbling women" who wrote scores of sentimental domestic stories and novels reinforced and perhaps helped created a female sphere and a female value system. The woman's rights movement, though, with a smaller active constituency, provides a clear and well-known example of gender consciousness.

The historiography of the woman's rights movement in America is rich with evidence and speculation about the social and intellectual origins of the movement. The changing role of women, especially of white middle- and upper-class women who comprised the movement's leadership
and constituency, is the most often cited essential provocation to nineteenth-century organized feminism. Along with the changed role came heightened expectations that were further stirred by the liberal ideologies of the Enlightenment and the egalitarian rhetoric of the early republican and Jacksonian eras. Advances in female education created a literate, intellectual class of women keen to the discrepancies of the double standard in an egalitarian age. The expansion of the franchise and of commercial opportunity created a sense of "boundlessness" and allure that beckoned men with promises of unprecedented success and that left women feeling very much outside the mainstream of American life. Within the female bailiwick Christian evangelism loomed large—counseling its practitioners to piety and self-effacement, on the one hand, but imbuing them with a sense of superior moral righteousness on the other. The "pedestalization" of woman and the sanctification of hearth and home gave women a new sense of themselves and a new sense of purpose. But a pedestal was a very small space. Heightened expectations and increased responsibilities for moral guardianship and moral turpitude left many women frustrated with so abstract a challenge and so little autonomy. Some women responded to this new restlessness with a sense of mission transformed into charity or reform work. Some women
recoiled and became invalids. Some women became teachers or struggled for entrance into other professions. The American woman's rights movement was forged by those women who felt discontent, perceived contradictions, and articulated a new demand for female empowerment.

Of all the explanations for the women's rights movement, the most crucial--yet often least recognized because of its obviousness--is the development of gender consciousness. Just as there have always been separate male and female spheres, there has always been gender consciousness. But during the nineteenth century human experience was thoroughly and rigidly bifurcated, and this endowed gender differences with a new significance. Several other nineteenth-century developments sharpened this sense of sex distinction. The elevation of motherhood has been mentioned. The new female academies--to prepare women for intelligent motherhood--likewise engendered in female students an awareness of themselves as a specific gender class. In Nancy Cott's words,

The orientation toward gender in their education fostered women's consciousness of themselves as a group united in purpose, duties, and interests. From the sense among women that they shared a collective destiny it was but another step (though a steep one) to sense that they might shape that destiny with their own minds and hands.

The domestic literature of the day reinforced a new gender consciousness and some, like Catherine Beecher and Sarah
Hale, who sought to advance the position of women, promoted woman's sphere and the idea of female distinctiveness as a way of acknowledging special skills and claiming special rights.66

The numerous female church societies and voluntary associations further developed a perception of gender identification. Work with other women solidified a collective female sphere beyond the private sphere of the home. In this collective experience women learned new organizational skills, gained a new self-confidence, and kindled a spirit of sisterhood. Barbara Berg goes so far as to argue that as middle- and upper-class women pursued charity work among the poor, they became more fully aware of female economic dependence and female suffering and began to identify with their indigent clients. Berg claims that economic class was submerged in a new gender-class identification and this became the foundation for feminism.67

In sum, the extreme sexual division of life and labor in nineteenth-century America provoked an awareness of gender inequality and gender consciousness that was unprecedented. The woman's rights movement is inconceivable without this new perception. But the woman's rights movement was far from the only manifestation of gender consciousness or a desire for the advancement of
women. The Civil War interrupted the women’s rights movement as women organized to support the effort. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the woman’s club movement emerged amidst a flurry of female societies as the apex of gender consciousness.
Endnotes for Chapter One


12Lerner, "Lady and Mill Girl."


23. See, for example, Barbara Harris, *Beyond Her Sphere*; Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman’s Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Glenda Riley, "The Subtle Subversion."


29 Ryan, Empire, p. 40.

30 Sklar, Beecher, p. 163.

31 Sklar, Beecher, p. 156.

32 Sklar, Beecher, pp. 55-56; also see Lerner, "The Lady and the Mill Girl."

33 Sklar, Beecher, p. 83.


35 Anne Firor Scott, "What Then, Is the American: This New Woman," "The Ever-Widening Circle: The Diffusion of Feminist Values from the Troy Female Seminary, 1822-72" and "Education of Women: The Ambiguous Reform," in her Making


37 The quotation by Alma Phelps, Emma Willard's sister, is cited by Woloch, Women and the American Experience, p. 127. The statistics regarding female school teachers are cited by Woloch, p. 129.

38 The quotation is from Cott, Bonds of Womanhood, p. 123; Scott, "The Ever-Widening Circle."


40 Scott, "This New Woman," "Education of Women;" Solomon, Educated Women, especially pp. 56-7; Woloch, Women and the American Experience.


42 Welter, "Feminization of Religion," p. 84.


45 The quotation is Woloch, Women and the American Experience, p. 170. This paragraph is also supported by the following sources: Sydney Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 422; Mary P. Ryan, Cradle, pp. 105-144, 282-286.

Lydia Marie Child as cited by Woloch, Women and the American Experience, p. 171.


Smith-Rosenberg, "Militant Woman:" Mary Ryan, "The Power of Women's Networks: A Case Study of Female Moral Reform in Antebellum America," Feminist Studies, 5, No. 1 (1979), 66-85. Also see Ryan's later publications which refer to or expand her analysis of female moral reform societies. For example, in The Empire of the Mother, Ryan describes the female moral reform movement as "an epicycle around the emerging cult of domesticity." Empire, pp. 76-9; Cradle, pp. 116-27.

For a brief, but cogent, discussion of this paradox, see Mary Beth Norton, "The Paradox of 'Woman's Sphere,'" in Women of America: A History, pp. 139-149.

In addition to the works cited above regarding women's reform movements (e.g. Melder, "Lady Bountiful;" Smith-Rosenberg, "Militant Woman:" Ryan, Empire, Cradle, and "Women's Networks"; Scott, "Education of Women:" Epstein, Politics of Domesticity), see Anne Firor Scott, "As Easily as they Breathe...," in her Making the Invisible Woman Visible, pp. 261-278; Estelle Freedman, Their Sisters Keepers: Women's Prison Reform in America, 1830-1930 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981).

As cited by Woloch in The Experience of American Women, p. 175.


Kate Stone, Brockenburn: The Journal of Kate Stone, pp. 6-8, as cited by Scott, Southern Lady, p. 50.


Clinton, Plantation Mistress, pp. 13-14.

This is Barbara Berg's thesis in The Remembered Gate.


Sklar, *Catherine Beecher*; Riley, "The Subtle Subversion."

Berg, *The Remembered Gate*; also see Dubois, *Feminism and Suffrage*. 
Chapter Two

"Potencies and Possibilities:"
The Origins of the White Women's Club Movement in the United States

...instead of being the source of all evil, woman comes quite as near to being the source of all good. This does not interfere with the belief that she might be the source of more good.

The female of the species may still be pictured as 'more deadly than the male' but her attack, we find, is not upon man but upon the common enemies of man and woman. If this new evaluation of woman's work in civilization seems to err on the side of woman, we shall be satisfied if it helps to bring about a re-evaluation which shall include women not in an incidental way but as people of flesh and blood and brain--feeling, seeing, judging and directing, equally with men, all the great social forces which mold character and determine general comfort, well-being and happiness.

--Mary Ritter Beard 1

A new sense of and a quickened desire for usefulness characterized many middle- and upper-class women in the last half of the nineteenth century. The Civil War placed new demands on civilian populations, and women rallied to serve either the Blue or the Gray. In the North women quickly organized themselves into numerous relief societies. The United States Sanitary Commission involved thousands of women at the local level collecting supplies and raising money. Commission work became so important to some women that power struggles often ensued between the
male officials and the female commission agents. Still, war work provided valuable organizational experience to women who would assume various leadership roles later in the century. For example, Annie Wittenmyer, widowed shortly before the war, threw herself into relief work and became president of the Iowa State Sanitary Commission. She was later instrumental in organizing the WCTU and was elected its first president in 1874. Mary Livermore, also prominent in Sanitary Commission work, went on to work for woman suffrage and served as president of the American Woman Suffrage Association from 1875 to 1878.

Southern women organized soldiers' relief societies as well. At one point there were almost one thousand such groups. Sometimes these societies chose a male clergyman to lead the group, but the work was done by scores of women. Southern women supplied the Confederate army with food, clothing, and medical supplies; without their aid the "cause" would have surely collapsed much sooner. Three thousand southern and northern women worked as nurses, most of them as volunteers.

The Civil War affected every aspect of American life, and not least of all American women. As there were over one million male casualties, many women were widowed, and many would never marry. Anne Firor Scott notes that there were 80,000 widows in Alabama alone. Many women on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line had to fend for themselves
and their families for the first time in their lives. The aftermath of the war for the South was often grim. The South had to be "reconstructed" politically, but it also had to be rebuilt almost from the ground up. Still, the strenuous challenges of the war and the following years changed many southern women in important ways. A South Carolina woman wrote:

Let me say that while my young life was somewhat shadowed, and I was cut off from the privileges of an education...Still I am glad to have lived through a period like this, and believed that what there is in me of womanliness and strength of character and endurance is greatly due to the lessons of self confidence...taught me during the war. 10

In addition to the effects of the Civil War, other changes came apace. As mentioned in chapter one, educational opportunities for women expanded as new female colleges opened and as universities admitted women. The new female collegians were primarily daughters of the "broad and expanding middle class." Of the total female college-age population, the number who actually attended college remained a small although growing minority. Still, the availability and acceptability of female education had reached a new peak.11

A related development was the increasing number of women who took up professional careers. The number of women in the labor force grew significantly, but very few
employed women were middle or upper class. Working women of that class were most likely to be found in the newly feminized profession of teaching or the newly professionalized work of nursing. Toward the end of the century, librarianship and social work became increasingly female occupations. Too, more women challenged the male professional domains of law and medicine although with considerable difficulty. More often than not, the claim for women's admission into the professions was based on an appeal to Victorian ideologies of womanhood. Medical careers especially were justified by themes of female nurturance, compassion, and modesty. But with the exception of teaching, professional opportunities for college-educated women remained quite limited. In fact, the opportunities did not really exist; determined, career-minded women created their own opportunities.12

The absolute numbers of women attending college or choosing professional careers were quite small, but like the women's rights movement, the social significance of this change was more dramatic than the numbers suggest. Education and economic independence for middle-class women were still new and controversial developments that attracted much attention. The increased interest in education or professional work betokened a sense of restlessness; as more women satisfied this sense of restlessness with education or careers, the sense of
restlessness spread. Education was more accessible than post-baccalaureate work, thus creating a new grievance and frustration. Also, the moral imperative of service to others that issued from the cult of true womanhood and was reinforced by contemporary social reform impulses left women looking for a wider field of service. Jane Addams described the frustration of an entire generation of college-educated women in her autobiography. The values of true womanhood, coupled with the influence of education, stood in opposition to the privatism of the domestic sphere. In Addams's words:

They [women] are taught to be self-forgetting and self-sacrificing, to consider the good of the whole before the good of the ego. But when all this information and culture show results, when the daughter comes back from college and begins to recognize her social claims to the 'sub-merged tenth,' and to evince a disposition to fulfill it, the family claim is strenuously asserted, she is told that she is unjustified, ill-advised in her efforts...The girl loses something vital out of her life to which she is entitled. She is restricted and unhappy; her elders, meanwhile, are unconscious of the situation and we have all the elements of a tragedy. 13

With each passing decade the discontent of middle- and upper-class women became more apparent. The woman's rights movement was the most obvious and direct expression of this discontent. The increased interest in education and economic independence was a second indication. Another
profound but more subtle sign was the frequently noted near-epidemic of female invalidism. In the 1850s Catherine Beecher suspected that American women were often ill and attempted a systematic survey. She published *Letters to the People on Health and Happiness* in 1854 and revealed that out of one thousand women in seventy-nine different communities, the ratio of illness to good health was three to one. As Beecher's biographer Kathryn Kish Sklar points out, Beecher's study fell short in social science methodology, but it showed "that great numbers of women perceived their health to be precarious, and demonstrate[d] the ubiquity of the image that linked women with infirmity..."

These mysterious maladies were often difficult to diagnose. Female reproductive anatomy seemed a curious and potent aspect of female biology and was considered fundamental to every aspect of female health. It was, in a sense, the heart of female health. Most ailing women exhibiting no other functional disorders were presumed to be suffering from hysteria—a disease inexplicably but undeniably traced to the uterus. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg persuasively argues that nineteenth-century female invalidism and hysteria was a symptom of profound and pervasive discontent among American women. Debility and even invalidism was an unconscious expression of a desire to escape from the conflicting and confusing role of the
"true woman." It was an unofficial "strike" of sorts—a passive-aggressive expression of discontent and noncooperation. ¹⁷

Many nineteenth-century women who are now remembered for outstanding intellectual or social contributions suffered bouts of debility and incapacity, e.g., Jane Addams, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Catherine Beecher. Some of these women later explained their own collapse as a response to feeling confused about their lives' direction and/or thwarted in their pursuits. Educated with a strong sense of female righteousness and moral responsibility, many such women faced adulthood feeling that marriage and family was too small and too selfish a sphere through which to manifest their moral training and mission. ¹⁸

This is not to say that the motives of women seeking higher education or professional careers or the causes of female malaise are reducible to individual or collective dissatisfaction. It would be equally misleading to suggest that the entire warp and woof of the lives of affluent white women in the nineteenth century was one of complaint, despair, or escape from despair. The diaries and journals left by many contradict any such simplistic or reductionistic rendering. ¹⁹ The point is, however, that there were signs and omens of discontent, restlessness, and a desire to be useful. Feminists of the nineteenth-century
women's rights movement have, until recent scholarship informed us otherwise, been caricatured as a small group of deviant, cranky misanthropes. Just as this caricature is inaccurate, it is also inaccurate to conclude that overt nineteenth-century feminism was the only wave in a placid Victorian sea. The rigid and prescribed male and female sex roles were an edifice as much as a reflection. In looking behind this edifice, one sees other examples of "sex discontent" besides the women's rights movement.

*       *       *

The term "social feminism" has been used to connote many of the organizational activities of middle- and upper-class women in the late nineteenth century. Social feminism was the most widespread, popular expression of the desire for a broader and more useful sphere for women. Christopher Lasch summarizes the significance of this increased organizational activity:

The founding of the National Council of Women in 1888, the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1890, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers in 1897, and the National Consumers' League in 1899; the growing membership in the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the suffrage organizations; and the spread of the settlement movement—all these indicated that large numbers of women, even many who were otherwise conservative in their social outlook, refused to accept domesticity as their sole occupations. 20
Social feminists worked to expand woman's sphere and to increase female autonomy but did so without the same direct challenge to male hegemony as woman's rights feminism. Social feminism was ideologically based on the tenets of "true womanhood"; woman's position was best advanced by emphasizing female distinctiveness and moral superiority. In particular, social feminists were less concerned about the significance of suffrage as the key to woman's emancipation. Nor were their efforts always focused on women's issues. They were involved in a variety of reform efforts that could be construed as requiring the wisdom of female sensibilities. This chapter discusses the social feminism of the late nineteenth century especially as it took shape in the woman's club movement.21

The organizational activities of women during the Civil War seemed to whet a collective appetite. The exigencies of war had required more of women than domestic and affective skills, and many were uninterested in returning to the relative quiescence of their former lives. Just as men searched for the "moral equivalent of war," the postwar generation of white women desired a field of activity wherein their newfound competence and usefulness could be exercised.22 In 1892 Mary Livermore recalled this new spirit among women:

I saw the quiet days of the past vanishing in the receding distance, like
Indeed, this was an age of organization, as several twentieth-century historians have observed. Business and labor are the two most obvious examples; industrialization, specialization, and competition required organized effort for continued success and, at times, for survival. Also, with the nation re-unified, dozens of interest groups from churches to alumni associations organized on a national basis. The "increasingly turbulent urban environment" and the stresses of industrialization created new problems that clamored for attention. In some quarters social Darwinism and laissez-faire gave way to an interest in reform and social intervention. Numerous secular and religious associations were formed to address one problem or another or to represent various interest groups.

Women created new groups that involved unprecedented numbers of women. Suffrage groups were among the first to organize national organizations; the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Suffrage Association were founded in 1869. Most of the new women’s organizations, however, were social feminist groups, which, in the tradition of antebellum moral reform societies,
sought to transform American society along the lines of female virtue and to protect women and girls from the dangers of urban disorder and masculine treachery. The Young Women's Christian Association began with a chapter in Boston in 1866 to aid the "temporal, moral, and religious welfare of young women who had to support themselves." By 1871 the YWCA had chapters in thirteen cities, and by 1891 there were 225 branches.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union, organized in 1873 after the Ohio saloon-closing crusade, is the best known of the late nineteenth-century social feminist groups. The WCTU began with the single concern of preventing the sale and consumption of alcohol; under the leadership of Frances Willard, however, its agenda expanded to one of comprehensive social reform. The WCTU motto revealed the group's belief in the transforming power of female righteousness: "Woman will bless and brighten every place she enters, and will enter every place." The WCTU became involved in a multitude of causes: religious education, prison reform, the eight-hour day, and even woman suffrage. Woman suffrage became a goal of the Union because the ballot was perceived as "the most potent means of moral and social reform." Many members of the WCTU also believed that woman suffrage was a matter of justice and women's rights, but most were willing to champion the radical and unwomanly proposition of votes for women.
because virtuous womanhood required worldly tools in addition to moral suasion.

The phenomenal growth of the WCTU attests to its widespread appeal: in 1890 the Union claimed 160,000 members, and the numbers continued to swell through the early twentieth century. Historian Barbara Epstein argues that the popularity of the WCTU was evidence of profound female discontent and antagonism toward men and masculine culture. It is an example of the political implications of gender ideology—the logical extension of the code of female virtue and the development of gender consciousness.

The desire to wield female influence collectively encouraged women to expand their church-related organizations. Women’s church groups, benevolent societies, and missionary societies were all part of the antebellum associational fervor among women. The postwar efforts however, were on a larger scale and were more ambitious in their projects. Women of all denominations created new organizations. The missionary societies were the most successful. Very soon they became skillful fund-raising enterprises. In 1890, for example, the Methodist Woman’s Board of Foreign Missions had a membership of over 70,000 women and owned almost two hundred thousand dollars in property.

Other new women’s groups were also created during
these postwar decades. Greek letter sororities began appearing in 1867, and by 1891 there were eleven national sororities with more than eighty local college chapters. Women’s auxiliaries to male fraternal orders were founded, for example, the Ancient Order of the Eastern Star in 1876 and the Woman’s Relief Corps in 1883. The new generation of college-educated women formed national alumni associations like the American Association of University Women. In fact, so many new and diverse women’s organizations were created that a union of national women’s groups, the National Council of Women, was formed in 1888. The woman’s club movement was a significant aspect of this postwar organizational fervor, and in 1868 this new kind of female voluntary association made its debut.

* * *

The New England Woman’s Club of Boston held its first meeting February 8, 1868, at the home of Dr. Harriot K. Hunt. One account of its inception describes an 1867 conversation wherein Abby W. May bemoaned to Dr. Marie Zakrzewska the lack of activity for women since the strenuous voluntary efforts that accompanied the war had ended. Dr. Zakrzewska responded with the idea of a "woman’s club" or "literary union" that would offer "opportunities for culture and service." The term "club"
had not been used for female groups, and some thought it a bit bold and masculine-sounding.\textsuperscript{41} The purpose of the club was to foster women’s development and women’s benevolent work generally:

\begin{quote}
Its plan involves no special pledge to any one form of activity, but it implies only a womanly interest in all true thought and effort on behalf of women, and of society in general, for which women are so largely responsible. \textsuperscript{42}
\end{quote}

Most of the founding members were veteran reformers, for example, Caroline M. Severance, the club’s first president; Julia Ward Howe, president and leading light of the NEWC from 1871 until her death in 1910; Mrs. Horace Mann; and Elizabeth Peabody. Some of the members had literary pedigrees or associations like Louisa May Alcott and Mrs. Ralph Waldo Emerson. In addition to the 118 original female members, the club had 17 male associate members who included such well-known New Englanders as John Greenleaf Whittier, Henry James, A. Bronson Alcott, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.\textsuperscript{43} As associate members, the men had no vote or authority within the club. Caroline Severance explained this policy as part of the club’s commitment to women’s development:

\begin{quote}
we admit our husbands, sons and friends, as associate members, to our literary gatherings and our recreations. We welcome their counsel and sympathy and receive most valuable and generous help from them. But, since woman pre-eminently needs the benefits of such an
organization and of practice in directing it, we wish them [women] to be free in debate and in executive detail from the constraining presence of their more experienced brothers. 44

With this reform heritage and literary background, the women of the New England Woman's Club set about their dual goal of study and good works. Soon after the club's organization, an education committee was formed to present ideas for educational reform to the group. One project of the committee was to secure school suffrage and eligibility for school board election for women. Another early committee was the Work Committee, which focused on the situation of women and children employed in industry. 45 In 1870, just two years after the club's founding, the NEWC opened a horticultural school for women and the Friendly Association to aid working women. The NEWC became involved in dress reform and in 1874 opened a woman-run store that made and sold healthful and sensible clothes for women. 46

From the beginning, the NEWC provided classes for its members. Literature, art, history, and foreign languages were among the subjects studied. The classes were taught by a club member designated as the class "leader." 47 It was this aspect of the new club that so rapidly caught the imagination of women all over the nation.

The other "first" among women's clubs also began in 1868. New York journalist Jane Cunningham Croly, 48 whose pen-name was Jennie June, organized the club after she and
other female journalists were excluded from a New York Press Club dinner for Charles Dickens. Despite the fact that Croly's husband was on the executive committee and that *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley thought the female journalists should be included, the all-male New York Press Club decided that interested women could attend only "if a sufficient number of ladies could be found willing to pay fifteen dollars each for their tickets, to make a good showing, and prevent each other from feeling lonely." Croly refused the belated and insulting concession and said "the ladies had not been treated like gentlemen."  

Jane Croly contacted several literary friends and, defying the conventions precluding ladies lunching unattended by men, they held their first official meeting at Delmonico's Restaurant on April 13, 1868. The women chose the name "Sorosis"--a botanical term meaning "a collective fruit formed by the union of many flowers."  

The "collection of flowers" was, like the NEWC, a group of truly outstanding women. According to one contemporary writer, Sorosis included "most of the prominent women of the latter part of the nineteenth century."  

Many were well-known writers or journalists such as Fanny Fern, Ellen Louise Demorest of *Mme. Demorest's Mirror of Fashion*, the poets Alice and Phoebe Cary, Hester M. Poole, and May Wright Sewall. Others were
"career women" or reformers--Dr. Mary Putnam Jacobi, Mrs. Robert Dale Owen, architect Elizabeth B. Sheldon, Unitarian minister Celia Burleigh, and botanist and abolitionist M. Louise Thomas. Several, though by no means all, Sorosis members were also active suffragists: Isabella Beecher Hocker, Ernestine Rose, Charlotte Wilbour.52

Sorosis began as a social and literary club committed to woman’s self-improvement and advancement. The members of Sorosis determined from the outset that their club would provide moral support and intellectual stimulation to its members and that this goal would be achieved through their own efforts and without the advice, or manipulation, of men. Croly wrote in 1869 that it was important for women to work alone "because men would overpower them if they tried to work together."53 Unlike the NEWC, Sorosis did not offer associate memberships to its male supporters.

The early work of Sorosis reflected the development of woman’s sphere in the nineteenth century and the parallel development of dissatisfaction with the restraints of that sphere. That is, Sorosis recognized the growing trend that had identified middle- and upper-class women with literary and cultural interests, and it sought to maximize women’s opportunity to indulge and perfect those interests. The women of Sorosis described their goals in the club’s constitution:

The object of this association is to
promote agreeable and useful relations among women of literary and artistic tastes...It recognizes women of thought, culture and humanity everywhere, particularly when those qualities have found expression in outward life and work.

It aims to establish a kind of freemasonry among women of similar pursuits, to render them helpful to each other, and to bridge over the barrier which custom and social etiquette place in the way of friendly intercourse.

It affords an opportunity for the discussion among women, of new facts and principles, the results of which promise to exert an important influence on the future of women and the welfare of society. 54

Initially, Sorosis had four areas of interest represented by committees: literature, art, drama, and music. The club eschewed the superficial and ornamental interest in the arts that was the mark of the antebellum "lady." Rather, they saw themselves, as historian Karen Blair explains, as "emulating the salonieres of Europe."55 They pursued culture as intellectual aesthetes, believing that their study of culture was enhanced by their feminine sensibilities as well as their intelligence. "Culture" and the arts were, by the late nineteenth century, like religion in that they were widely considered female terrain. The four committees organized cultural studies for the women of Sorosis. Although many Sorosis members were associated with one or another controversial reform movement, such as woman suffrage, it was agreed that neither politics nor theology would be discussed in the
Sorosis pursued some charitable projects but was not, in its early days, as devoted to reform as the NEWC. Sorosis professed a womanly interest in altruistic concerns but, in fact, emphasized the self-development of its members. This was a significant, and sometimes acknowledged, challenge to the current conventions of womanhood. In line with its accent on "self-culture" and its determination to avoid internal disputes, Sorosis even declined Susan B. Anthony's request for help with the Working Women's Association.

Its inward focus was the subject of much criticism of the club. An autonomous organization of women was cause for suspicion especially if it could not be justified by a female devotion to self-sacrifice and altruism. Male clubs did not labor under this requirement, but the women of Sorosis were unhesitatingly reproached for selfishness. Even the liberal New York World was critical and sarcastically queried, "If the organization was designed solely to meet for 'toast and tea,' why form a conspicuous club to do so?" Jane Croly understood the brazenness of this new type of club. She wrote in her history of the club movement:

Had Sorosis started to do any one thing, from building an asylum for aged and indigent "females" to supplying the natives of Timbuctoo with pocket
handkerchiefs, it would have found a public already made. 59

At the same time, and despite Croly's remarks, an interest in reform and benevolence was no guarantee of public acceptance. The Boston Transcript found the NEWC a dangerous departure from the accepted natural order: "Homes will be ruined, children neglected, woman is straying from her sphere."60 And so, the woman's club movement began—marked by the enthusiasm and commitment of some of the era's most notable women but also by suspicion and ridicule.

From the 1870s on individual women's clubs were formed in every region of the United States. By the end of the century one journalist commented that "from Maine to Florida, from Massachusetts to Oregon, tucked away in quiet hamlets and flourishing aggressively in large cities, the Woman's Club finds itself at home."61 Often the clubs chose straightforward names such as the Rhode Island Woman's Club, the Chicago Woman's Club, The Wednesday Morning Club, or The Fortnightly; sometimes, however, the names were more personal or exotic, like The Cadmean Circle, The Cosy Club, The Fifteen Club, or Friends in Council.62 These clubs initially followed the pattern of New York's Sorosis in that their goal was the self-culture of the membership through the study of literature, history, the classics, geography, and the arts. Most clubs began as small,
intimate associations of ten to twenty women who met in members' homes, but some began as large clubs or quickly grew to memberships of one hundred or more. Meetings were usually for two hours and were held weekly or bi-monthly from fall through spring when children were in school.63 The culture club idea moved West and then South, and in 1890 resulted in a national federation of clubs. The new secular woman's club became a part of the national scene and received as much comment and notoriety as the "new woman." Clubs were both praised and condemned. They became the subject of articles, stories, and novels.64

The story of the New England Woman's Club and Sorosis explains their immediate origins, but the proliferation of the woman's literary club idea still requires examination. Something of the situation of white, middle- and upper-class women has been discussed, and the formation of antebellum and Civil War female voluntary associations has been noted; but the ubiquitous woman's club of the late nineteenth century was a significant innovation.

It is instructive to note how contemporary club women explained the phenomenon of the woman's club movement. In particular Mary I. Wood, who wrote a history of the national club movement in 1912, and Helen M. Winslow, Massachusetts clubwoman and author, wrote interesting accounts of the development and spread of women's clubs in the last decades of the nineteenth century.
Mary Wood began her history with a chapter entitled "Milestones in Woman's Evolution" in which she described male and female nature as immutable and distinct but complementary. With complete acceptance of belief in separate spheres, Wood wrote that "the natural response to the supreme call of the human race" was "the division of labor between the sexes in which woman cheerfully and willingly complemented the work of man with her own labor." She described woman's complementary role in classic feminine terms:

Is he a warrior? Then she is the nurse, binding up and comforting and solacing the injured. Is he an explorer, either in fields of country or of thought? Then she is inspiration, encouragement and rest. Is he an inventor? Then she puts to practical use the things which his thought has evolved. In short woman is conserver, preserver and helpmeet.

Wood sketched the development of these roles through the centuries and found momentous changes in the nineteenth century. According to Wood, industrialization transformed woman's role and created three distinct classes:

It was the invasion of her home industries...that turned the hands and minds of women into new channels. It was the advent of the butcher, the baker, the tailor, the candle-maker, the cannery, the ready-made clothing house, the steam laundry and a thousand other industries, once hers, now taken over into the hands of men, that made out of what had hitherto been one great class of women at least three distinct classes.
The three distinct classes were working-class women, middle-class women, and leisure-class women. It was middle-class women, said Wood, who—because of their degree of affluence combined with their appreciation of hard work—preserved the ages-old feminine ideal. The call to service during the Civil War and the widening of educational opportunities for women beckoned this "earnest, eager" class to desire enlightenment and, then, responsibility. The woman's study club emerged as the creation of these women and as their vehicle to female accomplishment.68

Other writers also identified industrialization and increased leisure time for non-wage-earning women as the essential social change that gave rise to women's clubs. One female journalist, looking back from 1905, wrote,

The man who invented the spinning jenny or the sewing machine never in his wildest vagaries dreamed that he was laying the foundation of the woman's club...the march of mechanical invention has been the emancipator of women. The freeing of their hands had led to the freeing of their minds. 69

Indeed, this was the standard explanation of the material conditions that fostered the woman's club movement. Further, just as industrialization provided more leisure time for certain women, the increasing complexity of society demanded more of men. Their time and energies were consumed by the exigencies of a more competitive and fast-
paced commercial world. As men had less time for cultural and ethical work, leisure-class women had to fill the vacuum. And this, of course, was perfectly consistent with the companion ideology of womanhood. An article in Harper's Bazaar entitled "The Significance of the Woman's Club Movement" explained that "by nature and by circumstance" women were "forced into positions of trust and responsibility where they [were] obliged to take an active part in the solution of the problems which are facing the civilized world."\(^70\)

Contemporary writers also cited "the age of organization" as a potent influence upon women. Sorosis founder Jane Croly described woman, prior to the club movement, as "the one isolated fact in the universe."\(^71\)

Many commentators noted that the woman's club movement was symptomatic of the late nineteenth-century American urgency to organize and to consolidate effort for enhanced effectiveness. For example, Chicago clubwoman, reformer, and early president of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, Ellen Henrotin, wrote that "It is a necessary step in the evolution toward higher social and educational conditions. It came, I believe, in answer to a demand for efficiency."\(^72\)

Women's clubs, beginning with the literary or study club, were a major part of this mass movement of women to
work collectively. Typically this trend to organization was explained in terms of evolution. Suffragist, reformer, and New England Woman's Club member Mary Livermore took this line when she wrote that "there is no surer measure of our social progress than our fitness to cooperate with others for noble ends." She went on to interpret women's organizations, and in particular women's clubs, as "an unconscious protest against the isolation in which women have dwelt in the past; a reaching out after a larger and fuller life...a necessary step in the evolution of women."73

The reach after "a larger and fuller life" was both the impetus for the club movement and a product of it. Clubwomen rhapsodized that the end of the nineteenth century brought the emancipation of women and that the woman's club was the harbinger of that emancipation. Like suffragists and feminists, leaders of the club movement acknowledged widespread discontent among womankind: "The stirring of woman's unrest may be heard down the ages by the ear placed close to the heart of hidden things."74 It is important to point out, however, that clubwomen who published articles in national periodicals were probably more radical than the rank and file. It has been noted that many early leaders in the club movement were avowed suffragists and came to women's clubs with an analysis of female subjugation and an agenda for reform. For these
women, the women's club was an important vehicle for the empowerment of women.

Wood recalled that women's clubs were often known as the "Middle-Aged Woman's University."\textsuperscript{75} Ella D. Clymer told the National Council of Women in 1891 that "what college life is to the young woman, club life is to the woman of riper years, who amidst the responsibilities and cares of home life still wishes to keep abreast of the time...."\textsuperscript{76} Like Wood and Clymer, commentators observed that the keynote of these early women's clubs was repeatedly that of education and self-improvement.\textsuperscript{77} For women who had missed a chance for higher education, who were too far removed from educational centers, or who wished to continue their studies, the woman's club "meant a school where they might teach and be taught, a mutual improvement society, which should educate them and lead them out into better hopes, nobler aspirations and larger life."\textsuperscript{78}

Other champions of the woman's club joined Wood in praising the club as an important educational institution. This educational or self-improvement aspect of the club was described as filling a void in women's experience and as the natural result of American female sensibility. Helen Winslow described the modern woman's club as "the outgrowth of national conditions" and "the cumulative evidence of the American woman's ideals and tendencies."\textsuperscript{79} Women's study
clubs provided "opportunity"—opportunity for missed education and opportunity for self-fulfillment.

The education women received in the study club was both effete and practical. Women studied Shakespeare and the Greek classics, but they also studied the new field of domestic science and current events. Controversial topics were sometimes forbidden, as in Sorosis, but most clubs were proud of the worldly knowledge which women gained in the club. Culture study provided clubwomen with the lofty idealism needed to be the culture-bearers and molders of civilization that "true womanhood" and "Republican Motherhood" had come to require. The more practical studies were justified as the new tools that modern women needed to fulfill their role in changing times. In the words of a New Jersey clubwoman, woman's clubs provided "a mental and moral growth as can be reached only by the proper development and proportionate mingling of all parts of the mind. This is the kind of training necessary to help solve world problems."\textsuperscript{80}

Most clubs began by studying literature or history and then graduated to include current events or the domestic arts. Members took turns making presentations to the assembled club on the featured topic. These presentations were most often "encyclopedic rehearsals" rather than the result of scholarly research and, as such, critics of the literary club were quick to label club study as superficial
and dilettantish. Clubwomen refused to be daunted by these jibes, claiming that the pursuit of knowledge and culture must begin somewhere and, in the words of club apologist Winslow, "...the encyclopedias as a course of reading is a better intellect developer than the 'family' story paper or the weekly county journal." More significant, however, these clubs provided women with an arena in which to improve and develop: "They gave to women, unaccustomed to the sound of their own voices, courage to speak before an audience...an ability to express their thoughts...an interchange of ideas whereby other thoughts, fresh and creative, had birth." An often cited virtue of the woman's club and club study was the way in which they made women more well-rounded human beings. Strictly speaking, the canons of "true womanhood" did not require that women be well-rounded; in fact, woman's sphere was conspicuously confining. But, as white, middle- and upper-class women enlarged the definition of "true womanhood" and the requirements of woman's sphere, a certain amount of education and worldly sophistication could be construed as beneficial and appropriate. The advantages of studying literature and the arts were obvious: it added a certain patina to women of a certain class and enabled them to spread the noble lessons to their children and communities.
In addition, the collective work and study broadened women and lifted them from the female pitfalls of pettiness and parochialism. Winifred Harper Cooley reflected upon the accomplishments of women's clubs in a 1902 article in *Arena*:

> It [the woman's club] has made them more democratic—less narrow and exclusive. It has heightened their plane of thinking; it has taught them habits of concentrated study; it has multiplied their available topics of conversation and eliminated the constant personal note therefrom; it has lifted them bodily from the pettiness and restraint of domestic drudgery. No one can question the benefit to the home and to society of broadening and deepening the life and experiences of the home-maker...The club develops not merely a clever and versatile, but an expansive and harmonious, a well-rounded individual. 83

Charlotte Perkins Gilman observed in 1898 that women were far from "well-rounded." Woman's economic dependence had thwarted her evolution. Women were, consequently, over-developed in the traditionally feminine characteristics and handicapped in other human traits. 84 Some clubwomen may have echoed or anticipated Gilman's theories in their apologies for the importance of the woman's club. Alma Rogers of Oregon wrote that

> Woman by reason of her environment has developed to excess on the emotional side. Now the infinite law of equilibrium demands a reaction to the neglected intellect. Through the interaction of these two—between the impulses of the heart and the reason of the mind—woman will acquire the perfect poise of noble
womanhood. 85

The woman's club was part of the "infinite law of equilibrium." It would redress imbalances. It was the antidote to woman's oppression and her thwarted evolution.

Winifred Cooley's statement that women's clubs made women more democratic suggests another favorite, but less plausible, claim of late nineteenth-century clubwomen. It became a cherished notion that women's clubs were unusually heterogeneous. For example, Texas clubwoman Anna Pennybacker described the 1906 Biennial meeting of the GFWC in this way: "The general air was one of modest prosperity; in federation circles the woman of limited means makes no apology; the woman of wealth avoids all ostentation."86 It is true that most clubs, and later the national and state federations, were adamantly nonsectarian and nonpartisan. It is also true that while literary clubs may have begun with mature middle-aged women, they soon included many young women-married and single.87 Many clubs included career women as well as homemakers and women with different degrees of affiliation with the women's rights movement. It was often claimed, however, that social class was not a factor in club membership: "...character, not social position or wealth, is the basis of club aristocracy."88 In line with the rising gender consciousness of nineteenth-century middle- and upper-class women, clubwomen too often obscured the reality of class
divisions. By and large, clubwomen were from the middle and upper classes and most of the clubs excluded black women. The color question remained moot until the early twentieth century when the national federation had to refuse membership to a "mixed" club in order to avoid secession from the southern clubs.89

That clubwomen believed their enterprise to be one which embraced all women—when it clearly did not—is, in some ways, not surprising. It can be likened to the herrenvolk democracy that describes the post-Reconstruction, segregationist South.90 It is also an example of how thoroughly the working classes were excluded from consideration. That working-class women were not, by and large, part of the woman's club movement did not completely contradict the claims of clubwomen. When clubwomen spoke of the variety of women that met in unprecedented harmony within the woman's club, they were not disingenuous. It was an innovation for women of different churches, sometimes even Jews and Catholics, of different educational backgrounds or vocations, or of different social status to mingle so promiscuously outside of kin groups. Clubwoman May Wright Sewall praised women's clubs for bringing wives and daughters of business and professional men together with business and professional women. The club also introduced "society women" to
professional women or women reformers and thereby dissolved stereotypes and revealed compatibility:

In the club, "society women," as a class, first discovered that women who pursue serious objects do not, thereby, forfeit their social qualities; and on the other hand, in the club, the women who "follow occupations" and advocate "causes," first learned that they do not monopolize seriousness, and that "society women," whom they had been wont to deem altogether frivolous, are, equally with themselves, capable of earnest pursuits. 91

In describing the meritocracy of clubdom, there was a new degree of heterogeneity, but certainly not the heterogeneity that twentieth-century egalitarians associate with that word or concept. Class was an undeniable determinant of membership in women's clubs, but whereas class exclusiveness was previously thought to be a prerogative or prejudice of the very affluent, in clubdom the unwritten class requirements recognized the strength and spread of the rising middle class and excluded working-class women.

In explaining the national popularity of the woman's culture or literary club in the late nineteenth century, a further word about the relationship of women to "culture" is required. Just as women were believed to possess a natural affinity for religion, the notion developed that white, leisure-class women had an intuitive sympathy for "culture" or the arts. Christopher Lasch describes the "social and cultural abdication of the middle-class male"
that allowed what he terms the "extraordinary dominance and aggressiveness of the American woman in all matters unconcerned with business." The separate male and female spheres that were divided as public and private early in the century had, by the end of the century, become a gap between "practical life" (male) and "culture" (female).\textsuperscript{92} Many people found this disquieting. Prestigious journals carried editorials that predicted catastrophic results from what seemed a female preoccupation with "culture:"
"marriages would fail, insanity would increase, and violence would become commonplace." A 1902 editorial in The Living Age feared the Europeanization of America if women continued their cultural pursuits.\textsuperscript{93} By this time, however, a nineteenth-century tradition had been firmly established.

Many historians as well as contemporary observers have noted the widespread attraction of nineteenth-century women to literary careers. Women, too, extended their role as consumers to literature and the arts, especially the sentimental or romantic literature of the nineteenth century. So many women successfully took up the pen to write popular fiction that "authorship in America was established as a woman’s profession, and reading as a woman’s avocation." Many women writers wrote out of economic necessity since writing—along with teaching—became one of the few occupational opportunities open to
middle-class women who needed to earn a living. The increased leisure afforded to women supported by husbands or families helped create a large audience for this new group of women writers.94

This new popular fiction portrayed the values of "the cult of domesticity." Like Catherine Beecher, the women writers sought to establish the importance of woman and woman's sphere. As Nina Baym explains the new fiction,

Domesticity was set forth as a value scheme for ordering all of life, in competition with the ethos of money and exploitation that was perceived to prevail in American society. The domestic ideal meant not that woman was to be sequestered from the world in her place at home but that everybody was to be placed in the home, and hence the home and the world would become one. Then, to the extent that woman dominated the home, the ideology implied an unprecedented historical expansion of her influence... 95

As writers and as readers, the ideology of the separate spheres allowed women to stake a claim antithetical to acquisitiveness, competition, and the related values of politics and the market place. The sublimity of woman's sphere did not seem to match the vigorous and visible achievements and changes related to male-engineered urbanization and industrialization. Thus, by emphasizing the distinctiveness, morality, and humanity of woman's sphere in the domestic novel, women sought to challenge male hegemony and social disintegration.

Women writers, "damned scribblers" as Nathaniel
Hawthorne called them, viewed their work as a moral mission. The didactic prose and the sentimental aesthetic was the woman writer's pulpit from which she could provide guidance or admonition. Women readers, too, like faithful parishioners, shared in this perceived moral mission. The study, or consumption, of literature became a moral activity. In fact, many ministers condemned the popular novel, in part because they believed that novelists were appropriating their clerical function.96

The attraction of nineteenth-century leisure-class women to literature and the arts was not limited to the new popular, domestic fiction. As educational opportunities increased for women and as the "literary life" took on the aspect of moral superiority, women became more devoted to the study and appreciation of "culture." The arts, especially literature, signified an idealism and spiritualism that was easily compatible with the virtues of "true womanhood." Thus, "culture study" was a supremely feminine pursuit. Culture study seemed a natural part of the higher morality of woman's sphere. As such, culture study was used to reinforce the specialness and distinctiveness of woman's sphere and in so doing, to establish the importance and value of that sphere and—by extension—of woman. Culture study was also an area that women could dominate. Outside of the academy few men
had time to ruminate on Homer’s *Odyssey* of Wordworth’s "Intimations of Immortality." Finally, as the proliferation of women’s culture clubs indicates, culture study could easily be a collective activity. The culture club augmented and often replaced the sewing circle as a bond of womanhood. It provided a structure for study and another avenue for female friendship and mutual appreciation.97

The extent and shape of the woman’s club movement in the South requires special attention. Southern white women of the middle- and upper-classes were enthusiastic club women although the movement did not gather steam in the South until the 1880s and 1890s. According to a list of the first clubs in each state compiled by Massachusetts club woman Helen Winslow, the earliest secular woman’s club in the South was the Springfield Ladies’ Saturday Club of Missouri, formed in 1879. The other "firsts" were all, according to Winslow, in the 1880s. It is unlikely that this was a definitive list, but it also is unlikely that many clubs were organized before this time.98

In an 1891 article entitled "The Work of Women’s Clubs" Alice Hyneman Rhine made reference to the status of clubdom in different geographic regions. Rhine observed that there were many women’s clubs in the South that pursued philanthropic, benevolent, and educational work. She believed, however, that southern clubs were generally not
as "advanced" as clubs elsewhere, and she ascribed this difference to the "conservatism, and almost Oriental timidity, of the sex in that portion of the country." 99

In 1892 southern club woman Annah Robinson Watson described the situation a little differently. Watson acknowledged a conservatism among southern club women that made them initially skeptical of the woman's club idea, but she explained this as part of the southern woman's pride in her femininity. Southern women, she explained, as distinct from other American women, were intensely loyal to their region and its cultural tradition. Women's clubs were not immediately perceived as compatible with southern traditions of womanhood. Southern women, at first, "looked upon the club as an institution for advancing the 'rights to women to be men'." In time they were persuaded that clubdom offered opportunities for women that did not threaten cherished notions of womanly behavior, that "women might be club women, and yet feminine in the highest and broadest sense." Clubs could provide women with the intellectual development which middle- and upper-class white women needed for the expansion and rebuilding of the South. 100 Writing in the same issue of Arena as Watson, Katherine Nobles described southern women's literary clubs as pervasive and explained the appeal of the club movement in this way:
It is the middle road between the too progressive and the too conservative, holding neither the aggressiveness of the suffrage movement nor the limitations of church and charity associations. The thinking women of the South, as a whole, are not quite ready for the one, and have grown a little beyond the other.  

These authors focused on the conservativism of women's clubs in the South, but they overstated this conservatism in contrast to the rest of the country. By the early 1890s, some local clubs were engaged in civic reform, or, at least, in the provision of progressive social services. Also in the 1890s several leaders in the club movement were encouraging an emphasis on some form of social action or "municipal housekeeping" and a de-emphasis on literary study as the woman's clubs' singular goal. But resistance to this trend or to any taint of radicalism or public sphere involvement was not limited to the South. Karen Blair makes this observation with reference to clubs in Rhode Island and New York.  

Furthermore, it is generally acknowledges that the success of the club movement everywhere was largely due to the "middle road" the woman's club offered. Southern women were not unique in their skepticism, timidity, or disdain for women's rights radicalism, the suffrage movement, or even involvement in civic reform. In fact, chapters four and five will reveal the enthusiasm among white Texas club women for several social and political reforms.
As increasing numbers of women formed local clubs in their communities during the seventies and eighties, the idea for a national union of women's clubs was not far behind. In 1882 Indiana club woman Mrs. May Wright Sewall wrote the NEWC to suggest some affiliation between the women's clubs in the West and the older eastern clubs. This suggestion led to a correspondence committee, but no formal union was created. Yet since this was in many ways an age of expansiveness and optimism for American, white, middle- and upper-class women, other attempts were bound to follow. The indefatigable woman's club enthusiast and Soros founder Jane Croly successfully organized a national union of women's clubs in 1890.

Croly and her Soros associates had twice before initiated national organizations for women with varying degrees of success. In 1869 Croly called an organizational meeting for a Woman's Parliament. The proposed Woman's Parliament, which did not survive its first year, was quintessential social feminism and represented a real departure from Croly's earlier devotion to self-culture. The Parliament was conceived as a separatist female democracy wherein issues relating to women and children would be comprehensively addressed. The Parliament was created with the goal of extending the
traditional female virtues into the public domain. The ideological assumptions of the Parliament’s leaders were the logical extension of "true womanhood" and the "cult of domesticity," but with a significant twist. Women had special duties to protect their homes and their families and to elevate the moral tone of society. Further, women had special skills and sensitivities that uniquely qualified them for this mission. The social feminist innovation was that women should pursue this womanly mission in league with other women and extend their influence beyond the home into the public sphere. The conviction in woman’s moral superiority and male depravity was manifestly evident at the Parliament’s first and only convention. Melusina Pierce, the Parliament’s president, was quoted as saying

She thanked God that she was not a man to have one day to stand before God’s high judgement seat and answer for a share in the dread crimes of strength against weakness, of armed might against defenselessness, of knowledge against ignorance, of lust against innocence, that must stamp man in the eye of his maker. 104

Predating Frances Willard’s "Army of Women"--the WCTU--by several years, the abortive attempt for the Woman’s Parliament was strikingly ambitious and even bold in the reforms it sought to achieve. When Croly addressed the meeting she outlined public education, prisons, vocational training, school hygiene, and political corruption as some
of the targets for women's reform efforts, and various women gave presentations on these subjects. 105

The social feminism of the Woman's Parliament stopped short of identifying their work with "women's rights"—then dangerously associated with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. In fact, as historian Karen Blair explains, the Woman's Parliament was fashioned to "provide a less threatening alternative to women" and to make their proposed work more acceptable. Croly never denounced the suffrage campaign, but she described it as superfluous: women had enough work to do without worrying about the vote. Croly's views, widely shared by the seventy women who attended the Parliament's 1869 meeting, can be viewed as an incipient radicalism—affirming the power and responsibility of women with a thorough disdain for the ways and means of the male political world. On the other hand, the lack of interest in suffrage and the appeal to the traditional prerogatives and imperatives of "woman's sphere" offered little to challenge the status quo directly. After all, by 1869 there was almost an established tradition of separatist female reform societies although organized women, for whatever purpose, were never completely beyond suspicion. 106

The second Sorosis-inspired attempt at a national union of like-minded women and a forerunner to the General
Federation of Women's Clubs was the Association for the Advancement of Women. The AAW was created in 1873 in response to a "Call" from Sorosis to 1,600 American and European women. The list of early supporters was impressive and diverse: Sarah Grimke, E.D.E.N. Southworth, Reverend Antoinette Brown Blackwell, Frances Willard, and many from Sorosis and the New England Woman's Club. Though the AAW initially disavowed any interest in the controversial suffrage issue, prominent suffragists, including Stanton, also joined. The stated goal of the AAW was

to consider and present practical methods for securing to women higher intellectual, moral, and physical conditions, with a view to the improvement of all domestic and social relations. 107

The AAW was more successful than the Woman's Parliament in many respects. It remained an elite group of career women and reformers, with a peak membership of 438, which espoused social feminist goals similar to those of the Woman's Parliament. Annual congresses were held where members presented papers on the role and responsibility of women in the family and in the world. Paper topics ranged from "Enlightened Motherhood" and "Social Purity" to "Women as Guardians of Public Health." The AAW had a decidedly religious and moral tone; woman's mission was the salvation of a morally bankrupt social order. Julia Ward Howe predicted at the first AAW congress that organized
womanhood would yield a "redeemed society." ¹⁰⁸

A part of the AAW’s saving mission was to elevate the position of women. The AAW championed educational opportunities for women and the need for and justice of women’s inclusion in the professions. Woman’s role as homemaker was never forsaken, but domestic efficiency and cooperative domestic enterprises were promoted as a way to liberate women from household drudgery to that they might attend to issues and problems that required woman’s more sublime skills. ¹⁰⁹

Initially, the AAW remained aloof from the suffrage issue, which contributed to its favorable reception in the press. After 1881, however, Julia Ward Howe of the American Woman Suffrage Association and the New England Woman’s Club replaced Jane Croly as the group’s leading light. Suffrage sentiment became more obvious in the AAW, but it was carefully subordinated to the group’s social feminism. That is, woman suffrage was endorsed not on the basis of the "justice" or "woman’s rights" argument, but rather as a tool that women needed for their feminine mission. At the fourteenth congress in 1886, Ednah Dow Cheney expressed this rationale: "If woman in the home needs politics to broaden and strengthen her intellectual and moral perceptions, politics needs the home to quicken its conscience, to animate it with unselfish life, and to purify it from cruelty and grossness." ¹¹⁰ The interest in
suffrage, then, was a purely "unselfish" and, therefore, womanly interest. It was not, according to the AAW, something woman desired for themselves or their own aggrandizement or advancement, but a means to a higher end.

The AAW was an inspirational as opposed to an activist group. It did not sponsor specific reform programs but concentrated instead on educating women about the need for reform and about the appropriateness of woman's work for reform. The AAW congresses spawned AAW chapters in various states and encouraged the creation of local woman's clubs. The AAW lasted twenty-five years. In the late 1890s its work was eclipsed by the new and more activist General Federation of Women's Clubs.111

The formation of the General Federation of Women's Clubs in 1890 marked a significant transition in the American club movement among white women. The successful union of women's clubs strengthened the movement and fostered the development of even more local clubs as well as state and local federations. The club movement soon became a large and truly national movement. It also brought the social feminism of the early club movement into an activist phase that placed women and women's clubs prominently in the forefront of the reform campaigns that would later be identified with the Progressive Era. Women's clubs transformed the inspiration they had gained
from study clubs and from the articulation of woman's social mission into concrete programs for reform.

Not surprisingly, and perhaps predictably, it was Jane Croly who called the meeting that organized the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Though the AAW still functioned, it was not primarily a union of clubs. Just as significant, it was no longer a Sorosis project. In 1889 Croly and Sorosis invited ninety-seven clubs to attend a meeting to celebrate the twenty-first anniversary of New York's Sorosis.

In March of the present year, Sorosis, the pioneer woman's club, attains its majority. It is proposed to celebrate the twenty-first anniversary by a convention of clubs to meet in New York on the 18th, 19th, and 20th days of March next; and in pursuance of this object, a delegate from your club is cordially invited to be its representative, and assist, by a report of your methods and their results, in furthering the larger aims of the convention.

Delegates came from clubs in Colorado, California, North Dakota, Illinois, and other states as well as the eastern seaboard. At this anniversary meeting plans for a union of literary clubs were discussed, and a committee was appointed to draft a constitution. In April 1890 women from seventeen states reconvened and formally established the General Federation of Women's Clubs to "bring into communication with each other the various women's clubs throughout the world, in order that they may compare
methods of work and become mutually helpful.¹¹³

The first biennial meeting of the new GFWC was held in Chicago in 1892. Two hundred ninety-seven women from 185 clubs in twenty-nine states attended. The first constitution defined the GFWC as an organization of culture clubs or literary clubs without any particular ideological or political agenda. Article IV specified the terms of membership for individual clubs:

...clubs applying for membership in the General Federation must show that no sectarian or political test is required and that while distinctly humanitarian movements may be recognized, their chief purpose is not philanthropic or technical, but social, literary, artistic, or scientific culture. ¹¹⁴

Accordingly, the program topics of the first biennial focused on issues of club formation and organization and how the federation might facilitate successful local clubs. One early device for mutual assistance was the "card of introduction" that club women could use when traveling to visit other member clubs. The GFWC Advisory Board also began publishing an official GFWC newsletter, The Woman's Cycle, to disperse information about individual clubs and about the federation.¹¹⁵

The "culture club" membership requirement was modified in 1896 although one club woman journalist wrote as late as 1904 that member clubs were still expected to do some literary study.¹¹⁶ Literary or culture study remained a
popular aspect of clubdom well into the twentieth century for the same reasons as in the 1870s and 1880s. By the late 1890s, however, culture study was no longer the raison d'être of the woman's club or of the club movement. The purpose of the woman's club and the role of culture study began to change almost as soon as the federation was formed. For many of the GFWC leaders it was as if the early success in organizing the federation proved a temptation too strong to resist. The press of social feminism, the desire to be active and useful, rapidly pushed the federation beyond its initial purpose. In 1891 the GFWC council met at the home of Mrs. Thomas A. Edison, Jane Croly made this remark:

The eagerness with which the women's clubs all over the country have taken up history, literature, and art studies, striving to make up for absence of opportunity and the absorption in household cares of their young womanhood, has in it something almost pathetic. But this ground will soon be covered. Is there not room in the clubs for outlook committees, whose business it should be to investigate township affairs, educational, sanitary, reformatory and all lines of improvement, and report what is being done, might be done, or needs to be done, for decency and order in the jails, in the schools, in the streets, in the planting of trees, and the provision of light which is the best protection for life and property? 117

Jane Croly was impatient for the increased involvement of organized womanhood in the public sphere, but she was not alone. In 1895 The Woman's Cycle posed this question
to club women:

Would you have clubs limited to study and discussion of these subjects, or would you advise that they endeavor, by education and active cooperation, to promote a higher public spirit and a better social order? 118

The subsequent development of the GFWC indicates that the club women chose the more expansive public-oriented goal. At the third biennial meeting held in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1894, the federation passed its first resolution on a public issue: the four hundred assembled delegates voted to study "forest questions and resources and to further the highest interests of our several states in these respects."

The Federation had also created the Departments of Education, Philanthropy, Social Economics, the Home, and Finance in addition to its Department of Literature.119

By this time the club movement and the GFWC had already achieved some national visibility and even included clubs from Ceylon, India, the Panama Canal Zone, and Australia. The Panama Canal Zone clubs were established at the request of President Theodore Roosevelt in hopes of "remedying the unrest and dissatisfaction which was grievously afflicting the residents of the Canal Zone."120 Such was the faith in woman's civilizing, or, at least, stabilizing influence. In 1896, 495 clubs held individual memberships in the GFWC and over 800 clubs were represented through twenty-one state federations. About 100,000 women were in one way or
another affiliated with the GFWC.\textsuperscript{121} As early as 1892, state and local federations were formed. Maine organized the first state federation in 1892, and Massachusetts and Utah organized state federations in 1893.\textsuperscript{122} In 1895 four southern states (Kentucky, Alabama, Florida, and Georgia) formed state federations.\textsuperscript{123} By 1906, forty-six states had state federations affiliated with the GFWC, and by 1911 every state in the union, Washington, D.C., and the Canal Zone had a state federation of women's clubs.\textsuperscript{124} Urban centers that could boast several women's clubs organized city federations to coordinate the cultural and civic work of local club women. In short, the club movement resembled a giant pyramid. The local and state federations were modeled after the GFWC in structure and in purpose. Federations at every level were designed to promote cooperation, coordinate efforts, and strengthen ties between the local or state level and the national level and with other states or localities.

The GFWC and the state federations forged an important communications link. GFWC officers attended state meetings and worked with state boards. State leaders and club delegates attended the biennial GFWC meetings. Each state that had a GFWC affiliated club had a GFWC representative, first appointed by the GFWC and later elected by the club women in each state. Around 1910 it became customary for
the retiring state federation president to serve as the state GFWC representative, and, as such, to serve on the National Board of Directors. Structures such as the Committee on Reciprocity facilitated and encouraged intra- and inter-federation communication. State federations had a great deal of autonomy in that conformity was not enforced, but, GFWC policy was generally made, or, at least, initiated by the higher echelons of the GFWC. State federations followed the recommendations of the mother federation to varying degrees and, of course, state federations established programs to meet particular local needs or interests, but the General Federation was immensely successful in conveying its values and priorities to the state federations. The Federation structure, the growing enthusiasm that accompanied the growing Federation, and the commitment to harmonious collective work did, in fact, establish a national club culture that, while not erasing regional differences, minimized the potential for conflict that exists in any national organization. Educator and progressive social worker Sophonisba Breckinridge wrote of this accomplishment in her 1933 work *Women in the Twentieth Century:*

Women from all parts of the country and with all sorts of interests have been joined together in the Federation as they probably have been united in no other association. It antedates most of the specialized groups, yet it has survived their appearance and still holds a prominent place in the organization life of
women in the United States. 126

The movement from self-culture to reform within the club movement quickened during the 1890s and the early 1900s and occasioned much favorable comment. As clubwomen shifted their focus from self culture to community culture and then to social or "municipal housekeeping," they were relieved from the burden of justifying what was interpreted as an almost inexcusable self-absorption. Large-scale, public sphere activity for women was still quite novel and was by no means always welcome, but the rhetoric of social feminism as the public application of virtuous womanhood had paved the way.

Jane Croly was one of the first clubwomen to articulate a reform impulse within the club movement, but by the 1890s many others shared her views. Organized womanhood was poised for its philanthropic mission. The awareness and eagerness for the public work of reform and social betterment issued naturally from literary or cultural study. In 1892 Dr. Julia Holmes Smith succinctly stated the case with a quotation from Ralph Waldo Emerson:

> Emerson said, "Civilization is the power of good women"; and it is a notable fact that when a good woman, or one who wants to be good, becomes associated with a few others in a club, after a season or two of self-culture, the question seems naturally to arise, "What can we do for some one else?" 127

For well into the early twentieth century, clubwomen gave two explanations for their new interest in social
activism. First, women had a natural desire to do good and to serve the good. Second, social reform had been nurtured in literary study. Woman's supposed natural propensity for "good works" was the logical extension of the canons of "true womanhood" that had been established in the first half of the nineteenth century. As Sarah Hale had written in 1838, "The reign of brute force is now over, and that of intellect and feeling is at hand."\textsuperscript{128} There was no doubt that Hale believed "intellect and feeling" were the domain of women. Women had been endowed with the capacity and responsibility for moral guardianship. A sense of duty and a willingness for self-sacrifice were hallmarks of female distinctiveness. Women were "God's ministers."\textsuperscript{129} Having a special mission and an awareness of mission, women must spread light through the world as they did in their homes. GFWC president Sarah Platt Decker wrote that "It has been the woman's part since the beginning to put into the world beauty, regeneration, and uplift...."\textsuperscript{130} The gender consciousness borne of the ideology of separate spheres and the moral superiority implicit in "true womanhood" led quite logically to the development of female organizations committed to reform and philanthropy. That this view of moral guardianship was reinterpreted and used by well-known female Progressive-era reformers such as Florence Kelley and Vida Scudder has often been acknowledged.\textsuperscript{131} It was
also the guiding light for late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women's organizations in general.

Historians Ann Gordon and Mari Jo Buhle explain:

The assertion of woman's moral superiority had important implications. For the first time, women as a group had been attributed an independent power of moral guardianship which, however intellectually degrading, contained the potential of a hidden challenge to woman's traditional political and social passivity. In community reforms, such as schools for the poor and charity and religious organizations, and in social clubs, such as sewing and literary circles, middle-class women recognized the advantages of their forced isolation. Through close contact with each other, these women gained a new sense of sorority for their common plight and their common aspirations. 132

The presumed moral superiority of women provided the imperative and the justification for what has been referred to as "social feminism," "domestic feminism," and "municipal or social housekeeping." Women shirked their duty to ignore these challenges, for social changes were needed that only women could engineer. Woman's intuitive desire to preserve and foster the good was deemed especially important as an antidote to the frantic changes experienced by late nineteenth-century Americans. Women needed to temper or humanize "man-conceived and manexecuted and man-driven improvements." Mary Wood wrote that "never in the history of the world has there been a time when there had been so great a need for the full use of the
natural function of woman to supplement and complement the functions of man as now."\textsuperscript{133} The club movement and the GFWC led thousands of women as they took up this challenge and seized this opportunity for focusing their talents.

Woman's perceived natural inclination to "do good" was, according to club women, further nurtured or inspired by their time spent in literary and cultural studies. As one Georgia clubwoman put it, "The club women who used to study Shakespeare have been looking around them upon life's stage."\textsuperscript{134} The connection between literary study and civic work was two-fold. First, literary study ennobled the mind with higher ideals. Association with "truth and beauty" made women want to extend the grace and refinement they had received to the community at large. The GFWC Civic Committee explained this connection in its 1906 report:

The literary and self-culture club is, as a rule, the beginning and support of all those important elements which foster the growth and influence of our Federation; and which develop the interests of women in the forward movement of humanity. For after spending months studying the idealism of Tennyson, or the scathing arraignment of all that is sordid, found in Browning, or after reading a course of Carlyle, and becoming imbued with his scorn of pettiness of the pretentious world; then, at last coming to John Ruskin, with his appeal for more simple and spiritual living, for more beautiful surroundings, and less destruction of all that is fine and noble in ourselves, and in our surroundings; after all this and other strong and wholesome mental pabulum, one naturally begins to open one's eyes, to look about,
and to inquire if we have any right to continue to live amid hideous surroundings; or to permit children of our "land of the free" to be destroyed by drudgery, or vicious environment; or to stand idly by while the grandest and most beautiful, and picturesque scenery in our country is destroyed by the blind greed of grasping commercialism. 135

The woman's literary club of the late nineteenth century for a certain class of women had taken the place of the religious revival of the early nineteenth century. Whereas evangelical Christianity had encouraged the antebellum female voluntary association, the literary club was a major inspiration for this new generation of women. Just as religion involved personal piety and service to others, the woman's club came to combine self-culture and public action. The relationship of women to "culture" had always had religious overtones and now had come full-circle with the imperative for service.

Literary study not only provided inspiration, it also gave women a sense of their talents and competencies--individually and collectively. When Anna Pennybacker of Texas addressed the GFWC as its president in 1906 she stated that the "federation movement sprung from the trained mind of true culture."136 Study habits developed while reading Shakespeare or Homer encouraged women in their ability to study contemporary social problems. The club experience provided a new self-confidence for many women. This new confidence coupled with a strong sense of
feminine duty enabled women to move beyond self-culture to civic responsibility.

An excellent illustration of how club women perceived and explained the shift of focus from self-culture to civic responsibility is provided in the 1906 novel, The President of Quex: A Woman’s Club Story, by Massachusetts club woman Helen M. Winslow.137 The novel covers the two-term presidency of Nancy Phayre, who presides over Quex’s transformation to a socially and politically active club and who is personally changed in the process. Phayre leads the club in a successful campaign for a state anti-child-labor law after observing the employed children and miserable conditions at the local textile mill. As a part owner of the mill since her husband’s death, Phayre provides new worker housing. She also encourages the club to establish a neighborhood recreation center for the mill workers. Phayre had been content with the club’s emphasis on self-culture until she realized a larger duty and a wider opportunity. She understood that her new awareness was shared by many, and she described this change to her club sisters:

There should be a new proverb to fit the times: Many are they who shall pursue literature, but few there be who overtake it. Those were the years when we were finding ourselves; when we learned the sound of our own voices; when we learned to tolerate the opinions of other women; when we were growing a desire to do more
active and valuable work in the world. 138

The women of Quex had achieved the true destiny of the woman's club: they had learned from their culture studies and their work together and had developed a new sense of interest in social amelioration. As one Quex member said: "We prefer Doing to Dante, Being to Browning...We've soaked in literary effort long enough; today nothing but an orgy of philanthropy will satisfy us." 139

From at least the 1890s on the trend in individual clubs was to spend less time in literary studies and more time studying civic affairs or organizing different "village improvement" or "municipal housekeeping" projects. A Michigan clubwoman witnessed this changed emphasis:

There is a general feeling, so far as my correspondence with clubs, my visits to many of them and my observation in the state has revealed it, that we should give less time to merely literary work, and more of it to ethical and sociological culture. 140

A woman in Ohio also noted the change: "They [club women] are asking if their club does not stand for something better and higher than mere selfish culture." 141 Civic work became a positive duty. Clubwomen increasingly believed this, and they were often encouraged in this belief by male supporters. In an address before the Indiana Federation of Women's Clubs in 1902, Dr. John Brewer DeMotte counseled the audience of clubwomen to add civic duty to their important cultural studies: "You owe it to the
civilization in which you live to exert your influence in an effective way for the betterment of environmental conditions for the coming generation."142

Just a few years before, "self-culture" had not been viewed, perjoratively, by women, as selfish. The women of Sorosis and other early clubs had unashamedly pursued their own intellectual development. When justification seemed required, self-culture was rationalized in one of two ways: self-culture made women better and more interesting wives and mothers, and woman's self-culture benefited her family and community through a "trickle down" effect—the light in the home would shine outward as women did the spiritual uplift work for those too busy or preoccupied (men) or too young and untutored (children). Now, as Karen Blair explains, "culture had to be useful" in a more direct way.143

For most clubs and clubwomen, the reform spirit of the times and their own desire to be useful coincided to create an unprecedented opportunity, but it should not be supposed that the change in focus was ever complete or without resistance. In fact, some clubwomen who extolled the significance of literary study after the 1890s did so in order to encourage the compatibility of the two different programs. As civic improvement or reform was emphasized at the federation level, some clubwomen felt compelled to
justify the continuation of literary pursuits. There were many individual clubs that were less than enthusiastic about embarking into the public sphere. A few of these clubs eventually left the federation, but most added philanthropic or service projects to their study agendas. By 1896, only six years after the federation was formed, GFWC corresponding secretary Mrs. Philip N. Moore reported that only fifty member clubs pursued "purely literary work."\textsuperscript{144}

* * *

Mrs. Harriet H. Robinson of the Old and New Club of Malden, Massachusetts, said in 1891 that the "mission of the women's clubs is to fit the sex for larger duties which are so surely coming into their lives."\textsuperscript{145} In looking at the work of individual clubs and state federations, however, it is apparent the clubwomen did not passively wait for these "larger duties." Guided by the maxim "Do the task that lies nearest,"\textsuperscript{146} they identified problems and sought to correct them. In general individual women's clubs concentrated their improvement or reform efforts in three areas: home, school, and community.

Since the movement originated in self-improvement clubs, the home and the homemaker were targeted as in need of reform. Moreover, as the club movement grew, a majority of club members were homemakers as opposed to the writers,
reformers, and career women of Sorosis or the New England Woman's Club. In line with prevailing views regarding women and domesticity, many homemakers sought to improve their sphere, and thus their individual and collective status, by focusing on the role of homemaker and by professionalizing that role. This "home economics movement" was "the progressive version of Catherine Beecher's theories about training the homemaker in domestic science and household management." The professionalization of the homemaker and the rationalization of housework were promoted as the distaff analogue to scientific management in industry. As such it was modern, efficient, and more nearly comparable to the work of men. Despite the vaunted claims of female moral superiority, in a pecuniary society, "man" remained the measure of significance.

In 1905 Alma A. Rogers wrote about the home economics movement and the woman's club:

It is a strange fact which has often been made to support the theory of woman's inherent unreason, that while man long ago reduced his labor to a system, woman has been content to do as her mother before her, except when the masculine genius added some labor-saving invention to the household menage. But to whatever extent this criticism may have been just in the past, it no longer applies. If women's clubs had done nothing more than awaken a widespread interest in the scientific conduct of the household,
their right to exist had been well-proven. 149

Women's clubs surely did "awaken" an interest in the household. Most individual clubs spent time studying some aspect of domestic science from "scientific cookery" to proper home ventilation. State federations had standing committees on home economics that provided study guides for clubs.150 Domestic science promised many healthful advantages for families. It also promised advantages for the homemaker. A midwestern clubwoman explained the significance for women: "We feel that homemaking is the one thing above all others for which we are responsible, that we alone can elevate it, and that we must work out our salvation through scientific investigation and cooperation."151

Most women's clubs were quick to promote domestic science education, believing that "some training in domestic science is an essential part of a girl's equipment for life."152 First, clubwomen sponsored domestic science classes or schools like the School of Domestic Arts and Sciences of Chicago that served 1,100 students in 1905.153 Then clubs urged public school boards and universities to provide domestic science classes and often encouraged acceptance of the idea by furnishing money for equipment or buildings.154

It must be added that many clubwomen viewed the provision of domestic science education as a solution to
the "homemaking-housekeeping-domestic service problem."\textsuperscript{155} The domestic service problem was two-fold: a domestic servant labor shortage and the reported difficulty in supervising poorly trained domestic servants.\textsuperscript{156} Domestic science education and increased household efficiency would, it was hoped, reduce the homemakers' need for domestic help so the "ideal home would be freed of all non-family members."\textsuperscript{157} Also, domestic science education would provide training for working-class women and thereby increase the supply and the expertise of domestic workers. The Chicago Woman's Club, for example, opened a Training School for Domestics in 1886, and in 1892 the Home Department of that club sponsored an employment bureau for domestics.\textsuperscript{158} It is likely that domestic training and placement services for working-class women was viewed as a social service for the urban unemployed, and it may have filled that need. The frank discussions in women's clubs about the "domestic service problem" also reveal a motive of self-interest.

Interest in home economics continued throughout the period studied, but other activities received far more attention. One of the earliest projects of most women's clubs--the traveling library--reflected their devotion to reading and study. Traveling libraries, forerunners of the modern "bookmobile," were collections of approved books and magazines that club women amassed and sent to districts or
rural communities without other library resources. The success of the traveling library led to the traveling art gallery—sometimes an individual club project but usually sponsored by a state federation. The traveling art gallery and the traveling library are pristine examples of the ethical importance that club women attached to the study, appreciation, or even exposure to "high culture." These projects were popular all over the country. By 1904 the Chicago Woman's Club sponsored sixteen traveling libraries, and by 1906 women's clubs in Tennessee had over one hundred traveling libraries.\(^{159}\)

Clubs were also committed to the establishment of municipal public libraries. Often a club or a group of local clubs would combine their personal or club libraries and open them to the public. Clubwomen served as librarians until they were able to hire someone. Sometimes clubs could acquire a rent-free room in the city hall or some other public building. Eventually, clubs encouraged municipal governments to assume responsibility for this service with varying degrees of success. When Andrew Carnegie offered endowments to communities demonstrating a willingness to maintain public libraries, women's clubs were often the agents who either raised matching funds or lobbied local councils to provide assistance. Public libraries all over the nation owe their founding to the efforts of women's clubs. In 1933 the American Library
Association reported that fully 75 percent of all public libraries in the United States had been started by women's clubs.160

Schools were a logical focus for women's clubs given their interest in learning and their womanly concern for children. Many clubs organized kindergartens. Elizabeth Peabody, one of the founders of the New England Woman's Club, opened the first formal kindergarten in the United States in Boston in 1860, and Chicago clubwoman Bertha Payne Newall encouraged the Kindergarten Movement as a philanthropic service. The Kindergarten Movement became extremely popular in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. The leaders in the Kindergarten Movement were almost always women and, among them, several club women.161 The kindergarten became almost as popular as the traveling library as a club project. Clubs raised money to open free kindergartens and sometimes sponsored kindergarten teacher training. In time, clubs pressed school boards to incorporate the kindergarten as part of public education.162

Women's clubs sponsored other educational innovations. They encouraged the addition of manual training, domestic science, and music education to the public school curriculum. Sometimes they initiated schools for the blind
or for "deficient children." Clubs supported higher education as well by working for the establishment of normal schools and providing scholarships. They also worked to improve school grounds, school room decor, and educational equipment. For example, in 1895 the Art and Literature Department of the Chicago Woman's Club pledged to place works of art in the public schools; in the early 1900s the Out Door Art League in California landscaped public school yards. As one midwestern clubwoman stated, "In working for the cause of education the club women have not neglected the things that too often seem petty and sentimental to the men of affairs."  

Sanitation in public schools and the health of school children was another prominent concern. Clubs in Baltimore convinced the school board to sponsor medical inspections. Several clubs or city federations urged that school nurses be added to the staff, and some clubs provided the nurses' salaries. Thomas Balliet, Dean of the School of Pedagogy at New York University, praised the educational work of women's clubs in 1906:

The Women's Clubs have taken a leading part in many of the most important reform movements in elementary education within the last twenty years. In many cities these clubs have been the direct means of introducing manual training, cooking and sewing into the public schools. In some communities they have supported classes in these studies at their own expense, to educate public sentiment and to prove to school boards and city councils the
The wisdom of making them a part of the public school system. 166

The interest in children and their well-being extended beyond education. Anti-child-labor laws were an almost universal concern for club women. Individual clubs and state federations campaigned tirelessly for passage and enforcement. 167 For example, in 1901 anti-child labor bills were introduced into the Alabama state legislature. Edgar Gardner Murphy, an Episcopal clergyman and founder of the Alabama Child Labor Committee and the National Child Labor Committee, led the campaign, which was supported by the state federation of labor, several prominent political figures, and Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs. This coalition and favorable press successfully gained an anti-child-labor statute in 1903. 168 The Massachusetts Federation of Women's Clubs joined efforts with women's clubs in Georgia to set up a model school in the Georgia textile region to combat the evils of child-labor. 169 Also in Georgia, club women assisted the anti-child-labor campaign by lobbying state legislators and packing the state house gallery when the measure came up for a vote. 170

Two other popular issues reflect the interest of club women to extend their protection of children beyond the home: the creation of playgrounds and the treatment of juvenile delinquents. Clubwomen were often activists in the playground movement. Playgrounds were not only a means
to foster the wholesome physical development of children, but it was also believed that adequate playground facilities would save youngsters from juvenile delinquency. The Civic Club of Philadelphia, a woman's club, equipped the first summer playground in that city and maintained it until the school system and the city was persuaded to take over responsibility. This pattern was repeated in communities across the nation.

Individual clubs and state federations were active supporters of the juvenile court system. Once juvenile courts were established, clubwomen maintained an interest in the treatment and disposition of wayward children and pressed for reformatory institutions, police matrons, and juvenile probation officers. In Alabama, for example, the state federation of women's clubs worked with a prominent Birmingham judge and secured legislation regarding the treatment of juvenile offenders and state aid for industrial schools which the women had previously supported. Another example from the South was the juvenile court system instituted in Memphis, Tennessee, largely in response to efforts of the Nineteenth Century Club and the Memphis Playground Association.

After education and children's issues, women's clubs were most attracted to "village improvement," also referred to as "municipal housekeeping" or "city beautification." Like so many of the club movement's efforts, "municipal
housekeeping" involved both the provision of services and agitation for municipal reforms. In their capacity as service organizations, women's clubs organized public concerts, city clean-up days, and health fairs. They beautified public parks and other municipal grounds with landscaping, park benches, and fountains. In 1906 the GFWC Civic Committee reported that city beautification was the most popular project of individual clubs. For example, a California woman's club cleaned up vacant yards, sponsored work to clean and maintain the ocean front, and lobbied for the purchase and preservation of the historic Telegraph Hill. In the San Joaquin Valley, clubs planted hundreds of trees along the highways, and the Civic Federation of Los Angeles sponsored garden contests. Some particularly ambitious women's clubs even founded hospitals. The Woman's Charity Club of Boston built and owned a hospital and, as of 1906, raised about $10,000 a year for its support.

As reform organizations, women's clubs challenged their communities to provide better services, especially public health services. Garbage removal, street cleaning and paving, sewage systems, and pure water were among the issues that women's clubs took up with city halls. Sometimes the local woman's club was the lone agitator for these improvements, and sometimes they worked in league
with other civic improvement groups. The usual tactic of women's clubs was to begin with a campaign to educate public opinion about the need for certain reforms. Newspaper editorials, petition drives, and educational workshops were typical means of achieving public recognition of particular problems. These public awareness campaigns were then followed by meetings with local officials. As with so many other aspects of the club movement, these issues and this pattern of reform was found all across the nation. For example, in Louisville, Kentucky, the women's club began with a campaign to secure passage of an antiexpectoration ordinance. The women then turned their attention to tree planting, street wires, smoke pollution, and vacant lots.\textsuperscript{179}

Women's clubs also identified "women" as a group of people in need of their attention and assistance. The club movement began as a way to further the interests and development of women, and the benefits of club membership have been discussed. As clubs became active beyond their literary pursuits, club women looked beyond their membership and their class. Domestic science education in the public schools was one project that women's clubs sought to assist all women. Many clubs had college scholarship programs for women, and some clubs contributed to women's higher education by raising money for women's college dormitories. In 1902 the South Carolina Federation
administered fifty-two scholarships for young women. The Chicago Woman's Club hoped to serve destitute women when they established an Emergency Employment Center. Some clubs organized workingwomen's clubs and children's day care centers. One club served meals at cost to 1,000 working women each day and provided a reading room. Clubwomen educated themselves about industrial conditions and sought improvements in working conditions for female laborers. Often these improvements proved beneficial to working people in general. Josiah Strong noted this in 1906 when he wrote,

It looks as if women's clubs might take a leading part in the great work of industrial improvement and in establishing right relations between employers and employees. As wives they sympathize with the perplexities of the former, and as women they sympathize with the hardships of the latter. With a hand upon each they may do much to reconcile both.

Historian David Thelan provides an account of Wisconsin club women in this regard:

Women's clubs assumed the role played by unions before the panic of 1893 and supported enforcement of the states' factory inspection laws, and the state's women's clubs in 1899 joined the Wisconsin Federation of Labor in demanding stricter inspection laws. Many workers--as well as their wives--deeply appreciated the successful crusades by women's clubs at Ashland and Madison to persuade merchants to close their stores by 6:00 or 7:00 p.m. so the women employees could spend their evenings at home.
Clubwomen also evinced an interest in women prisoners. Estelle Freedman has written about the women's prison reform movement between 1830 and 1930. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries women's clubs joined this effort. The Chicago Woman's Club opened a home for released female convicts, and several clubs worked to get female matrons in city jails.

Women's clubs also worked to increase the involvement of individual women in the professions and in politics. Rarely, however, were these advances justified as actions taken on behalf of women, but rather the rationale was along the social feminist line of society's need of woman's special wisdom in certain situations. A prime example was the often successful effort to place women on school boards and to obtain school suffrage for women. Another example was the movement to place women physicians in eleemosynary institutions like asylums for the insane.

Women's clubs were of course not always successful in achieving desired reforms, and successes were often hard won. Social service projects were, not surprisingly, more popular with city governments than reform campaigns that required structural change or public expenditures. A midwestern club woman made this point with some bitterness in 1906:

When women have worked openly for...things of value to the community
they have sometimes worked alone, often in cooperation with public governing bodies, and not infrequently against the opposition of lawmaking bodies. When the women undertake at their own expense a work that does not call for legislation and can by no possibility infringe upon the rights and privileges of the man, there is always official tolerance, frequently approval, and sometimes cooperation. In general, however, when a work calls for a diversion of public funds, or requires the sanction of legislation, or seeks to change the existing laws, it is looked upon with indifference or hostility by the powers that be and the lawmakers.

On the other hand, though battles were often hard-won, many reforms desired by women's clubs were effected, and clubs were proud of the role they played in achieving civic improvements. The Civic Club of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, recalled these achievements in a 1906 report:

It is no longer necessary for us to continue at our own cost, the practical experiment we began in street cleaning, or to advocate the paving of a single principle street as a test of the value of improved city highways, nor is it necessary longer to strive for a pure water supply, a healthier sewage system, or the construction of playgrounds for the pleasure of our fellow citizens. This work is now being done by city councils, by the Board of Public Works, and by the Park Commission.

The reform or "municipal housekeeping" initiative in the woman's club movement was fostered at many levels. The General Federation of Women's Clubs was greater than the sum of its constituent parts in facilitating these reform energies. In the 1890s the GFWC became a multi-issue
national organization. Composed of clubwomen, individual clubs, and city and state federations, the GFWC quickly became an important force in Progressive era reform. Beginning with the presidency of Ellen Henrotin in 1894, the federation committed its considerable resources to reform. From the mid-1890s through the 1920s it helped focus the energies of thousands of women as they entered the public arena to make their concerns known and to effect needed changes in urban-industrial America.

The General Federation fostered reform in two ways. First, it provided guidance to state federations and local clubs for their work on the state and municipal level. Second, the GFWC sought legislative reform on the national level. In both instances, the GFWC functioned as a federal democracy. Members elected national officers every two years at the GFWC Biennial meeting. National officers directed the work of the GFWC and the national committees. These leaders had considerable influence in setting priorities for the club movement. At the same time, most reform-action priorities were set at the biennial meetings in the form of resolutions passed by the membership. In a sense, the national federation reflected the interests of the local clubs and state federations and vice versa.

The biennial meetings were also educational events, and "expert testimony" had a prominent place in the work of
the federation. Workshops were a regular feature. Nationally recognized experts came to provide their analysis of various problems and to propose favored solutions. These workshops often included reports from clubwomen on their experiences in dealing with the problems. With each meeting the list of social ills expanded and the work agenda of the club women expanded accordingly.

The ambitious scope of the club movement's interest in reform is reflected in the standing committees that were in place by 1906: Art, Civics—or Civic Improvement, Civil Service Reform, Education, Home Economics, Pure Food, Forestry, Industrial and Child Labor, Legislation, Library Extension, and the Outlook Committee.  

During the administration of Sarah Platt Decker (1904-1906), all state federations and local clubs were encouraged to pattern their committee structure after that of the national federation. "In this way," Decker stated, "there might be an unbroken chain reaching from the fountain head to the smallest tributary."  

Decker gave a brief description of the work of these committees in The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, which devoted an entire issue to the club movement in September 1906. Generally, these committees had a direct service or political function and served to inspire and instruct state federations and local
clubs in their responsibilities. The Art Committee sent original or reproductions of paintings all over the country to be displayed by local clubs to their communities. The watchword was "good art or no art," reflecting the belief that "great practical sermons" were preached by "good art." The Art Committee also encouraged clubs and federations to see to the tasteful adornment of public buildings and to establish Municipal Art Commissions that would place these decisions in the hands of experts. 197

The Civics Committee worked at the national level for the establishment of national parks like the Palisades and Mesa Verde and promoted work at the local level for city beautification and public health measures. 198 It "set forth the duty of women in home and municipal sanitation." 199 The goals of the Civic Committee often overlapped with those of other committees like Education, Pure Food, and Legislation. Between 1904 and 1906 the Civics Committee published "A Civic Primer"—"a handbook, giving concise, simple, practical suggestions on a host of subjects all suitable to be taken up by town and village improvement societies." A copy was sent to every club in the Federation. 200

The Civil Service Reform Committee supported the movement to de-politicize the administration of public
institutions. It was typical of the club movement that an issue was "studied" before action was taken. In 1904 the Federation urged clubs to study existing civil service laws and the need for further reforms. In 1906 at the GFWC eighth biennial meeting the Civil Service Reform Committee presented the resolution that the Federation work for adoption of state civil service laws. Civil service reform remained an abiding concern of the GFWC for many years, but the Federation consistently limited its target to the reform of hiring policies at charitable and reformatory institutions. Public sphere involvement, especially where politics was concerned, clearly had boundaries. Club women would participate in the public sphere only in so far as such participation was compatible with traditional feminine concerns--such as protection of the dependent and helpless. The GFWC Board of Directors described the goal of the Civil Service Committee in 1909 in this way:

It is not proposed to take up the great unsolved questions of national or municipal civil service, but the scope of this committee is to bring to citizens a careful study of the Institutions in which are housed the dependent, the delinquent, and the defective--the helpless members of the body politic...[The Civil Service Reform Committee has encouraged many] to ask through the press and public that only merit be considered in the appointments and that these helpless sisters and brothers shall no longer be victims of the spoils system.
The Educational Committee encouraged clubs to seek reforms in public education. Decker espoused the committee's view that attention must be paid to the educational conditions "not of your child or mine, but of all children."205 As early as 1896 the GFWC went on record with this resolution:

Whereas, The time is ripe for the adoption by the General Federation of Women's Clubs of a subject which shall be a central point of interest and work for all clubs represented, therefore,

Resolved, That we recommend to the clubs a study of the science of education and the educational conditions existing in their home cities, to the end that the united influence of women's clubs may be exerted for the betterment of the state system of education from the kindergarten to the university. 206

The GFWC hoped to enlist the federal government in the pursuit of a better educational system in 1904 when it resolved to work for the establishment of the Department of Education.207 The Federation's work in the area of education was noted with praise in 1908 by the Washington, D. C., based International Association of Education.208

The Household Economics Committee of the Federation served the dual role of promoting domestic science education and of championing the role of homemaker. The Pure Food Committee claimed a tangible victory in aiding the 1906 passage of the national Pure Food and Drug Law. This committee was organized in 1904 for this specific
purpose, and using the federation communication network it stimulated a flood of mail to Congress in support of pure food legislation. Every state federation president sent telegrams to every member of the House of Representatives. H. M. Wiley of the Agriculture Department of Chemistry predicted that women's clubs would have a favorable impact on this legislation when he wrote

I fully believe that whatever the women of this country, as, for instance, through the Federation of Women's Clubs of America, shall demand legislation regulating interstate traffic in adulterated foods and drinks, that legislation will be forthcoming. When the women's clubs are fully aroused in this matter, it will not be possible any longer for organized selfishness to block the wheels of legislation for the purpose of securing an additional profit in trade.

The Pure Food Committee did not disband when the national law was passed. Rather, it shifted its focus to the states. The committee sent 2,000 letters to member clubs to inspire interest in state-level reforms.

The Forestry Committee presented resolutions for the protection of American woodlands, and with a "correspondent" in every state, urged state legislation.

The legislative contributions of the GFWC and in particular some of its leaders was acknowledged by conservation movement leader Harry A. Slattery in 1913. The motivation of women's clubs to support the conservation movement was like their interest in anti-child-labor laws.
The forests, like children, were helpless and threatened by the rush of industrialization. The club movement posited women as "conservers" and "guardians." It was a womanly duty to protect that which would otherwise be crushed by relentless "progress." A representative of a woman's organization voiced this view at a meeting of the National Conservation Congress when she said, "We feel that it for us, who are not wholly absorbed in business, to preserve ideals that are higher than business."\(^{214}\)

The Industrial and Child Labor Committee encouraged and supported the state federations in their efforts as noted previously. This committee was created at the 1898 GFWC meeting when a special workshop was held on the industrial problems of women and children. London social worker and activist Beatrice Webb was one of several speakers. Several resolutions were passed with this preamble: "Believing that right and justice demand that women of large opportunities should stand for the toilers who cannot help themselves...."\(^{215}\) In 1900 the GFWC membership passed a resolution urging all clubs to work in their home states for legislation that would improve the working conditions of women and children. In 1902 the GFWC resolved to work for uniform state child labor laws. The 1902 assembly also decided to petition the directors of the St. Louis Exposition to persuade them to refuse exhibition
space to manufacturers who used child laborers. The committee also sought redress on the national level by working for a bill that would authorize the secretary of commerce and labor to investigate and report upon the industrial, social, moral, educational, and physical conditions of the woman and child laborers in the United States.

Along these same lines, a resolution passed in 1908 called for a bureau in the Department of Interior to concentrate on the working conditions of women and children. The same convention resolved to urge states to enact a ten-hour maximum working day for women. This was a curious regression from an 1898 resolution that called for an eight-hour day for women and children.

The Legislative Committee worked with other committees when legislation was chosen as the desired goal. The Library Extension Committee supported the prodigious efforts at the state and local level to create more public libraries. This remained a special women's club mission for several years. As Decker said, "No greater advance can be made in the growth of a nation than by work of this nature." The Outlook Committee studied new areas for federation work, ever on the "look out" for social problems that might command the attention of club women.

In pursuit of its goals, the GFWC often worked in league with other national organizations. The National Civic Federation, the Conservation Association, the
Tuberculosis Association, the National Child Labor Committee, the Consumers' League, the National Congress of Mothers, the Peace Congress, the National Council of Jewish Women, the National Municipal League, and the American Civic Association are a few of the groups whose efforts the GFWC supported or who invited GFWC representation.  

Early in the second decade of the century club women supported the woman's peace movement. By 1918, however, the club movement was solidly behind the war effort and war relief for Europe. The General Federation raised $25,000 to send one hundred GFWC representatives to France to establish a cantonment for United States service men.  

After the war, the club movement resumed its progressive activities. The two most notable achievements in the 1920s were participation in the Women's Joint Congressional Committee and the passage of the Sheppard-Towner Act. The Women's Joint Congressional Committee was organized in 1919 by ten national women's organizations. "The WJCC served as a clearing house and harmonizer of national lobbying efforts." The WJCC represented the combined forces of social feminism in the 1920s and was sometimes called "the most powerful lobby in Washington." The greatest achievement of the WJCC was passage of the Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Protection Act of 1921. The Sheppard-Towner Act provided
matching federal grants to states to establish maternity and pediatric clinics. It was very successful in reducing the maternal and infant death rate, but opponents succeeded in eliminating funding in 1929.\textsuperscript{226}

The GFWC worked closely with the WJCC during the 1920s. It also continued to press for a child labor constitutional amendment, creation of a cabinet-level department of education, enforcement of prohibition, and other measures.\textsuperscript{227} The desire for reform waned in the twenties, however, and a speaker at the 1924 biennial meeting noted that "clubs were returning to the literary programs."\textsuperscript{228} Club movement began to turn inward although it never completely abandoned an interest in philanthropy and social change. One development that siphoned off reform enthusiasm was the "club house movement." Individual clubs and state federations had fund-raising drives to build permanent headquarters. The GFWC built a national office with guest accommodations in Washington, D. C.\textsuperscript{229}

There were certainly indications of the club movement's conservatism before the late 1920s. The controversy over the admission of black women to the GFWC is one example. Club women also revealed decidedly nativist attitudes. Some of their educational programs were designed to homogenize, or "Americanize," the foreign population.\textsuperscript{230} An even more striking example of the movement's conservatism, given that this was a woman's
movement, was the reluctance to endorse woman suffrage. There were many active club women who were suffragists and, from time to time, they tried to include the woman suffrage goal in the GFWC agenda. Suffrage leader Carrie Chapman Catt asked the GFWC for support on the issue in 1907, and clubwomen-suffragists responded with a "massive campaign for club support." The woman suffrage issue was discussed at the 1908 and 1910 biennial meetings, and by 1912 there was evidence that woman suffrage had gained many converts among clubwomen. By 1914, a majority of club women were convinced that suffrage could be a useful tool that need not threaten femininity or home life. A resolution in favor of GFWC support for woman suffrage passed at the 1914 meeting, with only twelve negative votes registered by delegates from Rhode Island and Delaware.231

Of course, the national reform impulse in general was on the wane in the 1920s, and therefore, the slow ebb of reform enthusiasm among club women was part of a larger phenomenon. It is also true, however, that despite the energetic assertion of club women into new spheres of public activity, the movement bred a subtle complacency which proved inhibiting. This divided legacy of the white women's club movement is discussed in the final chapter.

* * *
It is clear that the club movement among white women was an active part of Progressive Era reform despite the fact that their work and accomplishments have received little recognition from twentieth-century historians. Clubwomen shared many assumptions with the social justice wing of Progressive reform about existing problems, their causes and solutions. Clubwomen, like other Progressives, believed that reformation of the social environment was essential. They pursued this goal with the Progressives' attraction for expertise, professionalism, and bureaucracy. Marilyn Gittel and Teresa Shtob observed that

...despite the awareness of the political implications of urban social problems, women in the reform movement shared the male Progressives' belief that the city's problems were amenable to non-political solutions or urban and environmental planning. Their continued justification of political participation by the "special [woman's] sphere" argument was partly a matter of expediency, but it also fit with the concept of rational administration in both household and city dear to all Progressives. Civic reform became to Progressives largely a "scientific" endeavor, analogous to scientific management in the factory. 

Clubwomen observed that the urban-industrial transformation of the last half of the nineteenth century was a mixed blessing. They championed commercial and industrial "progress" but lamented that it had occurred without the moderating hand of womanly influence. The
needs of certain dependent groups had been overlooked, in fact, exploited, as a consequence of industrialization. The development of services to preserve a certain quality of life had been neglected as cities grew larger and more unwieldy. Clubwomen observed industrial strife, urban crime, and inadequate or nonexistent city services. They also observed that unrestrained or unmitigated industrial capitalism was not likely to change its course without outside intervention. They noted, as well, that municipal and state governments lacked the institutions to deal with modern problems and that protective or ameliorative institutions would not emerge without public pressure. After a century of social conditioning, middle- and upper-class women believed that they were uniquely capable and responsible for identifying and achieving the needed reforms. GFWC historian and celebrant Mary Wood described the situation in this way:

The wheels of evolution have brought the human race of the twentieth century up to great heights; the inventive, aggressive, and creative functions of the twentieth century man is urging us on, but the price of such rapid advance must be paid, and that the cost may be less terrible, the conserving influence of organized womanhood is needed. Conservation, then, in its best and highest sense is the raison d'être of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs—conservation of child life, of womanhood, of civic and national integrity in matters of public and private import; conservation of the best and highest functions of womanhood which shall make her in very truth the
conserver of all that is best in our advancing civilization, preserver of all that is good in the civilization of the past and helpmeet in the daily battle of life which is constantly going on about them. 235

As wives, daughters, and consumers, many of these women had clearly benefited from the leisure and financial gains of the upper and middle classes. But class-bound as they were in their social attitudes, their experiences in a highly defined woman's culture created a parallel perspective on the world and their place in it. The constituent influences in this woman's culture have been discussed: the cult of true womanhood, the glorification of motherhood, the ideology of the separate spheres, Christian perfectionism, and the relationship of women to culture. It has also been explained that these prescriptions for female behavior were not wholly imposed from without upon decades of passive womanhood. Rather, the development of woman's culture was in large part the active creation of nineteenth-century, white, middle- and upper-class women. It was designed and promulgated to dignify—even to sanctify—woman's role. It was designed to grant respect and a degree of mastery to women who, in a rapidly changing but avowedly democratic society, were excluded from the events and occupations that—rhetoric aside—were the most revered and rewarded. It was designed to enhance woman's power within her sphere and, by
extension, within the society. It was designed to provide
women with a greater measure of autonomy. Add to this the
"gender consciousness" that the homo-social world of
Victorian America imbued in women. Add, as well, the
increased attractiveness and opportunity of female higher
education. The radicalism of the woman's rights movement
proved too threatening for many white women, but the desire
for assertion and the feelings of discontent were present
nonetheless.

By the end of the nineteenth century white upper- and
middle-class women were in a position to change the
direction of their lives. Their exclusion from business
and politics, coupled with the moral and affective
qualities that had been touted as woman's domain for nearly
a century, allowed women to perceive themselves and to
proclaim themselves as particularly fit for the task of
societal reclamation. Despite their leisure and their non-
working-class backgrounds, these women claimed that the
special lens of their gender allowed them to see the plight
of the unprotected or unprivileged. Further, their
socialization as women—although they would have credited
"female nature" rather than socialization— instructed them
to do good, to be caring, to aid and to protect. Their
interest in philanthropy or social reform was presented,
and believed, as utterly selfless. Their work for the
uplift of humanity, the salvation of the cities, and the
preservation of the environment was easily and convincingly construed as an extension of domestic nurturance. Just as woman cared for her home and family, the time had come for woman to extend this care to a larger home and the human family.

It is essential, in the historical study of reformers, to look behind the claims of altruism for the specter of self-interest. Richard Hofstadter introduced this line of inquiry regarding the Progressive reformers in 1955 when he concluded that Progressive Era reform was motivated by the status-anxiety of the educated middle class who wished to reestablish influence that had been lost to the new leaders of business and industry. George Mowry had earlier reached similar conclusions in his 1951 study of California Progressives. Samuel Hays observed the self-interest of the patrician class progressives shocked by the materialism of the age. In his study of municipal political reform, Hays also found evidence of self-interest among the urban upper classes seeking control over the urban working classes through the governmental reforms of the era. Gabriel Kolko posited a conspiracy of self-interest among businessmen: corporate regulation introduced "political capitalism"—the regulation of business for the protection of businesses' interests. David Thelen, in his 1972 study of Wisconsin progressives, focused on another interest
group--consumers and taxpayers--who sought self-protection through reform.237

Club women need not be excepted from such inquiry. At the same time, evidence of self-interest does not necessarily obviate concern for others. The two may, and usually do, coexist. It is reasonable to assume that club women shared some of the self-interested goals of male reformers of their class. For example, many club movement programs sought social control through what Paul Boyer calls "positive environmentalism"--the belief that behavior can be positively affected by the right changes in the social and physical environment.238 Libraries, art in school rooms, supervised playgrounds, landscaped parks, public concerts, paved sidewalks, pure food and drinking water were changes in the environment that, it was believed, would inspire cooperative behavior and deter destructive behavior. Club women hoped that these ameliorations would benefit the whole community. They no doubt also hoped that these improvements would reduce urban crime and working-class discontent. Similarly, industrial schools and domestic science education would help countless youths prepare for economic self-sufficiency, and, it was hoped, would reduce poverty, dependence, and industrial strife. There is no reason to believe the altruistic claims of club women were wholly disingenuous. But the methods of amelioration were those that--whatever good may
have come from them—rarely challenged the prevailing economic order.

Clubwomen had motivations of self-interest that, while not transcending class, were separate from or parallel to those of their class. The club movement began as a frank effort to improve the status of women. Self-culture and mutual self-improvement were the watchwords of the early literary clubs. Even after reform and philanthropy became goals of the club movement, clubwomen continued to pay special attention to the needs and aspirations of women. This was done in a direct way by supporting women’s education, women in the professions, and finally by examining sex-discriminatory legislation.239

The salient aspect of self-interest in the club movement, however, was the way in which the movement provided a highly visible presence of women at work in the public sphere—demonstrating their ability and their womanly concern. However well individual women of earlier decades acquitted themselves in the cult of domesticity and true womanhood, recognition for those achievements was never more than private, sentimental, or rhetorical. As a mass of organized womanhood, the club movement achieved—through its social feminism—widespread public recognition of female virtue. Municipal housekeeping demonstrated a usefulness and a righteousness for women that the
privatistic cult of domesticity could not achieve. Throughout the nineteenth century, middle-class white women sought respect and status by calling attention to the superiority of domestic values and to woman's role as moral guardian. Social feminism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—and the club movement was the largest single expression of social feminism—was a way that women could fulfill their salvific mission to the nation on a larger scale. In addition to raising virtuous children, the social imperative of "Republican Motherhood," women could, to use historian Marlene Wortman's phrase, "Domesticate the City." And this wider application of female skills and values yielded larger and more tangible results. Women could fulfill their mission, thus satisfying themselves and others that neither femininity nor woman's sphere had been breached, but they could do so in public at high noon, so to speak. There were satisfactions and commendations in this larger realm of service that exceeded the quiet, private, and often sentimental self-congratulation of the mother and homemaker. The point is not that service to the family was not satisfying or fulfilling or interesting. It was, and remains, important work. The point is that, despite the rhetoric to the contrary, the work of middle- and upper-class women in the home did not—in contrast to the nation-building, frontier-conquering work of men—gain the same
acclaim. The female ideologues of true womanhood were engaged in a protest movement, albeit a short-sighted one. They protested the marginality of woman’s sphere. They hoped to place the domestic virtues of woman’s sphere in front and center. The club movement provided an unprecedented opportunity: woman’s work was not marginal; it was important, it was central, it would change the world. As the Board of Directors wrote in an open letter to clubwomen in 1909,

The federation may become a mighty factor in the civilization of the century...an army of builders, ready, alert, systematic, and scientific, not only a potent force in this generation, but transmitting to the next a vigor and strength which have never been given by any race of women to their inheritors. 240

The club movement allowed women to feel part of a "potent force"—fulfilling the mission for which they had been born and bred, providing a sphere for usefulness, and achieving undeniable recognition for their sex. In this way, the self-interest of middle- and upper-class women was surely served.

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This extended introduction presents a sketch of the situation of white, middle- and upper-class women in the nineteenth century and describes in brief the woman’s club movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth
centuries. Moreover, this chapter establishes the context of a national white women's club culture in which white Texas club women created local literary clubs and a state federation and then proceeded to play an important role in the state's era of progressive reform. As the following chapters trace these developments in Texas, the general congruence of the Texas club movement with the national club movement becomes apparent. This remarkable congruence notwithstanding, white club women in Texas also fashioned a movement that addressed problems peculiar to a frontier state in the lower South.
Endnotes for Chapter Two


4McHenry, p. 249.


7Woloch, p. 223.

8Woloch, p. 224.

9Scott, Southern Lady, p. 92.


13Jane Addams, Twenty Years at Hull House (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1920), pp. 119-120.


The term "social feminism" was first used in the modern historiography of American feminism by William L. O’Neill in 1969. It has since been used by numerous historians of women as a standard term of definition. See
William L. O'Neill, *Everyone Was Brave: A History of Feminism in America* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 51-52, 77-106. O'Neill differentiates social feminists from suffragists or women's rights' feminists: "The difference between hard-core feminists and social feminists was chiefly that the latter either could wait for the ballot, or did not think it was necessary for their purposes, while the former believed with Susan B. Anthony that woman suffrage was essential to the success of all other reforms," p.52. Another way to characterize different positions in American feminism is suggested by Aileen Kraditor. Early suffragists, according to Kraditor, usually based their advocacy of suffrage and other rights for women on an appeal to "justice" or natural rights, i.e. women and men shared a common humanity and should, therefore, have similar rights and privileges. Aileen Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1965). A related way of describing different nineteenth century feminist ideologies is to note the different proposed remedies for woman's aggrieved situation. Feminists of the Stanton/Anthony stripe challenged male hegemony with an assertion of woman's rights to male preogatives. An alternate position, usually held by social feminists, asserted an improved position for women by emphasizing female distinctiveness and moral and cultural superiority to masculine values. This is an important distinction for the historian and the twentieth century feminist. But, it is essential to recognize that in the nineteenth century the two remedies were often not considered mutually exclusive. Susan B. Anthony and Sarah Hale represent opposite extremes in terms of prescribed remedies, but they shared certain assumptions about female distinctiveness. The vast majority of white women in nineteenth century America pursued a course for woman's advancement which incorporated both remedies to varying degrees, and most asserted women's rights on the basis of female distinctiveness. For more information on nineteenth century feminism. see Ellen DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848-1869* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978); Ellen DuBois, "The Radicaliam of the Woman Suffrage Movement: Notes Toward the Reconstruction of Nineteenth Century Feminism," *Feminist Studies, 3*, No. 1/2 (1975), 63-71; Gerda Lerner, "Women's Rights and American Feminism," in her collection of essays *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 48-62, 186-7; Eleanor Flexnor, *Century of Struggle: The Women's Rights Movement in the United States* (New York: Atheneum, 1974); Keith Melder, *Beginnings of Sisterhood: The American Woman's Rights Movement, 1800-...

The phrase "moral equivalent of war" is from the 1910 essay with that title by William James: William James, "The Moral Equivalent of War," International Conciliation, No. 27 (Feb. 1910).

22 Livermore, "Twenty-Five Years," p. 262.


27 Breckinridge, p. 76 as quoted in Wilson, p. 99.

29 Wilson, p. 99.


33 Woloch. p. 288; Rothman, p. 67.


36 Breckinridge, pp. 16-17.

37 Breckinridge, p. 16.


40 Hall, p. 200.


42 Ella Giles Ruddy, Mother of Clubs: Caroline M. Seymour Severance (Los Angeles, Baumgart Publishing Co., 1906), pp. 24-25 as quoted in Blair, p. 32.

43 Blair, pp. 32-3; Hall, pp. 200,202.

44 Ruddy, p. 42 as quoted in Blair, p. 33.

45 Hall. pp. 203-4.

Helen M. Winslow, "Literature via The Woman's Club," Critic 44 (1904), 241; Hall, p. 205.

Jane Cunningham Croly (1829-1901) immigrated to the United States from England in 1841. Her father was a radical Unitarian minister and reformer. She attended Central College in Geneva, New York—a unusually progressive coeducational institution. She married journalist David Croly in 1856 and bore five children. She was a member of New York City's Stephen Pearl Andrew's Club "where the 'best' male and female 'minds in New York City' discussed philosophical and scientific questions. She began her career in journalism in New York City in 1855. She was the chief staff writer for Mme. Demorest's Mirror of Fashions when it was founded in 1860 and contributed to many other publications. She published collections of her columns, a book on marriage and the sexual relation, and History of the Woman's Club Movement in America. One of her sons, Herbert David Croly, became a famous political thinker and founding editor of the of the New Republic. McHenry, p. 86; Leach, pp. 138-9.

Croly as quoted in Blair, p. 20, n. 18.


Blair, pp. 20-3.


Blair, p. 27.


60 "Short History," New England Woman's Club Papers, Box 11, Schlesinger Library, Cambridge, Mass., as quoted in Blair, p. 34.

61 White, p. 479.


63 Blair, p. 62.


66 Wood, pp. 5-6.

67 Wood, p. 25.


70 Nettie Bailey, "The Significance of the Woman's Club


74 Rogers, p. 350.


78 Wood, p. 28.

79 Winslow, "Literature via the Woman's Clubs," p. 239.


82 Wood, p. 29.

83 Cooley, p. 376.

84 For example, Gilman wrote: "As the distinction [between men and women] increased, the attraction
increased, until we have in all higher races two markedly different sexes, strongly drawn together by the attraction of sex, and fulfilling their use in the reproduction of the species...The Unnatural feature by which our race holds an unenviable distinction consists mainly in this,—a morbid excess in the exercise of this function...Our distinctions of sex are carried to such a degree as to be disadvantageous to our progress as individuals and as a race." Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution (1898; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1966), pp. 29-33.

Rogers, p. 350.


Anna Pennybacker said of the 1906 meeting: "Even a casual glance told the spectator that these were representative women, the happy grandmothers, mothers, wives and daughters, who stand for the best and sanest in American home and social life. The middle aged woman was strongly in evidence, but some of the most capable and most beautiful members had passed the three score mark and many were still in the flush of youth." Pennybacker, p. 79. Also see Rogers, p. 349.


96Baym, p. 22.

97In writing of the mid-nineteenth century, Taylor and Lasch explain female devotion to literature and its related reform function as an avenue to friendship and an alternative to the increasing social isolation wrought by changing social and material circumstances: "...the ideal of pure friendship, given the peculiar moral atmosphere of the period, grew quite logically out of a devotion to literature. With whom after all, could a woman converse, assuming that she was endowed with the refinement which qualified her in the first place to write of the beauties of the 'spiritual' life, except with other women so endowed?" Taylor and Lasch, p. 31.

98Winslow, "The Story of the Woman's Club Movement," p. 557. The other Southern clubs listed by Winslow as "firsts" were: Arkansas: The Columbian of Little Rock (1883), Paucha (1888);
Alabama: Cadmean Circle of Birmingham (1888), Kettledrum of Tuscaloosa (1888), Thursday Club of Selma (1890); Florida: Green Cove Springs Village Improvement Society (1887); Georgia: Nineteenth Century History Club (1885); Kentucky: Covington Art Club (1887); Louisiana: The Geographic Club of New Orleans (1880); South Carolina: Spartanburg Ladies' Association (1884); Tennessee: Ossoli Circle of Knoxville (1884); Texas: Quid Nunc Club of Tyler (1886) and Dallas Shakespeare Club (1886). Wood, pp. 556-7.

99 Rhine, p. 522.


102 Blair, pp. 100-1.


105 Blair, p. 42; Leach, p. 185.


107 As quoted in Blair, p. 45.


110 Ednah Dow Cheney on Suffrage. AAW Papers, 14th Congress, 1886, p. 115 as quoted in Blair, p. 53.
Blair, pp. 45-56; Leach, pp. 185-9, 318-9.

As quoted in Sewall, p. 362.


Article IV, Constitution, GFWC, 1892, as cited in Breckinridge, pp. 17-8. Also see Wood, p. 319.

Wood, pp. 43, 47, 49, 321.


Croly as quoted in Wood, p. 46.

Croly as quoted in Breckinridge, p. 19.

Breckinridge, p. 19.

Wood, pp. 228-9; "History of the Club Movement," in GFWC Press Release, 1911, Mrs. Percy V. (Anna) Pennybacker Papers, Barker Texas History Center, Austin, Texas.

Wood, p. 80.

Wood, p. 43; Hall, et. al.


Breckinridge, p. 12.


Sarah J. Hale, "Why Women Were Made Lovely,"

129Jane Cunningham Croly certainly held this view of women. As she wrote in her history of the woman's club movement, "Women have been God's own ministers everywhere and at all times. In varied ways they have worked for others until the name of woman stands for the spirit of self-sacrifice." She also wrote: "The sense of duty is always strong in the woman. If she disregards it she never ceases to suffer. Her convictions of it have made her the most willing and joyful of martyrs, the most persistent and relentless of bigots, the most blind and devoted of partisans, the most faithful and believing of friends, and the only type out of which nature could form a Mother." Both statements are quoted in Wood, pp. 18, 22.

130Sarah Platt Decker, as quoted by Pennybacker, p. 84.


132Gordon and Buhle, p. 287.

133Wood, pp. 304-5.


136Pennybacker, pp. 81-2.

137Helen M. Winslow, The President of Quex: A Woman's Club Story (Boston: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1906).

138Winslow, Quex, pp. 35-6.

139Winslow, Quex, pp. 185-6.
As quoted in Breckinridge, p. 21.

As quoted in Breckinridge, p. 21.


Blair, p. 100.

Mrs. Philip N. Moore as quoted by Wood, pp. 80-1.

Mrs. Harriet H. Robinson as quoted by Rhine, p. 520.


Rogers, p. 348.

See, for example, Ward, p. 9 and Granger, p. 54.


153 Sherman, p. 37.

154 See, for example, Sherman, p. 37.

155 Sherman, p. 36; Nettie Bailey also refers to the "problem" in her article cited above: Bailey, p. 207.

156 "From at least as early as the 1830s, foreign visitors noted the shortage and unreliability of servants in American cities...The number of those employed in a variety of domestic occupations (servant, waiter, housekeeper, and steward) declined more than 49 percent between 1870 and 1920, whereas overall population grew from 40 million to over 106 million, an increase of 165 percent. In only twenty years, between 1900 and 1920, the number of those employed as servants dropped 46.7 percent." U.S. Department of Commerce, Women in Gainful Occupations, 1870-1920, p. 39 as cited by Wilson, p. 77. David Katzman finds that the number of women employed as domestic servants rose between the years 1870 and 1910 but sharply declined by 25 percent between the years 1910 and 1920. During this period the number of native-born white women entering domestic service declined; the rise of immigration in the same period meant that more and more domestic servants were foreign-born. "The expansion of the urban-based middle class—a result of rapid industrialization and accompanying urbanization—constantly increased the demand for household labor." David M. Katzman, Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), pp. 47-8. Thus, the increased demand contributed to the difficulty affluent women expressed in finding domestic help, especially between 1910 and 1920. Further, cultural differences probably contributed to what leisure-class women referred to as the "domestic servant problem."

157 Matthaei, p. 198.

158 Frank and Jerome, pp. 52, 125.


160 Blair, p. 100; Mary Beard, p. 43; Ward, p. 21; Sherman, p. 46; Granger, pp. 51-2; Price, p. 141. At the 7th biennial GFWC meeting, it was reported that in 34
states belonging to the GFWC, there were 4655 traveling libraries operated by women's clubs, 474 free public libraries had been established by women's clubs, sometimes without outside assistance. In the recent best-selling novel, "...And Ladies of the Club," Helen Hooven Santmyer includes an accurate fictional account of how a local woman's club established a public community library. See Santmyer, "...And Ladies of the Club" (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1982), pp. 763-79.

161Patricia Rueckel, "The Contributions of Women to the Progressive Movement in Education, 1890-1919," Diss. University of Pittsburg, 1964. Elizabeth Peabody was a charter member of the Transcendentalist Club in 1837 along with Margaret Fuller, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and others. She published several works on kindergartens and organized the American Froebel Union in 1877. On Elizabeth Peabody, see McHenry, p. 320.

162Ward, pp. 9-10; Sherman, p. 33; Granger, p. 53; Bailey, p. 207; Frank and Jerome, p. 127; Julia Holmes Smith, p. 383.

163Frank and Jerome, p. 129; Ward, p. 13; Sherman, p. 36; Granger, p. 53; Breckinridge, p. 40.

164Sherman, p. 33; Beard, pp. 36-7.


167Sherman, pp. 33, 43; Granger, p. 55; Frank and Jerome, p. 225. On the related issue of compulsory education legislation, see Frank and Jerome, pp. 68, 127. On the related issue of truant officers, see Ward, pp. 9-10.


170 Hugh Bailey, p. 171.


172 Ward, p. 15.


174 Hackney, p. 306.


177 Moore, pp. 60-1; Ward, pp. 14-5, 21. The Chicago Woman’s Club sponsored a public concert in 1912 that was attended by 25,000 people: Frank and Jerome, p. 294.

178 Ward, p. 17. Regarding hospitals in the mid-west, see Sherman, p. 47. The Chicago Woman’s Club established the Children’s Hospital Society which furnished 150 beds for children in Chicago hospitals: see Frank and Jerome, p. 21; Julia Holmes Smith, p. 383. According to a report
made at the 1910 GFWC biennial meeting, 546 individual clubs helped establish health camps, sanitariums, TB clinics, and hospitals. This was cited in Beard, p. 48.


180 Wood, pp. 142-3; Jerome and Frank, p. 129; Ward, p. 13; Sherman, pp. 35-6; Sims, p. 207.

181 Jerome and Frank, p. 349.


183 Sherman, p. 39.

184 For example, see Jerome and Frank, pp. 247, 296; Sherman, p. 39; Ward, pp. 22-5.


186 Thelen, p. 77.


188 Freedman, Prison Reform, pp. 55, 198 n.34; Jerome Frank, pp. 38, 42, 250; Wilson, p. 99.

189 By 1891 women in 28 states had school suffrage. See Rhine, p. 527. Regarding women on school boards, see Wood, pp. 142-3; Winslow, "The Story of the Woman's Club Movement," p. 554; Kate Gannett Wells, "The Boston Club Woman," in "Women's Clubs--A Symposium," Arena, Aug. 1892, p. 370; Balliet, p. 89; Winslow, Outex for fictional, but
accurate, account of club involvement in school board election. Regarding women as school principals, see Jerome and Frank, p. 313.

Rhine, p. 527.

Sherman, p. 31.


Blair, p. 102. Henrotin had been a member of the Fortnightly Club in Chicago and the Chicago Woman’s Club. Her husband was a financier and first president of the Chicago Stock Exchange. She served as president of the National Women’s Trade Union League and as vice-president of the Woman’s Branch of the Congress Auxiliary of the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. She served for four years as GFWC president, 1894-1898. Biographical information taken from McHenry, pp. 187-8 and Blair, p. 104.

Decker, pp. 1-5; Wood, p. 221.

Decker as quoted by Wood, pp. 191-2.

The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 28, No. 2 (1906).

Decker, p. 5.

Decker, p. 3. Regarding the Palisades and the cliff dwelling preservation bills, note the GFWC supportive resolutions in Wood, pp. 134-5, 182-6. Regarding the GFWC Civic Committee, see Blair, p. 103.

Pennybacker, p. 81.

MacKnight, p. 95.

In 1883 Congress passed the Pendleton Act, a national civil service law which required competitive exams. Samuel Hays explains that proponents of this early measure were "patricians" of the "educated class" who were dismayed by the declining influence of their class and the growing alliance between industrialists and politicians. The Pendleton Act marks the beginning of civil service reform rather than its complete success. Women’s clubs were part of the continuing movement to extend civil service reform at the federal and state level. Regarding the Pendleton Act, see Samuel P. Hays, The Response to Industrialism, 1885-1914 (Chicago: University of Chicago

Pennybacker, p. 80.

*GFWC Board of Directors, 1908-1910, "An Open Letter to Club Women," TFWC Yearbook, 1909-1910*, p. 9. Also see Decker, p. 3 and Thelen, pp. 121-2 regarding the Wisconsin civil service reform effort. A resolution was passed at the June 1908 GFWC meeting that referred to civil service reform as a "moral" and not a "political" reform. See Wood regarding 1908 meeting and resolutions.

Decker, p. 3.


*TFWC Yearbook, 1904-1905*, p. 55.

Toler, p. 8.

Pennybacker, p. 82.


Pennybacker, p. 81; Decker, p. 4; Blair, p. 103. Regarding forestry resolutions in GFWC, see Wood, pp. 88, 188 and *TFWC Yearbook, 1904-1905*, p. 55.

Harry A. Slattery, Letter to George Kibbe Turner, 26 May 1913, as quoted by Hays, *Conservation*, p. 142. Hays further comments on the work of women's associations: "Women's organizations such as the General Federation of Women's Clubs and the Daughters of the American Revolution became especially enthusiastic about conservation. A leader of the National Conservation Association wrote that three women leaders in these two organizations had 'done as much in the legislative field for conservation as any three men I know of.'" Hays, *Conservation*, p. 142.
Hays, *Conservation*, p. 145; Grantham, p. 104. Grantham states that the few state parks that were created in the South in the early 1900s were usually in response to pressure from women's organizations.


Pennybacker, p. 82; Decker, p. 4.

1908 GFWC Biennial meeting resolutions, as quoted in Wood; also see Wood, pp. 109-10.

Decker, p. 5; Wood, p. 181.

Decker, p. 5.

Decker, p. 5.

Breckinridge, p. 33; Pennybacker, p. 83; Wood, p. 222. Richard Watrous, of the American Civic Association wrote of the work of club women in an early twentieth century issue of *The American City*: "To the enthusiasm, untiring efforts and the practical suggestions of women, as individuals and in clubs, must be credited much of the splendid headway attained by the general improvement propaganda. They have been leaders in organized effort and have enlisted the sympathy and actual cooperation of men and associations of men in their laudable undertakings. Hundreds of cities that have distinguished themselves for notable achievements can point to some society or several societies of women that have been the first inspiration to do things. Hundreds of these women's clubs are affiliated members of the American Civic Association, so that its influence is made powerful by having back of it the moral support of thousands of men and women." As quoted in Beard, pp. 279-80.


Headquarters, Austin, Texas, n. pag.


226 Lemons, pp. 153-80; Banner, p. 148.

227 Lemons, p. 123.

228 Breckinridge, p. 51.

229 Breckinridge, pp. 82-3.

230 Blair, p. 111.

231 Blair, pp. 111-3.

232 David Thelen's book on Wisconsin progressivism is a notable exception. See Thelen, pp. 86-112. Samuel P. Hays mentioned the GFWC in The Response to Industrialism, and acknowledged that club women "played an influential role in shaping the course of reform movements in the early twentieth century. He inaccurately, however, dates GFWC reform interests to the Sarah Platt Decker administration which began in 1904; significant reform activity actually began in the 1890s. See Hays, Response, p. 73. Dewey Grantham is to be credited for his notice of the work and influence of women and women's clubs in numerous progressive causes. Grantham, Southern Progressivism. Several state studies of progressivism, like those cited above, mention the contributions of club women. In general, however, histories of the Progressive Era have been written as if the club movement did not exist or with the assumption that its impact was too marginal for extended discussion.

233 Two of the best discussions of the Progressive reformers' attraction to expertise, professionalism, and bureaucracy are Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order and Samuel P. Hays, "The New Organizational Society."

234 Gittel and Shtob, p. 68.

235 Wood, p. 312.


238 Boyer, pp. 220-83.

239 Interest in women's education and professional options has been mentioned. Club women supported protective legislation for women, such as the 10 hours day and the establishment of the Women's Bureau. Regarding support for the Women's Bureau, see Clarke A. Chambers, *Seedtime of Reform: American Social Service and Social Action, 1918-1933* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1967). They also sought reform of some sex-discriminatory laws such as property laws. For example, see Pennybacker, p. 82.

Chapter Three

White Women’s Literary Clubs in Texas, 1880-1920

"Neglect not the gift that is in thee"
--Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle
of Waxahachie, Texas

It was more than ten years after New York’s Sorosis
and Boston’s New England Woman’s Club sparked the woman’s
club movement before secular women’s clubs appeared in
Texas. Like the national movement, the Texas club movement
developed in two phases, progressing from the literary club
to the action-oriented club. There were, of course,
qualifications to this progression. Many clubs continued
their literary endeavors well after "civic improvement" was
added to their agenda, while some clubs preferred to remain
primarily or even exclusively literary clubs, eschewing the
hustle and bustle of agitation and reform. But regardless
of the extent to which Texas literary clubs dropped their
books and papers to take up the work of the world, the
white woman’s study club became an important part of the
lives of countless leisure-class and professional women.
The literary club met several needs for this group and for
the individual women. The proliferation of these clubs,
their development and organization, their procedures, and
the social function they performed for their members is the
subject of this chapter. First, it is crucial to establish
the social setting for these clubs--Texas in the late-
nineteenth century.

*   *   *   *

In 1870 when Texas was readmitted to the Union, the state was an overwhelmingly rural, frontier state. Fewer than one million people lived in Texas at that time, and Texas was by far the least densely populated of the southern states. About one-third of the population was black and about one-thirteenth of the population was foreign-born, primarily German and Mexican, but also Irish, French, English, Austrian, Bohemian, Scots, Swiss, Canadian, Polish, Norwegian, and Swedish. The most populous county, Washington County in Southeast Texas, had no large town, and the largest cities in the state--Galveston and San Antonio--numbered about fourteen thousand and twelve thousand respectively. Waco, Dallas, and El Paso were "mere villages." Galveston had street cars after 1869, but the horse and buggy was the primary mode of transportation. Thirty-one stagecoach lines operated in 1860, and less than five hundred miles of railroad lines were in place at that time. Except for the Gulf port and the waterways through Jefferson, Texas, the state was essentially land locked. With the exception of one interstate railroad from Texas to Shreveport, Louisiana, all other inter- and intrastate overland traffic moved by wagon or stage.
The settlement frontier in 1870 extended from Henrietta, near the Red River, to Junction, about 100 miles west of Austin, and then to the Rio Grande River. The western part of the state and the Panhandle were almost totally without white inhabitants.\textsuperscript{5} Most people were farmers, agricultural laborers, or in related occupations. A growing number were cattle ranchers. There were 1,900 physicians, 1,000 lawyers, and 1,600 teachers.\textsuperscript{6} Most schools were one-teacher, one-room rural schools, and most of the teachers were male.

In the state capital of Austin conditions were still quite primitive. Hogs ran in the unpaved streets and cattle drives came through town. There were no sewers and no city garbage collection.\textsuperscript{7} The legendary violence of the Old West was still part of Texas in the '70s. Shoot-outs were not uncommon, and the Sam Bass outlaw gang was notorious all over the state.\textsuperscript{8} West of San Antonio, Texans were still fighting Indians as late as 1877.\textsuperscript{9}

The Republican Reconstruction government presided over a new state constitution that was adopted in 1869. The new constitution centralized governmental authority, made sweeping provisions for the establishment of free public schools, and provided for Negro male suffrage.\textsuperscript{10} Most Texans were hostile to the 1869 constitution: the free school provisions were extremely costly, and public
education was still a dubious proposition. The expanded
government provided in the constitution was also costly and
was perceived as an extravagance at best and an
encroachment upon personal liberty at worst. Democrats and
conservative Republicans feared that new measures were
bankrupting the state.\textsuperscript{11} Texans shared the sentiment of
southerners in other Confederate states in believing Negro
suffrage an abomination; consequently Negro voting rights
were effectively sabotaged through a variety of legal and
extra-legal devices. Most of the new laws passed by the
Reconstruction legislature were repealed by a Democrat-
controlled state legislature in 1873, and a new state
constitution was adopted in 1876. Hard times, social
conservatism, and the Granger "money-scarce economy of
self-sufficiency"\textsuperscript{12} produced a constitution more in accord
with contemporary popular opinion.\textsuperscript{13}

But, if Texas was still a frontier state in the 1870s,
it was a fading frontier, a frontier in transition.
Immigration into Texas, migration within the state, the
expansion of transportation and industry, and the recovery
of agriculture mark the 1870s as a turning point in the
state's social and economic history.

The Anglo population of Texas had always been
comprised of immigrants. The Austin and DeWitt colonies
established in the 1820s were the first Anglo settlements
of any significance. From the period of the Texas
Republic, 1836-1845, to the eve of the Civil War, migration to Texas accelerated. The financial panic and poor harvests in the United States in 1837 sent hundreds to Texas looking for new land and prosperity. As The Telegraph and Texas Register reported, "Crowds of enterprising emigrants are arriving on every vessel...."14 Texas became part of the transMississippi west that seemed to offer new hope and opportunity. The overwhelming majority of these new Texans came from the southern states. East Texas became the "westward extension of the older Deep South."15 The northern and western fringes of Texas were "distinctly Border South country" with settlers coming mainly from Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Illinois.16 Central Texas, home of the original Austin Colony, drew many from the South who brought hundreds of slaves and soon established prosperous plantations. The Central Texas area also received a large concentration of Europeans, especially Germans. Southern Texas rapidly became the most ethnically diverse region as it was peopled with Anglos, Mexicans, Blacks, and Europeans.17

The immigration tide again surged after the Civil War. Texas escaped the worst ravages of the war. Good crops and harvests and business-as-usual proceeded in Texas with relative security. At the end of the hostilities, Texas had more food supplies and more hard money than the total
of the southern states.¹⁸ The only undamaged state in the Confederacy became the refuge for thousands. In Lawrence Goodwyn's words

"Going West" for most Southerners meant, in the familiar phrase of the time, "Gone to Texas." The phrase became so common that often only the initials "G.T.T." scrawled across a nailed-shut door were needed to convey the message. White and Negro farmers by the thousands drove down the plank roads and rutted trails of the rural South, westward across the Mississippi River to the Sabine and into the pine forests of East Texas. The quest for new land and a new start drove lengthening caravans of the poor--almost 100,000 every year of the 1870s--ever deeper into Texas, through and beyond "piney woods" and on into the hill country and prairie Cross Timbers. There the men and women of the South stepped out into the world of the Great Plains. ¹⁹

Substantial immigration continued through the close of the nineteenth century. From 1860 to 1900 the population increased five times, and much of that increase was due to immigration. During the '70s and '80s half of the adult population of Texas, in any given year, had been born outside the state. Texas was the "great Southern frontier."²⁰

As the eastern half of the state swelled with new settlers, the line of settlement moved progressively westward. The western expansion began with the defeat of the Plains Indians and proceeded with the advance of the livestock industry. Railroad construction resumed after
the war and served the ranching industries as well as West Texas agriculture. In 1870, scarcely 40,000 people lived west of the farmers' frontier; this population quadrupled in the next decade and totalled 500,000 by 1900.21

As the railroads had extended and unified the rest of the United States, the resumption of railroad construction in Texas after the Civil War facilitated westward expansion within the state and linked Texas with the national economy. By 1890 half of the cotton produced in North Texas was shipped east by rail rather than by sea via Galveston.22 Also, as with the rest of the nation, railroads helped promote intrastate western settlement, urbanization, and the development of Texas industry.23 By 1880 Texas surpassed all southern states in railroad mileage, and during the 1880s more miles of track were laid in Texas than in any state in the union.24

The resulting growth of urban centers was phenomenal. Before 1860 Texas claimed none of the South's largest cities, but by 1900 three of the Old Confederacy's largest cities were in Texas.25 In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the population of Houston grew from 16,513 to 27,557; San Antonio from 20,550 to 37,673; and Dallas from 10,358 to 38,067.26 El Paso and Ft. Worth also boomed as a result of railroad expansion and became cities rather than towns.27

Economic development in Texas in the last quarter of
the nineteenth century is a checkered story of prosperity and decline. Production for state and national markets gradually overtook production for home consumption, and as the state economy became less insular, Texans were increasingly affected by national economic conditions.

Agriculture was undoubtedly the state's major industry. In the 1870s agriculture was mostly for home consumption, and produce was routinely used as cash in local markets. As the rapid expansion of rail lines brought a decline in freight charges, farmers increasingly entered the commercial economy. The increase in farm mortgages and farm tenancy, due to rising land values and falling prices, resulted in the need for cash crops and was a significant prod to enter the market place. The growing population and its expansion into West Texas yielded vast increases in production. Cotton and other specialty crops, the dairy industry, and the cattle industry boomed; merchants, banks, and other ancillary enterprises thrived as a result. This "boom" yielded paradoxical results: by the end of the century the state economy was growing and healthy but those directly involved in agriculture were unevenly affected. Cattle prices were up, but individual farmers were struggling.

Manufacturing industries also experienced dramatic changes. Manufacturing had actually grown during the Civil
War because of the absence of invading armies. Industrial enterprises for the production of war materials were encouraged and later converted to civilian uses. Still, development was slow until the '80s when the value of production from manufacture increased by 146 percent. \(^{28}\) Growth slowed in the "panicky nineties" but boomed again in the early twentieth century. \(^{29}\) Lumbering was a major nineteenth-century Texas industry and was expanded to supply national as well as world markets. Agriculture continued to dominate the Texas economy, but by the turn of the century the value of Texas industrial production was more than half that of the agricultural produce of the state. \(^{30}\)

By the time the first oil wells "came in" after 1900, the Texas economy had been transformed from one of self-contained individual subsistence to one of production for commercial markets. It was essentially a colonial economy, heavily dependent on foreign, out-of-state capital for investment and on national markets for the sale of produce and natural resources. Railroads zig-zagged the state connecting new towns and growing cities and linking the state to the nation. But, as cultural geographer D. W. Meinig points out, "'integrated' did not mean assimilated." \(^{31}\) Meinig cites an early twentieth century analysis of Texas as observing that Texas was still "somewhat off to herself," lacking close ties with
bordering state despite the predominantly southern heritage of most of its Anglo population. White Texans alternately claimed a southern pedigree and a western bravado, and the cultural institutions developed in the last decades of the nineteenth century revealed the influence of both.  

* * *

One sign of change in this growing state was the appearance of secular clubs for white women. Beginning in the 1880s, women’s literary or study clubs began to appear in every region of the state. However, white women in Texas, unlike their cohorts in northeastern states, did not have a century-old tradition of female organizational activity upon which to build, so the antecedents of this new social phenomenon in Texas must be found elsewhere: in the popular education movement that had swept the nation, at least since the days of the Lyceum; in the fraternal associations of their menfolk; in ladies’ church groups; and in the influence of the national women’s club movement. These forerunners to the Texas women’s club movement and the social conditions that contributed to this organizational impulse are the subject of the next several pages.

Free public school education was slow to develop in Texas, as in much of the South, but the popular education
movement of the nineteenth century was evident in Texas before the Civil War. Pioneer communities often founded lyceums, literary or debating societies, and theatrical groups as readily as they established churches. The East Texas town of San Augustine had the "Thespian Corps" as early as 1838, and both Houston and Galveston had an active lyceum in the 1850s.33

As the population increased after the Civil War so too did these pockets of education, self-improvement, and culture. "Chautauqua" was one vehicle for popular education in Texas as in much of rural America. Chautauqua founder John Heyl Vincent created the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circles in 1878 and within ten years the four-year correspondence course of guided reading had made its way to Texas.34 The C.L.S.C. was but one of several reading or study courses that flourished in the late-nineteenth century and that "filled a vast need for adult education opportunities" in frontier and rural America.35

Before the late 1890s most opportunities for adult education in Texas communities were for men, but some included both men and women. Mrs. J.C. Terrell, president of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs from 1901 to 1903, recalled these early associations sardonically:

Gentlemen invariably held the floor, ladies contributing music to the program. Occasionally a rare Hypatia would read an "original poem" or "essay." The usual status of the "fair sex" being that of
applauding listener. 36

The 1881 Study Club of Jefferson, Texas, is an example of a club that had both male and female members. Organized in 1881 as a Chautauqua Club, the club met weekly in members' homes. The first hour was spent in study and the second hour was for socializing or music programs. After following the C.L.S.C. study plan for some years, the group switched its focus to current events and studied magazines. Later, they took up the study of William Shakespeare. While studying Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the male members produced a theatrical performance complete with rented costumes from New Orleans. By 1902 the 1881 Club was an all female group, but whether the male members were lost or were purged is indeterminable.37

The Athenaeum debating society and the Rush Literary Society were two Austin men's groups that were organized in the 1880s. In addition to augmenting a young man's formal education, these groups served as a sort of finishing school for the man about to enter the world of affairs. Members learned poise in speaking before an audience and developed their argumentative skills.38 By 1888 Dallas had at least one men's literary or debating society, the Century Club.39

Adult education was but one reason to organize in the late-nineteenth century, and Texas was no exception to de Tocqueville's observation about the American penchant to
associate in groups according to every caste, cause, or interest. As settlement and urbanization increased, the number and variety of voluntary associations increased. For example, in 1886 twenty-three "miscellaneous societies and organizations" were listed in the Dallas City Directory, including the Dallas Chess Club, the Dallas Social Gymnastic Club, the Traveling Men’s Union, and several German associations. The Dallas Chess Club began as an informal evening gathering of bachelors at the Windsor Hotel and evolved into the Dallas Club, the leading organization of local business and professional men. Fraternal organizations also abounded. Again in 1886 there were three masonic lodges, three Oddfellow lodges, four Knights of Honor lodges, and at least nine other fraternal groups.40

The capital city, Austin, provides another example of the popularity of voluntary associations in late-nineteenth-century Texas. In 1890 Austin was the sixth largest city in the state. By that time the new capital building was complete, downtown street lamps were electrified, gas heating was available, and the University of Texas was in its seventh year.41 Austin boasted twenty-two fraternal association lodges, two men’s literary groups, two gun clubs, four music groups, and ten "miscellaneous societies and organizations."42 In
communities with large German populations there was usually a Turn Verein. The Fredericksburg Turn Verein, for example, was founded in 1871 "to help make its members physically strong and spiritually clean."\textsuperscript{43} Men's clubs and associations pre-date the secular women's clubs, but several new men's clubs were organized near the end of the century when the women's club movement made its debut in Texas. In the late-nineteenth century a some of the men's clubs were study societies, but more were hobby groups or business associations.

It has been noted in chapter two that women's church societies were the major form of female organizational activity in the antebellum South. In Texas these groups generally developed later than in the older and more settled southern states. Before Texas independence from Mexico in 1836, the Roman Catholic Church was the only legally allowed religious institution. The first Protestant congregation was not established until the late 1830s.\textsuperscript{44} As soon as a community was large enough to sustain a church, women organized church societies to raise money for a building and a minister. Once the church building was in place, the women formed groups within the congregation. These groups were usually missionary societies or "ladies aid societies." The first Baptist woman's church society in Texas was formed in Nacogdoches, Texas, in 1835, and the Texas Baptist Woman's Missionary
Union was formed in 1880. The oldest women's church group listed in a late-nineteenth century Austin city directory was the Ladies Aid Society of the Tenth Street Methodist Episcopal Church, South, organized in 1870; but in all probability women in Austin and elsewhere had joined in church work long before this date. Also, many women who moved to Texas as adults more than likely had been involved in church work in their home states.

Female organizational activity took other forms as well. There were ethnic groups such as the Austin German-American Ladies' Aid Society organized in 1881 or the Fredericksburg social group, Kafeekraenzchen, organized in 1889. The Women's Christian Temperance Union may have been the earliest non-denominational national organization to start a chapter in Texas; it appeared in 1882. Eastern Star, Rebekahs, and the Ladies Relief Corps of the Grand Army of the Republic all established groups in the larger communities. The Daughters of the Republic of Texas, originally an auxiliary of the Texas Veterans' Association, was founded in Houston in 1891. The Texas Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy was inaugurated by a Texas club woman in 1896, and the Texas Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution began in 1899 with five chapters.

The appearance of these groups in the final decades of
the nineteenth century was fairly contemporaneous with the
women's club movement in Texas. With the exception of
ladies' church groups, however, the new secular women's
clubs involved significantly more women on a more regular
basis than any other organization or type of organization.
The advent of women's clubs in Texas is explained by many
factors, most prominently the social and psychological
function of these clubs that will be discussed later in
this and in succeeding chapters. But the historical timing
was significant.

As documented in Chapters One and Two, the last half
of the nineteenth century was a time of tremendous
organizational activity for white American women. For all
the talk of "newness," however, white women of the middle
and upper classes of the Northeast and the Ohio River
Valley had been joining and creating voluntary associations
for decades. In the South, and especially in the
relatively young state of Texas, however, the groups formed
in the last decades of the century were truly "firsts."
In the villages and growing urban centers of Texas, the new
woman's organizations were, in a sense, a greater
innovation than those in older and more settled parts of
the nation. The growth and development of female voluntary
associations, and especially women's clubs, coincided with
the critical stages of growth and development that marked
late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Texas. Some of
the enthusiasm of the club movement in Texas is explained by the truly innovative quality of these groups. Women's clubs were not only "forces for good" among women and in communities, they were also among the first organized attempts in this rapidly fading frontier to bring a woman's hand to community building. As revealed in later chapters, this indicates the boldness of these groups as well as their hearty acceptance.

News of women's clubs and the national women's club movement reached Texas and was itself a major source of inspiration for the Texas clubs. While Texas was somewhat "off to herself," the state did have ties with the rest of the union because of its derivative population and through print media that gained popularity in the late-nineteenth century. As noted in Chapter Two, the work of study clubs and women's clubs in other states was frequently discussed in national magazines, and Godey's Lady's Book, Harper's, and other national publications had subscribers in Texas as early as 1860.53 News of the "new woman," the "woman question," and the "women's club movement" undoubtedly reached Texas through these publications. In addition to the serious articles written about and for women's clubs, Texans may have seen clubs mentioned in newspaper or magazines advertisements like this one:

The Coming Woman—who goes to the club while her husbands tends the baby, as
well as the old-fashioned woman who looks after the home, will both at times get run down in health...The most wonderful remedy for these women, is Electric Bitters...

The strongest inspiration for many of the first Texas women's clubs was, however, word-of-mouth and personal encounter.

Following the lead of white middle- and upper-class women in other parts of the nation and in response to local social and economic conditions, Texas women clustered in literary or study clubs in the last decades of the nineteenth century. It is not surprising that a fair degree of settlement was necessary before the women of a community considered establishing a club. Women's literary clubs were founded in towns and cities that were settled enough to afford a sense of leisure for the more affluent of the population. Club women in Texas were like club women elsewhere: they were primarily middle- and upper-class "women of leisure" who did not work for wages and who often had servants to assist with domestic responsibilities. The exception to this category was the significant minority, usually single or widowed, who were teachers or writers. Thus, only communities well-established enough to sustain a middle- and upper-class of "leisured" or professional women spawned women's clubs. This explains why the women's club movement in Texas was a semi-urban phenomenon and why the club movement's
appearance in Texas awaited a certain degree of urbanization. Rural women who lived on the farms or ranches outside of even the smallest towns were too busy, their place in the domestic economy too important, and their homes too far apart to allow time for an interest in group-organized literary study and intellectual self-improvement.

On the other hand, while Texas women's literary clubs were found only in towns and cities, there was a vast difference between the small villages and the growing cities of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Texas. Recall that the earliest postbellum women's literary clubs in the East and Midwest were organized in substantial urban centers like New York City, Boston, and Chicago, although clubs were formed in smaller cities and towns too. In Texas, most of the women's clubs organized before 1900 were in the more populated eastern and central parts of the state and most were in urban centers. Still, women's literary clubs were found as far west as El Paso and as far south as Laredo on the Mexican border; clubs were organized in cities like Houston—population 23,000 when the Ladies Reading Club was begun—55—and in towns like Gainesville—population 6,000 when the XLI Club was founded.56 In Texas, clubdom did not hinge on full-blown urbanization. The towns and cities were new and growing,
and the word of the new sororial experience was not far behind.

Just as important as a relative degree of urbanization was the change in the social position of white women. As demonstrated in Chapter One, the economic function of middle-class white women had disappeared and the affective responsibilities of "true womanhood" were substituted in its place. "True womanhood" offered the compensations of perceived moral superiority but not without the restrictions regarding the type and range of acceptable female activity. The expansion of the market economy resulted in an expanded leisured class among white women; the wives of middle-class working or professional men were included as well as wives of the very affluent. Also, despite new and more complex standards of household order that absorbed some of the time of the new leisure class, and despite the rhetorical emphasis on the affective and moral responsibilities of woman, the increased importance of the cash nexus left nineteenth century middle- and upper-class women with less relative status and higher expectations for personal fulfillment than their eighteenth century forebears. In the South, white women had the additional burden of the antebellum southern ideal of the "lady." Despite the reality of the life of the plantation mistress and the postbellum middle- and upper-class urban woman, the image and myth of fine southern womanhood
persisted in its influence. Still, the approbation afforded "true womanhood" and southern ladyhood became insufficient rewards in a society that increasingly valued competition and achievement.

Along with the loss of economic function, a new appreciation for education and the rise of an educated professional elite heightened the sense of reduced status experienced by middle- and upper-class white women. The revolutionary gains made in women's educational opportunities in the North and South have been discussed, and many Texas club women were beneficiaries of the new support for women's education. The new educational opportunities for women and the success of women's educational enterprises, such as the new colleges for women, was a significant challenge to widely held beliefs regarding female intellectual inferiority. But although there was new recognition of those talents, there were few opportunities to use them once school days were over. Expectations were raised, and in small numbers a few bold women chose to pursue careers in the male-dominated professions. Southern women from families of means often attended a female seminary or woman's college for a period of two or three years. Some became teachers. Some became writers or journalists. But most married and raised children. For these literate women there were few means
of continuing or using an education. There was no arena for their intellectual talents or literary interests.

Previous chapters discussed the much publicized "discontent" among white women in the late-nineteenth century. The women's rights movement and the social feminism of the W.C.T.U. have been mentioned as the best-known manifestations of this discontent. The much discussed "new woman" was also challenging nineteenth century stereotypes about female behavior and activity. Club women rarely, if ever, described themselves as discontented, but as demonstrated in Chapter Two, the club movement was widely acclaimed by its devotees as filling a void in women's lives.

Thus, the women in Texas who organized or joined women's literary clubs did so for many of the same reasons as club women in other regions. Texas was a relatively new state, and much of the population was new to the state but the social and individual needs of many middle- and upper-class women in Texas were the same as their cohorts who lived in different parts of the country. The situation of many women in Texas was like that of

...the new leisure class [of the Southeast] which was created after the Civil War when business men and industrialists assumed the ascendancy formerly enjoyed by the planters. Under this societal arrangement the duties of conspicuous leisure devolved more upon the wife, who, prevented by leisure class ideals from working, found satisfaction in clubs. 58
The nineteenth-century cult of true womanhood was still an influential ideology, but if it had ever been satisfying in earlier times, it required some redefinition for these late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century women. Texas club women were women who had a growing sense of their individuality and a desire to recognize and develop latent talents. They desired to be useful. They wanted a certain seriousness and depth in their lives. And, above all, they wanted to establish themselves as cultural leaders. Historian Karen Blair contends that the redefinition wrought in "true womanhood" by the women's club movement was the entrance of women into the public sphere. While this is true, Texas clubwomen expanded the definition of "true womanhood" before their involvement in public affairs. It was the literary club that added a dimension to "true womanhood" that began to restore, or at least temporarily shore up, the satisfaction of that ideology.

The woman's literary club, and indeed the entire club movement in Texas, seemed an almost perfect solution. In this growing state, few women were directly involved in commercial and industrial progress. The "queen of the home" was secure in her role and, for the most part, did not challenge it, but just as the extended logic of "true womanhood" propelled some women into professions such as
medicine, it also suggested to middle- and upper-class women in Texas that their talents and their interests need no longer be "hidden under a bushel." As the women’s club in Waxahachie, Texas, stated with their motto, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee." 59

* * *

With an understanding of the precursors to clubdom in Texas and the material and cultural conditions that fostered the club movement in Texas, it is appropriate to look at Texas women’s study clubs with some specificity. While the white women’s club movement in Texas followed the national pattern of progression from self-culture to civic responsibility, new literary or study clubs continued to form well into the twentieth century. The next chapter will chart the increasing involvement in the public sphere of white women’s clubs in Texas, especially after 1900, but for many clubs, study and "self-improvement" continued to be the raison d’etre. The following pages briefly describe several of the women’s literary or study clubs that were formed in the 1880s and 1890s. From this description one observes the interests of these early club women and how the "club idea" took root in Texas. In looking closely at these Texas women’s literary clubs, one observes an important dimension of women’s culture in Texas during these turn-of-the-century decades.
The first known women's literary club in Texas was the Bronte Literary Club of Victoria, Texas. Organized in 1855 as a literary society for school girls, it became a community club for older girls and young married women in 1880. Also in 1880, the Pearl Street Reading Club of Dallas was begun by Mrs. John Henry Brown, wife of the Texas historian and ex-Dallas mayor. The Ladies' Reading Club of Houston was another early Texas club. It was organized in 1885 with twenty charter members for the purpose of "intellectual and social culture" and was patterned after the Ladies Literary Club of Grand Rapids, Michigan. An 1892 article in The Arena about women's clubs in the South mentioned the Ladies' Reading Club as a particularly serious study club. Indeed, Adele Briscoe Looscan, one of the founders, wrote that the Ladies Reading Club "was designed to supply a want long felt, namely, a common ground on which ladies having a literary taste might meet.

The story of the Dallas Shakespeare Club, founded in 1886, demonstrates the way in which the women's club movement came to Texas and reveals a pattern that would be repeated again and again throughout the state. In 1885 Dallas resident Mrs. J.L. Trezevant visited her step-mother in St. Louis and was her step-mother's guest at a meeting of a local women's literary club. From this experience
Trezevant determined to form a similar club in Dallas. When she returned to Dallas she conferred with her friend Miriam Morgan. The two women set out in their carriage driving over the brick and dirt Dallas streets to call on their friends to tell them about the club they hoped to form. The club’s first meeting was later held in the parlors of the Grand Windsor Hotel.63

The Dallas Shakespeare Club claimed to be one of the oldest Shakespeare clubs in the United States and was cited by Massachusetts club woman and author Helen M. Winslow in one of her many articles on the club movement. This national distinction notwithstanding, many club members met with resistance from husbands, as indicated in this club reminiscence:

> When the club was first organized...its members read Shakespeare for pure enjoyment and then hurried home to reach the fireside before the arrival of their husbands, most of whom had a very decided dislike for any kind of club. Later the club read Shakespeare more slowly and critically, the husbands still fumed, and some members, so the stories go, dropped out to keep peace in the family. 65

Despite the resistance that some members felt, others became unalterably devoted to club work. May Dickson Exall was single when she joined the club as a charter member. She was elected the club’s first president in 1886 and served continuously until her death in 1936. A student at Vassar College before moving to Texas with her family, the
Dallas Shakespeare Club was her first club activity in what was to become a distinguished club career. She was a co-organizer and one-time president of the Dallas Federation of Women's Clubs, president of the Dallas Library Association, and founder of the Dallas Woman's Club. She married a successful horse breeder, Henry Exall, and was the mother of one child.66

The Dallas Standard Club probably took its inspiration from the Dallas Shakespeare Club. It was organized one month later by thirty women who lived in a fashionable neighborhood known as The Cedars. Its charter members included Mrs. A. H. Belo, whose husband published The Dallas Morning News; Mrs. George Aldredge, whose spouse was district judge for the 14th Judicial District; and Mrs. Robert Gibson, whose husband was president of Howard Oil Company.67

The Quid Nunc Club of Tyler was organized shortly after the two Dallas clubs. It claims to be the oldest club for "married women only" in East Texas. This is a much inflated distinction because it was extremely rare for a club formally to limit its membership to married women. The Quid Nuncs were determined to make literary study compatible with female domestic virtues. Without doubting the sincerity of their ideals, their avowed domesticity may have tempered resistance like that experienced by women of the Dallas Shakespeare Club. Their motto expressed their
dual purpose: "Keep your eyes on the stars, but don't forget to light the household candles by the way."\textsuperscript{68}

The Pierian Club in Dallas began as a Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle in 1888 when Mrs. A.C. Ardrey interested nine other women in collective study. Their work was guided by their belief that "to bring to bear upon the affairs of today the reflective powers which have been strengthened by a study of the past is one of the most important tasks of the intellectual man."\textsuperscript{69} The Pierian Club was one of several women's clubs that began as a Chautauqua Circle. "Man", of course, referred to all members of the human race, and this usage continued to be standard until the 1960s. Still, in this case, it also reflects a measure of timidity about the assertion of a relatively new preogative for women, i.e. intellectual endeavor. It would not be long, however, before white club women in Texas would speak boldly about the rights and responsibilities of womanhood.

Even sparsely settled West Texas could boast a few women's literary clubs after 1875 when English speaking women began to move there.\textsuperscript{70} Most secular women's groups in West Texas date to the 1890s and early 1900s, but by 1886 the Shakespeare Literary Club had been organized in Clarendon, Texas. Clarendon was not an old settlement; it sprang up in 1877 when migrants from other communities
moved there. Its first women's literary club, therefore, appeared less than a decade after initial settlement. A Chautauqua Club appeared in the Panhandle town of Amarillo in 1899. Amarillo had been nothing more than a railroad construction crew site called 'Ragtown' in 1877 but grew rapidly with the rail line and the cattle industry.

An historian of late-nineteenth century West Texas women observed that women’s clubs appeared "as community life became more leisurely." That was generally true even though some West Texas club women still contended with frontier conditions. A member of the Sorosis Club of Sweetwater, Texas, not organized until 1899, provided this picture:

Some of us like to recall the good times we’ve had, cooking on real cook stoves, washing on rub-boards, filling lamps with coal oil, building fires with wood and taking up ashes, bringing stove wood, milking cows, churning, making gardens, rolling our babies in our sandy un-paved streets, in antiquated baby buggies, and even occasionally spending a day with a friend—all while we were loyally keeping up with our club work and with our obligations to church, community and our country! Those were the good old days and we were happy to be living! We even had buggies and horses, side-saddles and long riding skirts, long hair and high top shoes, and wore fascinators and at least two petticoats at the same time. We could not bear the idea of anybody seeing through us on the street! Then, in the early days, there were no paved streets nor side-walks and so the sand would be rather bad at times, not only to walk in and drive in, but to go against while it was circulating freely in the
In Sweetwater in the 1890s there was only one church and one ladies aid society; women's clubs were unheard of. Mrs. Mattie Trammell had grown up in South Texas and had read of women's clubs. She discussed the idea for a woman's club in Sweetwater with her friend, Mrs. Cap Newman, who was from Kentucky. Like the two Dallas gentlewomen who organized the Dallas Shakespeare Club, Mattie Trammell and Mrs. Newman hitched up a buggy and began calling on friends to plan for a first meeting.\textsuperscript{75}

The full-blown enthusiasm for organizing women's study clubs did not emerge until the 1890s. Dozens of clubs were formed in this decade, setting the stage for a state federation. Austin's first secular woman's club was formed in 1890 by twenty-nine women for the object of "mental improvement." The local newspaper hailed the first meeting of the Pathfinders as a collection of the "brainiest women in Austin."\textsuperscript{76} The Ladies Shakespeare Club of Houston was likewise founded in 1890. The XIX Century Club of Corsicana began around 1891 as the Corsicana Literary Circle. Its stated goal was the encouragement among members of "a spirit of social friendship, and of intellectual inquiry and culture."\textsuperscript{77} The Abilene XXI Club began in 1892 as "an earnest band of Chautauquans." Its object was "intellectual improvement and mutual helpfulnes."\textsuperscript{78}
The Central Texas town of Waco had two women's clubs by 1892, one of which would later issue the call for a state organization of women's literary clubs. Also in Central Texas, several prominent San Antonio women formed the San Antonio History Club in 1896 to "study history and historical literature." In North and East Texas clubs were formed in Waxahachie, Palestine, Nacogdoches, Denton, Tyler, Kaufman, and McKinney. The Four-Leaved Clover Club in Kaufman was organized in 1897 as a "circle for mutual improvement," its members were self-described as "the most intelligent and cultured women of Kaufman." Similarly, the Owl Club of McKinney was created to promote "the intellectual growth and literary culture of its members." Other Dallas clubs appeared in the 90s, for example, the Altrurian Chautauqua Circle designed "for self-culture and mutual encouragement and sympathy in earnest study." The West Texas towns of Colorado City, Cleburne, Matador, and Vernon spawned clubs in this decade. The Yamparika Club of Vernon stated its goal as "the widening of the mental horizon by the stimulation of individual effort." By 1900 there were well over one hundred women's study clubs in Texas spread all over the state, and the Texas club movement was just beginning.

From this brief catalogue of early women's literary clubs in Texas one learns how the news of women's clubs
reached Texas communities. Sometimes women read of clubs in other states. Some women learned of clubs from out-of-state relatives. New Texans may have belonged to clubs before coming to Texas. Once clubs began to appear in Texas towns, word of clubdom spread as women moved within the state. The Anson, Texas, Woman’s Club was started by a woman who had been a charter member of the Austin American History Club before she married and moved to Anson with her husband. In Seguin, Texas, three clubs were founded in one year when the indefatigable Ella Peyton Dancy Dibrell moved there and shared her experience of clubs in Austin.86

More revealing than the proliferation of women’s clubs in Texas is the unanimity of purpose. It is clear from the previous examples that women’s clubs in Texas were consistent with the national pattern: these clubs were formed not primarily for social purposes but for the education and self-improvement of the membership. Texas literary club women emphasized the desire for intellectual attainment and sophistication. The study club offered women an avenue for achievement and growth. Adele Briscoe Looscan of the Houston Ladies’ Reading Club affirmed this sentiment when she described the goals of her club in the 1890 annual presidential report:

...that each may cultivate a taste, which thus far has been wanting for her mental development; that new avenues may be opened, new chambers unlocked for the intelligent mind, which much find in all
of them something to interest, something to elevate. 87

There seemed few acceptable intellectual outlets for middle- and upper-class women. The literary club offered genteel challenges in an age when growth and change seemed a matter of course. It offered a new sphere of activity to women, who, despite the hustle and bustle around them, were consumers and observers more than producers or participants. The literary club was an antidote to the fear of uselessness and a tonic for the flagging female egos that "true womanhood" no longer completely defined. As the secretary of the Dallas Standard Club explained in 1886,

At the recurrence of each meeting, we take such keen interest and our work grows more fascinating as we note the progress, and discover gifts and accomplishments of members, which have hitherto lain dormant, only requiring opportunity and occasion to awaken them to life and activity. 88

In addition to the erudition gained through the literary club, Texas clubwomen exclaimed upon the club's value for teaching women to think critically and, perhaps, less provincially. A clubwoman from Sherman, Texas, wrote that "The true aim of the ideal club will be, not to teach, but rather to inculcate a taste for study." 89 Through study and the exchange of ideas, women became more cosmopolitan and more open-minded. It was sometimes pointed out, somewhat defensively, that women's clubs would "broaden and
refine those who participate" just as men's clubs did. Bride Neill Taylor who started the Austin American History Club believed that in addition to the "acquirement of the habit of prompt and decisive thinking,

...experience in any well-conducted club brings to each member the courage to hear with patience, and a calmly receptive spirit, opinions diametrically opposed to her own, the beneficial shock of seeing her own most cherished beliefs boldly questioned, and perhaps even controverted.  

The fact that clubs were designed to provoke debate and controversy among the membership discloses another little-known aspect of clubs: while clubs were not particularly heterogeneous in terms of race and class, clubs did bring together women of divergent beliefs and opinions, and with the exception of the volatile question in Texas of liquor prohibition, clubs fostered friendly differences.

In a sense, these secular literary clubs served a quasi-religious purpose. The club meeting was often a forum for teasing out current-day ethical dilemmas. Jealousy, ambition, optimism, "The Ethics of Dress," and "The Simple Life" were representative topics considered by club women in their discussion sessions. Club study, especially of literature, was also believed to unveil to its supplicants the philosophical mysteries of truth and beauty. The ethical value of good literature, music, and the fine arts was a truism for Texas club women. The club
offered a way to pay homage to the arts, to derive inspiration from the arts, and, eventually, a way to be missionaries to those unchurched in the glories of higher culture. Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs President Ella Dibrell conveyed this message to Texas club women in 1908:

We should never lose sight of the higher aims of literature and art; demand the best, strive for the best and your beautiful work will bring good results, uplifting all mankind by the association with better things to higher ideals. 93

Along the same lines, one of the stated self-improvement benefits of the study club was that it made women better wives and mothers. This claim was made so often that one is bound to detect a note of protestation, or defense. There is little direct evidence that Texas clubs or club women were denounced or ridiculed, but it is reasonable to assume that, in the early days of the 1880s and 1890s, women’s clubs were looked upon with skepticism. Texas club women met the skepticism and may have preempted it with statements like this one by Kate Rotan of Waco, club woman and the first president of the Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs:

This club work in which we are engaged means the betterment of home life, higher conceptions of our duty as mothers, greater refinement in our social circles, better ideas of household economics, and of household economy, and above all, a better and braver ideal of what it means to be a good wife. 94
The home economics movement found fertile soil in Texas women's clubs, and most clubs devoted time and study to the practical aspects of homemaking. But literary study was also considered beneficial, almost necessary, to the wife and mother. Club study made women more interesting and, in providing a wholesome and uplifting diversion from domestic drudgery, it left women refreshed and renewed. Mrs. Frank Tompkins of the Ariel Club in Denton, Texas, extolled the virtues of club study in this way:

To many members in this club, the one afternoon devoted to literary work furnishes subject for thought each day during the entire week and stimulates the intellectual life that otherwise might be deadened or possibly destroyed, by never-ending demands of household...

and,

The clubwoman will be thoughtful and cheerful, and when the tired husband returns home to her she will have subjects of interest about which to intelligently converse, rather than a tirade on household cares. 95

The woman's literary club surely expanded "woman's sphere," yet it did so not to undermine prevailing concepts of woman's role, but rather to revive and dignify them.

Texas women gathered themselves into various study clubs with feelings of excitement and apprehension. This was a new and unique experience for most of these women. Many had heard of the northeastern women's clubs and they were surely aware of men's clubs, but a secular study club
organized and run solely by women was a totally new undertaking. Despite the affluence and social position of many club women, most had little self-confidence and perhaps less organizational experience. Moreover, women's clubs seemed to be bold and ever so modern. An Austin club woman's description of one of the early meetings of her club in 1894 conveyed the trepidation of many:

Enthusiasm was evident in every countenance, and likewise a sort of bewildered expectancy, but as only one or two of the members had ever belonged to a club, or taken a part in such exercise as was now to go forward, there was an undeniable evidence of a strained timidity in the atmosphere, and member looked at member with a self-conscious air, as if to say, "Aren't you afraid that we shall do something silly?"

If the organizational details of participating in a woman's club were intimidating, the prospect of speaking before a group could be a particularly terrifying experience—one that most women had not had since school days, if then. Study clubs required that each member contribute something of herself, a paper or perhaps a reading. This was a part of the much desired "mutual improvement," and it became a meaningful way for women to distinguish themselves. There is no evidence in club minutes that members faced a judgment on their performances before their club, but the new club woman, whatever her age, often lacked the self-assurance needed to address comfortably even such a congenial group. Ellen Graves
joined the Austin Pathfinders in 1908 and later recounted her first appearance on a club program:

I trembled so I could hardly rise from my seat, but a reassuring smile...carried me through to safety. I'm sure I spent two months preparing this paper...and I could hardly hold it in my hand when I began to read it. 97

The fears and foibles of early organization soon passed, and women's clubs became models of the well-ordered association. In studying the organization of women's literary clubs in Texas and the way they functioned, one is immediately impressed with the formality and seriousness of these arrangements. Every club had a constitution and bylaws which were usually in place after only a few meetings. These documents varied little from club to club; clubs freely borrowed from what they knew of other clubs. Club constitutions stated the club's purpose, membership requirements, officers, and election procedures. Bylaws established dues, meeting times, meeting procedures, and penalties or fines for unexcused absences of latency. From time to time, club presidents exhorted members to prompt and regular attendance. For example, when the Colorado City Up-to-Date Club instituted fines for absences, tardiness, and neglect of assigned duties, the club secretary recorded that failure to enforce the new rules would be "a slur upon the dignity of the club."98 Similarly, the Austin Pathfinders passed resolutions that rain and muddy streets
did not constitute an excuse for absence. They also resolved that there was to be no whispering during recitations and no refreshments would be served except on special occasions.99

Rigid adherence to parliamentary law was another mark of the formality and seriousness of clubdom. Meetings were conducted according to Robert’s Rules of Order or Mrs. Shattuck’s Woman’s Manual of the Parliamentary Law. Many clubs regularly held "parliamentary drills" during their meetings, and there were often workshops on parliamentary procedure at meetings of the state federation. The use and mastery of parliamentary procedure was a source of pride to Texas club women. It marked their efforts as solemn and earnest, and it separated club work from the more frivolous women’s associations. As the minutes of the Gainseville XLI Club declared in 1895,

…it should not be hinted by any specimen of suspicious masculinity that the election of officers was not done according to the strictest parliamentary usage even to the passing round of a hat to collect the ballots. 100

Club meetings followed a prearranged and often exacting format. Many yearbooks outlined the standard meeting’s agenda, e.g., roll call, minutes, unfinished business, new business, announcements, program or lesson, discussion, parliamentary drill, and adjournment. Any deviation from the prescribed format required passage of a
formal motion. The Waco Woman's Club went so far as to specify the number of minutes allotted to each item on the day's agenda.\textsuperscript{101} Of course, despite the best intentions and the most careful planning, schedules could not always be met, as a member of the Austin American History Club recalled in reference to the custom of answering roll call with a quotation or anecdote pertinent to the day's program:

...in practice [answering roll call] was found to have its objections. Women are notoriously unable to keep strictly to the point. In social intercourse we are told that this little characteristic of the sex constitutes one of our charms, but in serious business--such as studying American History--it sometimes becomes a stumbling block...We are no exceptions to our sex, it seems, for a custom which is meant to take up only 10 minutes or so...frequently consumed half-an-hour or more; we did so wander from our point...and spread out over such wide fields of thought. \textsuperscript{102}

The author of this reminiscence lovingly, but somewhat apologetically, remarked on a rather stereotypic feminine characteristic, but the statement also reveals the enthusiasm of the members of her club. Once club women warmed to their subject of study and experienced the liberty of self-expression in a comfortable group of other women, it must have been easy to "wander" from the point. The rigid scheduling that some clubs' meetings had may have been needed to corral the exuberance that threatened
decorum.

Penalties for unexcused absence or lateness, fines for failing to complete one's assigned literary work, rules against gossip at club meetings, carefully planned meetings, and the insistence on parliamentary observance made a bold statement to clubwomen and for clubwomen: women should take their intellectual pursuits seriously. Club membership and participation was not a frivolous matter. They should take one another and their time spent together seriously. Moreover, the business-like formality of the literary club proclaimed to non-members--husbands, the community, other women--the importance of the club enterprise. This was not a card club, or a sewing bee, or a kaffe klatch. The Lubbock Twentieth Century Club made such a statement in its constitution: "Nothing that departs from literary work or the object for which the organization was designed shall be introduced into this club."^103 The Texas woman's literary club was a group of bright and earnest women with a high purpose. In this way, women's literary clubs hoped to be not only above ridicule but recognized as an important aspect of the community's cultural life.

Seriousness of purpose and bylaws notwithstanding, Texas club women were also bound through a "female world of love and ritual." This phrase from Carroll SmithRosenberg's outstanding essay refers to the intense homo-social
relationships that were a crucial aspect of white women's culture in Victorian America. The phrase is applicable here to suggest the profound bonds of sentiment and loyalty that existed in Texas clubdom and to indicate the rituals and traditions that were a significant part of club life. Every club took pride and care in choosing a motto, club colors, and a club flower. For example, the Austin Shakespeare Club chose a line from Richard III as its motto: "Sweet flowers are slow, and weeds make haste." The club flower was the pansy, inspired by Ophelia's words in Hamlet:

There's rosemary, that's for rememberance;  
Pray, love, remember;  
and there's pansies, that's for thoughts.  

As soon as financially possible, clubs published yearbooks—small printed pamphlets that outlined the year's course of study, listed members and officers, included the constitution, by laws, motto, colors, flowers, dates of organization and federation, and sometimes favorite verses or poems about club life. Each club also had its traditions such as an annual celebration of Shakespeare's birthday, or a strawberry short-cake party, or a yearly spring picnic which included spouses or suitors. The Waco Literary Club had a loving cup which was periodically passed around the club circle while "each drank a health to the club, and cemented...the fidelity of the members."
The bonds of clubdom were such that, while some members needed exhortation to prompt and regular attendance, for most the club meeting was a cherished event and a sacred duty. The women of the Dallas Pierian Club were so zealous that one year they observed their scheduled meetings even when meeting day fell on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve. December 24, 1903, found the Pierians studying Japan and the Yoritamas feudal system.107 Nor was inclement weather a deterrent to eager club women. A member of the Sorosis Club of Sweetwater shared this recollection about a West Texas dust storm:

One member had the meeting of the club once when the wind was blowing gravel! A friend, in the morning, said to her: "Why prepare refreshments? Don't you know no one will come?" My friend replied: "You don't know these ladies; they will be here!" And they were, everyone of them, except one and she was out of town. 108

Ties to the club and to club friends were strong. Club minutes record the joy and enthusiasm that marked the beginning of each club year, and sometimes a meeting’s adjournment was noted with pangs of regret: "With happy faces but sad hearts--goodbyes were said."109 Members who had moved wrote wistful letters to their former club sisters. Songs and poems were written to exclaim the sentiments of clubwomen. The woman's club was a special sisterhood. It was a sisterhood of learning, of mutual
appreciation, and of affection. A member of the Dallas Pierian Club wrote

...'tis not alone as students that we boast, but of harmony that has ever prevailed and the great love for one another that is ever a true Pierian characteristic. 110

Similarly, the Anson Woman's Club declared in its motto: "In honor preferring one another."111

The devotion which women felt for their club was an indication of the importance of the club to individual women. For many, the literary club and its activities was the singular place where women felt affirmed in their talents and sensibilities. The club provided new challenges and new achievements. Moreover, it constantly reinforced the sublime femininity of the cultured lady. A member of the Kaufman Four-Leaved Clover Club described the club experience and revealed its attraction:

How they look forward to these dates of meetings! Each one culls and gleans all she can, during the intervals, to add to the general fund of information; ready for the warm hand clasp when congenial spirits meet to discuss pro and con, in friendly conclave, the author in question. 112

Clubwomen were proud of the amity that typified women's clubs. In addition to the intrinsic rewards of affection and mutual respect, organized and sympathetic association was seen as an accomplishment in itself. A West Texas club woman reflected that women's clubs had been a bridge for
sisterhood and female cooperation. Her words deserve to be quoted at length:

Long ago it was held up to women that they had little of the feeling of comradeship which is common among men: that they were harsh in their condemnation of their sisters, not loyal to each other as men are, and that they could never accomplish anything of magnitude as a class, because they could not work together peaceably and effectively. Nearly all women will admit that this was true. The result was a lack of harmony until this club idea began to take root, and what a glorious boon it has been to women, as the use and beauty of organized work came to be known. 113

In the early years of the white women's club movement in Texas, the sisterhood of the woman's club devoted its efforts to study and self-culture. All literary clubs followed a planned course of study. Clubs were not informal discussion groups. Most clubs had a "program committee" that chose topics for an entire club year. Once the study topics were agreed upon, the program committee would plan each meeting for the following year: the papers to be presented, the books to be read, the topics for roll call response, the debate and discussion issues. When this agenda was decided, the club's yearbook was printed and each member received a copy. Individual club members were assigned responsibilities for writing papers, leading discussions, or participating in debates.

Most clubs designed their own study programs, but many
subscribed to prepared courses of study. As noted, several clubs followed the Chautauqua study course, the C.L.S.C. The Bay View Reading Course was also popular with Texas clubs. This reading plan, with headquarters in Detroit, Michigan, was a course of guided reading on such topics as "Our Country and Mexico," "Germany, Denmark, and Belgium," or some variety of literature. For a fee of $3.50 per person, Bay View students received an outline of the year's study and reading assignments, books, and the Bay View Magazine. The course was designed to facilitate the thorough study of chosen topics by relieving club women from time-consuming planning and individual research. The Bay View Magazine included notes about women's study clubs all over the United States. In 1903 the Magazine stated that of 2,500 federated literary clubs—that is, clubs belonging to the General Federation of Women's Clubs—eight hundred subscribed to the Bay View Reading Course. The Boston-based Anna Tichnor "Society to Encourage Studies at Home" was another planned study course. At least three Texas women's clubs were affiliated and attended one of the Tichnor annual meetings.

Shakespeare study was enormously popular among Texas women's literary clubs, and many of them used study outlines prepared by club woman and Shakespearian scholar Katherine Harrison Flint. Kate Friend—school teacher, journalist, and local philanthropist—was a prominent
figure in Waco, Texas. She founded the Waco Shakespeare Club in 1899, and in 1900 she won a national Shakespeare essay contest with a lengthy thesis on King Lear. Often described as "the brightest woman in Texas," she furnished study plans on Shakespeare plays for at least fifty-six Texas clubs and for clubs in forty-six other states.¹¹⁶

A few clubs used courses prepared by extension departments of colleges or universities. The University of Chicago offered such a course.¹¹⁷ The Gainseville XLI Club used university extension courses for years; a year's course usually cost twenty to twenty-five dollars.¹¹⁸

Texas clubs also shared their yearbooks—which outlined a year's work—with other clubs, thus getting new ideas for study plans. By 1900 the Austin American History Club had received numerous requests for their yearbook from Texas clubs and out-of-state clubs.¹¹⁹ Soon after the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs was formed, a "reciprocity committee" was organized to promote and facilitate club study. This committee collected yearbooks and papers from dozens of Texas women's clubs and circulated them to the program committees of other clubs. It aided clubs in study plans and made suggestions for the observance of special days, such as Texas Day.¹²⁰

Most clubs studied literature and the fine arts. During the 1902-1903 club year, 94 of the 175 clubs listed
in the TFWC roster had plans for studying literature, music, or art. By the end of the nineteenth century it was widely presumed that women had a special affinity for literature and the fine arts. Outside of the academy, which remained male-dominated, literature, or at least the appreciation of literature had become feminized. The demands of business and the public sphere upon men increasingly left the cultivation of the high culture to women. This division was accepted and promoted in Texas as much as in other regions. McKinney, Texas, club woman Mrs. John Church saw this separation of responsibilities as natural and inevitable. She wrote in 1898:

> So since the dawn of history, we can find women of rank, wealth and influence, possessing the knowledge of their day; shining as stars around which lesser lights might scintilate—Sappho, Hypatia, and Madam De Maintenon; queens, duchesses, and ladies have endeavored to foster art and literature and have made patronizing efforts to enlighten the unknown women of their nations; but, as it was left to the patriotic sons of this great republic to establish liberty as a universal right, it has become the distinction of its daughters to make literature a common heritage.

A favorite way to study literature was to study the literature of a specific country; American and English literature were the most frequently studied, but French, Scottish, German, Scandinavian, and Spanish literature were taken up by various clubs. Writers of the American South were also often studied. Meetings devoted to literary
study usually included a didactic presentation and an exemplary reading. For example, in 1904-1905 the Austin Pathfinders studied nineteenth-century English literature. Their first meeting of the year began with a biographical sketch of Charles Dickens followed by a "lesson" on "The Condition of London at This Time." A third member read a selection from "The Pickwick Papers." The last part of the study hour was spent in discussion of "Dickens' Impressions of America as Gleaned from 'American Notes.'" The study of Dickens continued through the next week. A paper on "Dickens as a Humorist" was read, and a lesson on "Oliver Twist" was presented. The day's reading was "Oliver's Famous Demand for More," and the discussion topic was "Compare Fagin, the Jew, with Shylock and Isaac of New York." 123

Many clubs attempted to ground their literary study in the broader context of cultural geography. During the year that the Waco Woman's Club studied French literature, they also studied historical landmarks and famous French personages, French Art, the French Academy, the French Salon, the French Opera, and current political and social trends. 124 The next year the Waco Woman's Club surveyed modern fiction, reading Kipling, Hewlett, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, Israel Zangwill, Robert Louis Stevenson, Tolstoy, Balzac, S. Weir Mitchell, and several others. Their study
of Tolstoy included short papers on his personal life, the role of literature in Russia, and Tolstoy's work as a reformer.\textsuperscript{125}

The plays of William Shakespeare undoubtedly received more attention than any other category of literature. More than half of the clubs studying literature in 1902-1903 studied Shakespeare. Some clubs became virtual Shakespeare cults. The Waco Shakespeare Club annually honored the bard's birthday, and when one member visited Stratford-upon-Avon, she placed a wreath on Shakespeare's tomb.\textsuperscript{126} The club also founded a public park in Waco that was dutifully memorialized as Shakespeare Park.\textsuperscript{127}

Shakespeare had been popular with Americans from colonial days and was a familiar aspect of pre-Civil War folk culture. In the West as well as the Northeast, Shakespearian plays were performed more frequently than those of any other author. Shakespeare was so familiar that in Corpus Christi, Texas, in 1845, soldiers of the Fourth Infantry Regiment entertained themselves with a production of \textit{Othello} casting a young Ulysses S. Grant as Desdemona. However, as Lawrence W. Levine explains, by the end of the nineteenth century, Shakespeare had been transformed from "culture" to "Culture,"\textsuperscript{128} and it was "Culture" that drew Texas club women to study William Shakespeare.

The Woman's Shakespeare Club of Denton and the Ariel
Club of Denton both spent much time studying Shakespeare's plays. Their approach to Shakespearian studies is typical, and thus deserves attention. The Woman's Shakespeare Club was formed in 1899 by fourteen women for

...mutual improvement and the altruistic purpose of gaining a more complete and critical knowledge of the words of the great dramatist through careful study, hoping for a functioning of what is good and beautiful in literature. Hoping thereby to promote the best interests of our women and be a benefit to our community. 129

This manifesto is a stellar example of the moral edification which many Texas club women believed was derived from literary study, and there was no prophet or sage deemed more worthy of consideration than William Shakespeare.

The Ariel Club, founded in 1891, was not, strictly speaking, a Shakespeare Club, but from 1898 until 1909 the club studied at least one, and often two, Shakespeare plays each year. The Woman's Shakespeare Club also digressed at times to study other authors. The Ariel Club in 1904 and the Woman's Shakespeare Club in 1912 created other departments that did no literary study at all. Nonetheless, the Shakespeare plays--comedies, tragedies, and the histories--were a staple in the literary studies for these two clubs for several years.

The two clubs studied the Shakespeare plays by
combining a careful reading of the plays with papers and
discussions on various aspects of the plays or the
characters. Both clubs assigned parts to each member and
read the plays scene by scene. The reading was followed by
a lesson or one or more papers. There was a time for
general questions and comments and then a scheduled
discussion or debate on some issue of interpretation. Some
meetings included quotation identification contests and
each play's study ended with an examination.

The Woman's Shakespeare Club studied King Richard III
and Twelfth Night during the club year 1908-1909. The first
four meetings devoted to Richard III included lessons on
"the history and background" of the play. Two of the
scheduled discussions, called "Table Talks," were "Kings of
Shakespeare's Plays and Events of Their Reign" and "Queens
of Shakespeare's Plays, History and Their Leading
Characteristics." Later a paper entitled "The Women of
Shakespeare's Histories" was presented. The play was read
and studied from October to January. On January 14 an exam
on the War of the Roses was given and was followed by a
quotation contest and an "oral review of the play." In
studying Twelfth Night, six lessons or papers were presented
including one on "The Ladies of Twelfth Night" and
Shakespeare's Heroines in Male Attire." Two of the
scheduled group discussions were "The Love Affairs of
Maria, Olivia, and Viola" and "The Human Nature Depicted in
Twelfth Night."  

In reading Shakespeare, these Denton club women sought an appreciation and understanding of the plays, an increased knowledge of history, and insight into human nature. Julius Caesar prompted a paper on the "Home Life of a Roman Matron." "Witches in Shakespeare" was discussed while studying Macbeth and "Magic" was, of course, a topic while considering The Tempest. "Shakespeare's Treatment of the Insane" was discussed while reading King Lear, and "Famous Hamlets" and "Flowers in Shakespeare" received time while studying Hamlet.  

No subject in these Shakespearian studies received as much attention or sparked as much interest as that of "woman." Virtually every Texas woman's club that read or studied any of the Shakespeare plays had lessons, papers, or discussions on "Women in Shakespeare" or on particular female characters. "Shakespeare's Mothers," "Shakespeare's Daughters," "Women's Friendships in Shakespeare," "English Women as Shakespeare Knew Them," are some general examples. Female characters were carefully scrutinized. The Denton Woman's Shakespeare Club queried whether the character of Goneril and Regan was inherited. They later had a discussion on Katherine of The Taming of the Shrew: "Was Katherine a Womanly Woman?" Similarly, a paper was presented in the Ariel Club on "Katherine's Obedience."
On the other side of the state, the Standard Club of Colorado City held a club debate on the "womanliness" of Katherine and the affirmative won—declaring Katherine womanly "by force of eloquence if not by force of evidence." The Standard Club minutes also reported on an article read about women in Shakespeare's plays that evinces the club women's abiding interest in this subject:

...Shakespeare's women were for the most part, true, noble, and womanly... Few there were whose influence, like that of Lady Macbeth, was used for evil but rather for the undoing or averting of the evil wrought by the weakness or wickedness of men. 135

It is clear that Texas club women viewed Shakespeare's heroines as role models. Clubwomen interpreted Shakespeare's female characters in terms of "true womanhood," and in doing so, they fortified the club woman's ideal.

Lady Macbeth was, by far, the most discussed of Shakespeare's women. Her motives and character were the subject of numerous papers and debates. The women seem frankly fascinated with the complex portrait of female power. Her wickedness was soundly denounced, as in the paper read before the Standard Club cited above. Occasionally, however, one finds attempts to redeem Lady Macbeth's reputation. One club debated the issue of Lady Macbeth's culpability and found reasons for sympathy if not exoneration.
The plays of Henrik Ibsen evoked almost as much interest as those of William Shakespeare. Ibsen's plays became known to American audiences around the turn of the century. At a time when "the new woman" of America was evoking so much comment, Ibsen's plays were received with curiosity and controversy. The Boston-based Association for the Advancement of Women went so far as to welcome Ibsen's plays as sympathetic portraits of emancipated women.136 Nora and Hedda were not met uncritically by Texas club women, but A Doll's House and Hedda Gabler were standard fare for Texas women's clubs.

The Woman's Shakespeare Club of Denton read A Doll's House and Hedda Gabler during the 1914-1915 club year. The yearbook reveals the mixed feelings that Ibsen's work provoked. On the day Act I of A Doll's House was considered, the roll call was answered with thoughts about "wifehood." Three papers were given: one on Ibsen's life; one on Helmer as a husband; and one on Nora as a wife and mother. When Act II was studied the following week, roll call responses were on "Constancy" and a paper entitled "Mrs. Linden as Nora's Steadyling Force" was read. Two weeks later when Act III was taken up, Annie Webb Blanton, later to be the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the first woman to hold that post,137 read her paper on "Woman's Duty to Herself." "Table Talk" raised the question
"Was Nora Justified in Leaving Her Husband?" Hedda Gabler was studied next. Two of the papers presented while studying Gabler were "Thirst for Power as Hedda's Controlling Motive" and "The Various Types of Moral Weakness Shown in 'Hedda Gabler.'" "Table talks" focused on the timely and relevant issues of the "moral value of Ibsen's work" and the extent to which Hedda Gabler touched upon the Woman Question.138

From the study of Ibsen by Denton's Woman's Shakespeare Club, as one of the dozens of clubs that studied Ibsen, one may draw a somewhat unexpected conclusion. It is significant that Ibsen, with his unconventional and individualistic female characters, was so often read and studied by Texas club women, given prevailing stereotypes about southern women. It seems clear that neither Nora nor Hedda met with the approval of club women, but the willingness to consider their behavior indicates a curiosity and, perhaps, a fascination with the issue of female power and individuality. The club considered whether Nora was justified in leaving her husband and entertained Blanton's paper on "Woman's Duty to Herself." One doesn't know how the discussion about Nora went or how Blanton's paper was received, although other papers and discussions suggest skepticism, if not condemnation, about the choices made by Nora and Hedda. Nora, in particular, represented an option for modern
women. In weighing this option, women affirmed dissimilar choices. To understand Nora but to choose differently than Nora was like testing a virtue: true womanhood was tested but triumphant. An article reprinted in *The Dallas Clubwoman* makes this point. It was a fictional piece about a modern-day Nora—a discontented and much stifled housewife and mother. She is near despair about her life and wonders if she shouldn’t follow the example of Ibsen’s Nora. She decides to stay with her family upon reflection of their great need for her, and she achieves a new appreciation of her life when she observes the envy of her single and childless friend.\(^{139}\)

Nora and Hedda were not heroines or role models for Texas club women, but Texas club women were clearly interested in the issues posed by these Ibsen characters: the rights and responsibilities of woman and the meaning of modern womanhood. In fact, women’s study clubs provided an alternative for Texas women that may have spared them Nora’s despair and Nora’s drastic choice. The sense of accomplishment women gained through their clubs, the sisterhood and the sympatico, and the weekly break from the routines of domesticity was a safety-valve of sorts. The woman’s club altered women’s sphere enough to make it more hospitable.

Historical subjects were the second favorite topics
for study. Some clubs studied ancient civilizations, the history of Europe or of close neighbors like Mexico. United States history and Texas history were, not surprisingly, the most often chosen subjects for study. By 1903 the state's federation of women's clubs formed a special committee to encourage clubs in history study and to stimulate historical interest and observance in local communities. The federation was later a vigorous proponent of adding Texas history to the list of courses required in public school curricula.

The Austin American History Club was an especially studious club. The founder of the club had been inspired to study American history by the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. At first she had difficulty finding women interested in studying history, but soon enthusiasm and the club's membership grew. Although much constrained by the lack of a public library and with scant resources of their own, the women of the Austin American History Club had an ambitious study program. For example, in 1895-1896 the club spent a second year learning about colonial America. Some of the topics for individual meetings included: The Extension of New France; Notes on Marquette, Joliet, and Hennepin; Notes on La Salle and His Work; A Comparison Between the Claims and the Colonial Systems of England and France in North America; The Causes and Results of the Struggle Between France and England in North America; the
Seven Year's War; The Conspiracy of Pontiac and Relations Between Colonists and Indians; Colonial Industries; How They Lived in Colonial Days; Colonial Women; and Colonial Literature.143

The focal point of most meetings of the Austin American History Club was the presentation of papers written by the club members. The papers were often quite lengthy—twenty to thirty handwritten legal size pages was not unusual—and were primarily condensations of various secondary source materials which ranked from encyclopedia articles to scholarly histories. Laura Brush introduced her paper on "King Phillips' War" by stating that "This article I present to you is principally but an assimilation of quotation from various authorities."144 Still, the compilation and organization of data was a challenge for these club women who probably had little experience in historiographical essays. Helen King concluded her 29-page paper drawn from six sources on "The Aborigines of the United States" with this apology:

My inexperience in work of this kind must plead my excuse for the discursive manner in which this is treated; and if I have indulged in too great length it may console the ladies to know that I struggled with the objection and reduced my original paper within its present compass and left Mexicans Indians as much as possible out of the plan. 145

Mary Mitchell also expressed misgivings when she read her
1896 paper on "Colonial Literature." She introduced her essay by saying,

My step falters as I approach the portal of the vast temple of Literature which I have been invited to enter by the "American History Club," and I may be pardoned if I hesitate to "unveil the statue wherein I have wrought my best." 146

Standards and methods of study changed over time. In 1909-1910 the Austin American History Club again chose American history and literature as its course of study. Still serious, the study plans were not nearly so ambitious as in the 1890s. A text-book was chosen to facilitate study. Introduction to American Literature by H.S. Pancoast, and seven reference books were listed in the year book. Of the year's fifteen meetings, ten were spent studying the text book or classics like The Scarlett Letter and The Virginians. The other five meetings focused on current events or club business.147 This change reflects, in part, the club's shift in interest to public affairs; and yet, while the club's scholarly interests had slightly diminished after twenty years, study remained an important aspect of club life. By the 1940s there were only ten meetings during the entire club year and by 1975, when the club celebrated the American Bicentennial, the presentation titles suggest an abandonment of any attempt at or pretense of scholarship.148 The days of arduous study were long past.
Whether clubs studied history, literature, or current events, the subject of "Woman" appeared repeatedly. Women's clubs in Texas fostered a celebration of woman—noting her achievements around the world, in times present and past, and in the mirror of literature. In addition, the study of woman was a way to consider changing concepts of womanhood. Texas club women were not unique in this respect for the topic of woman was a unifying theme among women's clubs around the nation. The Gainesville XLI Club is a good example. Programs about women are found in most every yearbook integrated into that year's course of study: "Women Writers of the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century," "Women Among Primitive Peoples," "Women in Music," "The Man-Made World and Its Influence on the Character and Ideals of Women." In 1908-1909 the same club spent the entire year studying "woman." Some of the programs were: "Woman Yesterday and Today." "The Woman Wage Earner," "Woman in the Professional World," "Woman in the Home," "Famous Madonnas," and "The Legal Status of Texas Women." As these and other topics were studied, the club dealt with related questions such as "Why are so few women eminent composers?" "Did women play an important part in the making of our history prior to the Civil War?" "Do girls who have been self-supporting make better or worse wives?" and "Is there any modern fiction delineating the society woman in a full and noble life?"
Changing concepts of womanhood and the importance of defining and celebrating womanhood will be discussed in full in Chapter Seven. It is significant to note at this point that Texas club women were engaged in an intentional and enthusiastic study of these issues. Their desired mutual improvement and self-culture involved a serious consideration of their sex. This intense preoccupation with "woman," "woman's sphere," and "the woman question," was apparent in the North much earlier than in Texas: but as soon as Texas women formed clubs, they became interested in these issues they gave them great attention. This was education for identity and, as such, was an indispensable part of every club's agenda.

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated that a vigorous white women's club movement took root in Texas in the late nineteenth century. As more people moved to Texas and settled within the state, word of "women's clubs" spread. Following the national trend, these first clubs were literary clubs or study clubs. Organized for "mutual improvement," the education and companionship which women gained in these clubs was an antidote to the flagging ego of the "true woman" of the middle- and upper-classes. The erudition and culture acquired through collective study bolstered the position of the southern lady and the "true woman" of this class. Less than two decades after women's
clubs began to appear in Texas, the enthusiasm for clubdom reached a first cresendo with the organization of the Texas Federation of Women's Literary Clubs in 1897. From that point, Texas women's clubs grew in numbers, and their sense of mission expanded to include the public sphere. The public sphere activities of these women's clubs, most of which began with an exclusive focus on study and self-improvement, is described in the following chapter.
Endnotes for Chapter Three


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3McKay, p. 39.


6McKay. p. 36.


9Richardson, p. 245.


11Richardson. p. 214.


13Richardson, p. 226.

14Cited without reference in Richardson, p. 139.


16Meinig, p. 48.

17Meinig, pp. 50-6.
18 Newton and Gambrell, p. 236.


20 Meinig, pp. 63-4.

21 Richardson, pp. 241-2.

22 Meinig, p. 74.


25 Rabinowitz, p. 92.

26 Rabinowitz, p. 106.


28 Newton and Gambrell, p. 313.


30 Spratt, p. 4.

31 Meinig, p. 77.

32 See Meinig.

33 Richardson, p. 174.


35 Gould, p. viii.

37 Dorothy Craver, "The First One Hundred Years, 1881-1981; A History of the 1881 Study Club of Jefferson, Texas," Texas Federation of Women's Clubs, Historical files, TFWC headquarters, Austin, Texas.

38 "Literary Societies," *Cactus* 1896 (University of Texas Yearbook), pp. 101-06.


40 "Earliest Club of Bachelors: Old Dallas Chess and Checkers Club First Local City Club," unidentified newsclip, *Miller Scrapbook*, vol. IV, Texas and Dallas History Collection, Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas; *Morrison and Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Dallas, 1886-87* (Galveston: Morrison and Fourmy, 1886).


42 *Morrison and Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Austin, 1889-90* (Galveston: Morrison and Fourmy, 1889).


44 Newton and Gambrell, pp. 326-7.


46 *Morrison and Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Austin, 1893-4* (Galveston, Morrison and Fourmy, 1893), pp. 60-1.

47 *Morrison and Fourmy, 1893-4*, p. 70.

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51 Morrison and Fourmy, Austin and Dallas.


54 Richardson, p. 174.


59 "C.L.S.C., Waxahachie, Texas," The Club Monthly, 1, No. 2 (1897), 22.

60 Mabel Cranfill, "Reading Circle, Formed in 1880, Beginning of Club Life Here," unidentified news clip from Miller Scrapbook, 1, IV, Texas and Dallas History Collection, Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas.

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of Houston, 1887–88 (Galveston: Morrison and Fourmy, 1887), p. 54.


63 "Dallas Shakespeare Club Began With Carriage Tour to Tell People of Plans," unidentified newsclip from Miller Scrapbook, vol IV.


65 Fussell.


67 Scrapbook, The Standard Club, Dallas Historical Society, Dallas, Texas; Morrison and Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Dallas, 1886–7 (Galveston: Morrison and Fourmy, 1886).

68 Mrs. Cone Johnson, "Quid Nunc Club, Tyler," The Club Monthly, 1, No. 2 (1897), 24.


71 Branscum, pp. 29, 47.

73 Branscum, pp. 118, 121.


75 Crane, pp. 77-8.


77 "XIX Century Club, Corsicana," The Club Monthly, 1, No. 6 (1898), pp. 17-8.

78 "XXI Club of Abilene," The Club Monthly, 1, No. 6 (1898), pp. 17-8.

79 The History Club of San Antonio, Yearbook 1897-98, Mrs. W.B. Sharp Collection, Barker Texas History Center, Austin, Texas.

80 "Four-Leaved Clover Club, Kaufman," The Club Monthly, 1, No. 7 (1898), p. 36.

81 The Owl Club of McKinney, Yearbook 1897-98, American History Club Papers, Austin History Center, Austin, Texas.


84 Texas Federation of Women's Clubs, Yearbook 1900-01; The roster in the 1900-01 yearbook lists seventy-six study clubs, but it was likely that at this early date in the federation's history, many study clubs existed which had not joined the federation.


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Clubs in Seguin," Seguin Enterprise, unidentified news clip, Barker Texas History Center.

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98 Up-to-Date Club, Minutes, June 1898, Mrs. John W. Mooar Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas.

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100 Culp, p. 18.

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139 "Studies in Discontent, By an Ibsen Woman," *The Dallas Clubwoman*, 12 Dec. 1908, p. 3, reprinted from the *St. Louis Republic*.

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143 Austin American History Club, *Yearbook 1895-6* Austin American History Club Yearbooks, Barker Texas History Center.

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Chapter Four

From Self Culture to Civic Responsibility:
"Domesticating the City"¹

From the cozy and uplifting world of the woman’s study club, white Texas club women moved into the public sphere. Texas clubs took up the mantle of civic responsibility and added "outside work," as public sphere involvement was called, to their agenda for self-culture. In Texas this development appeared in the late 1890s, about one decade after women’s literary clubs began to organize in every corner of the state. This new interest in civic improvement evolved more rapidly in Texas than in older and more settled parts of the country. Although the literary club phase of the club movement had begun earlier (the 1870s) in the Northeast, the major shift to social involvement and altruism did not occur with those clubs for two decades, about 1890. The transition from self culture to civic culture came slightly later in Texas than in the Northeast, but sooner in terms of the clubs’ founding.

This new interest in civic work and philanthropy was occasioned by many factors. Like the club women discussed in chapter 2, Texas club women claimed that they derived much inspiration for public duty and good works from their studies. Not only was the content of their study inspirational, but the newly acquired ability to study, to

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consider, and to investigate engendered a sense of competence that was not there before. Having become, as they believed themselves to be, proficient in the exegesis and understanding of a poem or a work of history, Texas club women wanted to apply these critical skills to promote a better understanding of modern social problems, and their solutions.²

A more likely motivation lay in changing concepts of womanhood. The cult of domesticity, the cult of true womanhood, the cult of the southern belle—all still held sway; the essential ingredients remained. But significant transformations were taking place. To fulfill the prescriptions of true womanhood in the twentieth century, many women extended their sphere of activity beyond the home and church to include the city, indeed the world. But in keeping with the older requisites of true womanhood, the engine of her concern and duty was her femininity, her motherliness, her dedication to the true and the good, and her passion to serve.

The implications of the changing concept of womanhood which propelled otherwise traditional women into the public sphere are more fully explored in Chapter 7. For the present, it is enough to note that new notions of what constituted a good and proper woman made new behaviors acceptable, and to some extent, required. And, of course, new behavior informed and helped to transform prevailing
concepts of womanhood.

Social or municipal housekeeping, as this public involvement was often called, became the new calling for middle- and upper-class white women. The private sphere of the home had been, theoretically and rhetorically, a large enough realm for nineteenth century non-wage earning women. But as the scale of society grew and as the values of the market place became more pervasive, homemaking—even with its expanded responsibilities—seemed a less significant contribution than either Republican Motherhood or the cult of domesticity had promised. This is not to say that it was a less significant contribution to the good of civilization or the common weal, but that its importance seemed to pale alongside the developments of science, technology, industry, and business.

As subsequent generations of women would also experience, this was the bitter irony of the situation of white middle- and upper-class women under patriarchal capitalism: despite the proclaimed as well as actual advantages and virtues of the relative seclusion of women in the private domestic sphere, the impotence of their situation compared to men made it clear that women and women's work, while essential, was mundane, routine, and, therefore, unremarkable compared to the new feats of finance capitalism, scientific management, the rise of the
large corporation, or the advances in the professions. The measure of worth was male achievement.  

The sentimental rhetoric of true womanhood needed a fillip, a boost. And the rhetoric needed to represent a larger reality. Literary clubs provided women with a reality beyond domesticity. These clubs re-introduced women to themselves and they became acquainted with talents and interests that had been shelved since school days. As explained in Chapter Three, these clubs betokened a desire to be recognized as serious and thoughtful women. But as society grew larger and more complex, a larger contribution was required to gain for women the recognition that they deserved and desired.

If woman's work in the home was losing some of the glow or fulfillment or praise that attended the cult of domesticity when it was first formulated in the early decades of the nineteenth century, non-employed white women needed to shore up a sagging image. Self-esteem was at stake here. Social housekeeping and the home economics movement were two responses to this new situation, and as discussed in Chapter Two, both social housekeeping and the home economics movement, though not contained by the women's club movement, were greatly fostered through women's clubs. The home economics movement sought to raise the status of the homemaker through professionalization. Social housekeeping sought to enhance the status and self-
estee of the middle- and upper-class matron by extending the talents and virtues of the homemaker to the public sphere. Social housekeeping was also, genuinely, public spirited. Although the club movement is rarely viewed as a radical social movement, it did seek to do what radical feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman declared that women must do: the club movement redefined female duty as beyond the private duties of the home or even the home and the church and called women to recognize their larger responsibilities in the world.\(^5\) Thus, the "outside work" of women's clubs was occasioned by the continuing desire of middle- and upper-class women to be taken seriously and by their sincere interest in social amelioration, in doing good.

It has been stated above that "social housekeeping" or "municipal housekeeping" was the contemporary phrase used to describe the civic work of women's clubs in this period. Many reformers and activists drew upon the analogy of homemaking or housekeeping to describe the public-sphere work of organized women. The term justified, but also described, the heretofore limited involvement of women in the public sphere by characterizing that work in traditionally feminine terms: "housekeeping." Yet the phrase was apt; the city was cast as a large home. As such, who was better prepared to dust off the cobwebs of urban life or to brighten the city streets or to provide a
refined and restorative family atmosphere than that army of middle-class women who had spent the last century contemplating the domestic arts.

Compared to older states in the Northeast and Midwest, the Texas era of the exclusively self-culture club was brief. The rapid transition to a club movement that increasingly emphasized "outside work" was a reflection of both national and local conditions. Texas club women readily identified with the national club movement and the new horizons it presented. At the same time, in the relatively undeveloped state of Texas, white club women were keenly aware of the "municipal housekeeping" and the municipal homemaking that was needed.

Municipal housekeeping and many other Progressive Era reforms were, by their very nature, urban phenomena—responses to urban problems. The civic work of women's clubs, such as garbage removal or water purification, generally followed a certain degree of urbanization. On the other hand, Texas was far less developed in its governmental institutions than many other states. Furthermore, the enthusiasm for building the New South and securing Texas' place in the twentieth century were significant motivations for white Texas club women. Their contributions, and their desired leadership, would be a triumph for womanhood and for their social class.

The emerging interest in "outside work" within Texas
clubdom, coincided significantly with the organization and early years of the Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs (TFWC). Although founded in 1897 by eighteen Texas clubs as the Texas Federation of Women’s Literary Clubs "to advance and encourage Texas women in literary work", the federation expanded its purpose at its first annual convention. "Literary" was dropped from the official name of the federation in 1899 when it was agreed that the organization would include clubs whose interests were not purely literary—music clubs, civic clubs, mothers’ clubs—and because the organization was itself redefining its original purpose. The constitution was rewritten to reflect the members’ intention to have a broader impact on their home communities and their state. In commenting on the reports from member clubs at the April 1898 TFWC meeting, only one year after the creation of the federation, the minutes read

Without exception these reports were most gratifying, showing an advance along broader lines, a reaching out after nobler and less selfish work and a thorough sympathy with the federation movement, which was often referred to as an inspiration to stronger effort. 7

The organization of the state federation served to encourage many individual clubs to take up involvement in the public sphere. State federation heightened the enthusiasm of club women for the possibilities of organized womanhood. Within one year a network was created through
which individual clubs learned of the accomplishments and projects of other clubs, both in Texas and throughout the nation. Individual clubs joined the new state federation and, soon after, evinced a new sense of confidence and a dose of healthy competition. Social or municipal housekeeping had become the order of the day in the club world of the Northeast and the Midwest. The act of federation seemed to signal to Texas clubs that it was time to broaden their horizons.  

Throughout the period under consideration, Texas clubwomen never completely forsook the importance of study, but the place of study did occasion some comment. Some club women were impatient with clubs who kept self-culture and study at the center of their club work. A prominent San Antonio club woman eschewed self-culture at a time when the present and the future commanded attention. A club woman from Comfort, Texas, wrote Estelle Sharp, then head of the federation's Social Service Committee, to complain that she found it very difficult to get some clubs to do much social service work. Florence Fall, TFWC president from 1913 through 1915, did not condemn study, but she believed it had served its purpose. She wrote to Texas club women in 1913: "Time was when the ideal club was composed of a few women, who met together for their own delectation. Out of the culture club has evolved the
greatest activities...Service is the consideration of our various committees, the big motive behind the movement."\textsuperscript{10}

Similarly, many club women, especially those in very active clubs or who worked with the state federation, thought study was fine as long as it was "relevant." An outgoing TFWC President wrote in 1912:

> There is no more genuine proof of our Federation’s advance that the fact that many Clubs are dropping time-worn, stereotyped courses of study and are asking our Literature Chairman to put them in touch with the life and literature which tend toward the development of ideal home life and enlarged ideas of community co-operation. \textsuperscript{11}

While there was a clear prejudice against the exclusively self-absorbed woman’s club, most Texas club women believed that study still had an honored place in club work. Adella Turner, president of the Dallas Woman’s Forum for thirteen years, wrote of the importance of self-culture to the development of womanhood. By enriching individual lives, it enabled women to do better work for others.\textsuperscript{12} The motto of the Dallas Federation of Women’s Clubs, adopted during the administration of Mrs. J.C. Muse, 1913-1916, was "Willingly, for the good of others."\textsuperscript{13} The earlier goal of women’s clubs, that of self-improvement within the nurturing female world of love and ritual, while not gone or forgotten, was clearly in second place—a by-product of club work rather than a purpose.

Club study continued to receive support and
encouragement only insofar as it was utilitarian. Preeminent Texas clubwoman Anna Pennybacker, once president of the TFWC and once president of the GFWC, summed up the new ethos regarding club study and its relationship to civic duty:

There can be no continuous progress unless we steadily and religiously recreate our spirits and renew our vital forces. This can best be done by the study of the best literature the world has produced; therefore, the study club will never go out of fashion if we live up to our highest ideals. But "since all knowledge is futile that is not used for the good of others," we must act as well as study. No club has a right to be content unless it is doing something for its community. To work efficiently in a civic way, we must study and investigate before we act. 14

This chapter concentrates on the "outside work" of individual clubs and evaluates their strategies and accomplishments. The conclusions reached about the work of these clubs is based on a thorough study of thirteen white women's clubs in Texas and a cursory look at dozens more.15 The following chapter focuses on the state federation. The work and achievements of the clubs and the state federation will be considered separately, but because they were interdependent, to varying degrees, a picture of one will often require some glimpse of the other, and vice-versa.

*           *           *

Texas clubwomen clustered their civic responsibilities in three areas: culture and popular education, child
welfare and education, civic beautification and public health. Having cut their teeth, so to speak, on literary study, Texas club women saw their first public mission as bearing "culture" and learning to their communities. In fact, club women thought of themselves as cultural missionaries—bringing forth literature and the arts to those deprived of their felicities. As observed in Chapters Two and Three, by the end of the nineteenth century, appreciation of the fine arts was widely considered to be a feminine attribution. White middle- and upper-class women, especially, thought this was the case, and in the newer states of the lower South and Southwest, the exigencies of frontier life rendered "high culture" both rare and rarified, the province of genteel ladies and effete men. Texas clubwomen were convinced of the edifying and civilizing function of the arts and literature and considered women's work as cultural missionaries an important and solemn duty.

Club women brought learning and culture to their communities by sponsoring lecture series, dramatic readings, musical concerts, and art exhibits. The lecture series was a favorite club project because it not only provided the public with a whiff of erudition, entertainment, or inspiration; it also allowed the club to raise a little money by charging an admission fee. In 1900
the Waco City Federation of Women's Clubs (WCFWC) hosted a series of art lectures and raised $200.00 in admissions fees. The profits were donated to the Waco Library Association. The Kingsville Woman's Club sponsored a public lyceum for three years, and the Dallas Woman's Forum hosted public lectures. By 1903 the state federation, through its lecture committee, facilitated the efforts of local clubs by contracting with prominent lecturers to tour Texas. In 1908 the TFWC disbanded its Lecture Committee "with the sense that it had fulfilled its mission--that of creating the sentiment for good attractions which the Lyceums are now supplying to the small as well as the large towns." Texas clubwomen found a variety of ways to introduce their communities to great works of the visual arts. Club women were some of the era's most active advocates of "positive environmentalism"; they believed that an ennobling and positive environment--including what one read, listened to, or gazed upon--engendered, or at least nurtured, the finer human virtues. Thus, exposure to great art, like the study of good literature, served the cause of humanity and civilization.

Art shows were a popular means of elevating a city's cultural climate while allowing clubwomen to raise money for their other endeavors. In 1901 the TFWC created a Travelling Art Gallery, patterned after that of the General
Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) and the work of other state federations. The TFWC's Travelling Art Gallery consisted of "a small but very choice collection of water colors, carbons, photographic and other reproductions of noted works of art." Women's clubs made arrangements to receive the art show and then publicized it to encourage attendance. Some clubs made this an annual project. Attendance by school children was particularly encouraged, and no admission fee was charged.

In 1904 the TFWC Travelling Art Gallery, a collection of "Italian Art," visited ninety-five cities and towns in six months. In 1907 the state gallery proved too costly to continue, but local clubs proceeded with their desire to bring great art to their communities by engaging the GFWC Travelling Art Gallery.

Another means of enhancing artistic sensibilities and the finer human natures that must follow was the decoration of school rooms with reproductions of art masterpieces. Several clubs made this a special project. The Ariel Club of Denton, for example, after an 1899 club discussion of "Woman's Relation to Schools," chose school room decoration as one of several ways to introduce school children to fine art. During the next several years, the club raised money to purchase reproductions of masterpieces that were then presented to the public schools. The Reading Club of
Orange donated a large collection of pictures to the public schools in 1907, and the Woman's Club of Lockhart made it an annual practice to present a framed picture to a primary-grade school room. 26

Other clubs focused on bringing music to their communities. In fact, a number of clubs called themselves "music clubs" and instead of reading Shakespeare or Homer, these clubs studied the lives of great composers and practiced and performed or sponsored musical recitals. For example, the Matinee Musical Club of Beaumont provided summer band concerts, and, in 1908, the Chaminade Club of Bonham arranged five concerts by "great" artists. 27 The music clubs led the way in the TFWC in urging all local clubs to sponsor musical events in their home towns and to advocate music education in the public schools. Many clubs promoted music education by donating a piano to a public school. 28

Hattie Moore of Tyler, perhaps a member of that city's Mendelssohn Club, addressed Texas clubwomen in an 1897 article on the importance of music education. She criticized the traditional school curriculum that glorified the Caesars and Napoleons ("who are famous for the shadows that they cast and the blood they spilt") but ignored the Handels and Webers ("whose strains have soothed and will forever soothe the sorrows of humanity"). The positive influence of music was not to be underestimated. As Miss
Moore wrote:

It will inspire all to noble and heroic deeds; it will subdue the angry passions, and as showers from Heaven mellow and enrich the parched earth and cause it to send forth its herbs, flowers, and fruits, so does sacred song, or the soft, sweet strains of instrumental music soften the hard and stony heart and inspire the listener to noble deeds of kindness and charity. Music speaks courage to the soldier on the battlefield, speaks happiness and peace, and lights the eye of youth with love, and brings joyful remembrance to the heart of age. 29

Without a doubt the most significant work of women's clubs as "light bearers" and cultural missionaries was the establishment of public libraries. The public library movement gained momentum in the Northeast in the last half of the nineteenth century and was the product of various influences and interests.30 The public library movement in Texas was a turn-of-the-century and early twentieth century phenomenon. The coincidence of the public library movement in Texas and the activist phase of the white women's club movement in Texas was not an accident. Club women were, to a very large extent, the public library movement in Texas.31

Many Texas clubs made the provision of a public library for their town or city the club's primary outside work. It has been estimated that 85 percent of all public libraries in the state owe their founding to the interest and determination of local women's clubs.32
This step into the public sphere required no debate or controversy about the propriety of work outside their clubs and outside their homes. With a near-passionate interest and commitment to reading and learning and convinced of the civilizing effects of literature and learning, library work was the quintessential, perhaps inevitable, mission for Texas club women.

Club study was often handicapped because of the lack of public libraries. Soon after organization, many clubs often began amassing a collection of books and magazines to assist members in preparing their papers.33 Having begun to meet their own needs for study materials, club women were eager to share their wealth by opening the club library to the public one or two afternoons each week. The first circulating library in Dallas was the 500-volume collection of the Pierian Club.34 The next step for many clubs was to secure larger and publicly supported libraries for their communities.

Texas club women needed publicly supported libraries in order to continue their studies and write their papers. But they also desired public libraries and worked to establish public libraries because they passionately believed in the moral, social, and psychological benefits of learning. The interest in library work, to continue the cultural missionary metaphor, was like the zeal of the convert. The study club satisfied a deep need for many
Texas club women. Never mind that the need satisfied or the benefit derived was far more than knowledge of Greek mythology or the Shakespeare tragedies. Club women, having so enjoyed the experience of the study club, having found inspiration in literature, having gained a new sense of self esteem as accomplished women, rushed to provide the tools for this transformation to their towns and cities. Through library work, Texas club women received recognition as among the learned leaders and culture-bearers of their communities. They also sought to share with their communities the gains they received through reading and study. They wished to make accessible what had once seemed so inaccessible to them.

The XLI Club of Gainesville, the Woman's Club of Kingsville, the Woman's Club of Anson, and the Waco City Federation of Women's Clubs (WCFWC) offer typical examples of how Texas women's clubs saw to it that public libraries were established in their home towns. Founded in the 1890s, the XLI Club had 126 volumes in its club library by 1896. In 1900 the club opened its library to the public, and members took turns as librarian until a full-time librarian was hired. In 1906 the XLI Club created the Gainseville Library Association as a group separate from the club to raise money for the public library. The City Council allowed the club to use rooms in City Hall for the
public library. The club ran the library and paid the librarian's salary through 1911. In the meantime, the Library Association raised enough money to buy a lot for the library building and applied for a Carnegie library grant. The grant was received and the building was completed in 1914.35

In the sparsely settled town of Kingsville in southern Texas, nine women organized the Kingsville Woman's Club in 1909. This small but earnest group sought self culture for themselves but also provided Kingsville with a free public library. Their first meeting was a "book shower"; 28 books and $55.00 were received. Not to be deterred by a small collection, the club opened a library the very next day with a club member acting as librarian. The library grew. Club members responded to roll call with the presentation of a book or magazine. Members solicited donations from friends and neighbors and wrote to other women's clubs where they had been members and asked for contributions. In six months, the Woman's Club of Kingsville had established the town's first public library situated in a rent-free room over the Kleberg Bank. The library was open for a few hours, Monday through Saturday. Club members served as librarian, janitor, and administrator. In 1917 the club employed a full-time librarian. By that time, the Woman's Club included 125 women. Most of the money collected in annual membership dues went to the library
fund which was, then, augmented through other fund raising efforts. In 1925 wealthy rancher and landowner R. J. Kleberg, Sr., donated land, and the City Commissioners financed construction of a new library building. The Woman's Club of Kingsville continued to finance the operation of the library until the county, in 1930, and the city, in 1943, began to provide financial assistance.36

The public library in Anson—north of Abilene in west Texas—has a similar history. The Woman's Club of Anson began work on a public library in 1904. Like the Kingsville women, their first step was to have a "book reception." The collection was built with donations from friends, businessmen, and through membership dues. In the early years the library was open only one afternoon each week with a club member serving as librarian.37 In 1910 the local newspaper carried a story about the library that ended with a plea for support through annual subscription fees. The article, probably penned by a member of the Woman's Club of Anson, concluded:

...lend your support to the Public Library, the only purpose of which can possibly be the broadening of mind and intellect and preparation for a higher and nobler citizenship. And let us remember that "the harvest of the future is but the golden ripening of today's sowing." 38

Waco club women organized a city federation in 1898 to be a united force for the advancement of culture and
knowledge in Waco. Those present at the inaugural meeting unanimously decided that the establishment of a public library would be the federation's primary goal. Each member club of the city federation agreed to raise money for a library fund, and the federation immediately planned a lecture series as its first fund raising event. For the next seven years, library work continued as the focus of the WCFWC in league with the Public Library Association of Waco. In 1899 a small library opened in the home of Mrs. D. C. Bolinger, president of the WCFWC and the library association. As the collection grew, it was moved to Central School and in 1900, with 1,050 volumes, the library opened in a small cottage. With the help of a grant from Andrew Carnegie, a public library building was erected and opened in 1904.

Several Texas clubs, in addition to supporting local efforts for a public library, decided to take the lamp of learning into the Texas countryside. The Waco Woman's Club (WWC) was the first club in Texas to organize a travelling library. In 1898 Kate Rotan--one of Waco's elites, serving as the first president of the TFWC, and an influential member of the Waco Woman's Club--suggested that the club sponsor a travelling library. Rotan donated sixteen cases of thirty books each that the club circulated through the smaller communities around Waco. The WWC members were extremely proud of their travelling library and referred to
the project as "real missionary work." Rotan recalled

...the absolute joy and happiness of the country women...Sometimes they came as much as twenty miles in in open buggy, often through rain or sleet, to get books. 42

The club continued the travelling library for nine years. By 1901 six other clubs had travelling libraries and by 1907 there were fifty-three travelling libraries sponsored by women's clubs. 43

The enthusiasm of local women's clubs for establishing public libraries was encouraged by the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs when, in 1898, TFWC President Mrs. J.C. Terrell suggested that the creation of community libraries become the principle work of the federation. Mrs. Terrell's suggestion, so in line with the sentiments of Texas club women "realizing the dearth of library facilities throughout the state," received unanimous approval and gained her the affectionate sobriquet, "Mother of Texas Libraries." Throughout the period studied the federation pursued and encouraged "library work" at the state and local level. 44

In 1902 the TFWC, the University of Texas, and the State Teachers' Association cooperated to organize the State Library Association. Its goal was to seek legislation favorable to the establishment of more public libraries for Texas. All local women's clubs were urged to join and support the State Library Association. Less than
ten years after Texas club women made their commitment to the cause of public libraries, they could boast that they had fostered the foundation of sixty-five new libraries: twenty Carnegie libraries, twenty-eight public libraries operated by club women, and fifty-eight travelling libraries.\textsuperscript{45}

The library work of the Texas club movement provides an excellent example of the relationship between the state federation and the local clubs. The state's "library movement" proceeded on two fronts in early twentieth century Texas: the state federation provided guidelines to member clubs about how to go about establishing a public library in their home community and participated in a state-wide campaign to arouse public support for a state library commission; the local clubs concentrated their efforts at the local level but also supported the state federation in its work with the state legislature.

The state federation and the local clubs often took up "outside work" in tandem. The federation was organized to provide direction, encouragement, and practical support to member clubs as they tackled one local project or another. At the same time, it was the member clubs who set the agenda for the state federation at the annual meetings and who provided the leadership for the organization. The local clubs worked best at the local level; the federation,
as represented by its officers, spoke for Texas club women at the state and national level. Local clubs often desired the assistance of the state federation to accomplish their local work, and the state federation needed the support of the member clubs if it was to press effectively a particular issue in the state legislature, with the General Federation of Women's Clubs, or with the Congress of the United States.

* * *

Very often when club women worked to "uplift" their communities with music, art, or literature through concerts, exhibits, and public libraries they emphasized the particular importance of these positive influences on the young. When considering the possibilities for civic usefulness, club women--most of whom were mothers--often thought of children and their welfare. The new ethos of public duty that the club movement did so much to foster extended the maternal concern beyond the private home and beyond the biological bond. Women now had a responsibility to all children. Moreover, as more functions of childrearing, specifically education, became public, the only way to safeguard one's own children or to enhance their experience was to do so for all children.

This new ethos of public motherhood was, in part, the culmination of at least a century of change in the ideology
of motherhood. Beginning at least with the concept of "Republican Motherhood" of the revolutionary and post revolutionary decades, motherhood took on a civic function: mothers contributed to the triumph of the republic by raising moral children who would preserve the new nation in all its rectitude. Through the nineteenth century, motherhood became a sacred calling even as it became an increasingly private activity within the separate sphere of the home of the nuclear family. The privatization of woman's sphere in the home intensified maternal responsibility for the moral and emotional health of her children. But, as the century waned the seriousness of this responsibility and the belief in woman's unique ability to care for and nurture children led thinking women of the middle- and upper-classes to conclude that their maternal sensibilities were required in the public sphere.46

The National Congress of Mothers, the forerunner of the Parent Teacher Association, was one manifestation of a renewed emphasis on motherhood and the public duties of mothers. Organized in 1897, its purpose was "to recognize the supreme importance of the child."47 Local mothers' clubs were usually organized by mothers whose children attended the same school. In Texas, as elsewhere, mothers' clubs often joined the club movement and helped swell the
ranks of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs. 48

As outlined in the first chapter, white middle- and upper- class women extended the ideology of "true womanhood" and "the cult of domesticity" to justify the participation of women in the public sphere. This justification was not, however, disingenuous, nor was it merely calculated to emancipate women from the private home although it is often claimed to have had that effect. Rather, the powerful belief in woman's duty and in the natural moral superiority of women created a new moral imperative. 49 Texas club women took up the yoke of this responsibility and determined to have an affect on civilization. The domestic virtues must be extended to the urban environment. Texas club woman Margaret Mooar presented a paper entitled "Woman in Philanthropy" to her club in Colorado City around the turn of the century. She said:

It has been attributed to a great Texan the author-ship of the remark "Civilization begins and ends with the plow." How true that remark would have been had it said that "civilization begins and ends in the home." The higher, the purer, the better the education, the refinement- and the intelligence of the home, so will the civilization be higher, purer, and better. Napoleon never uttered a more important truth than when he said "What France most needs is mothers." 50

Mothers were the natural guardians of civilization just as they were the natural guardians of their children. In a similar vein, Mrs. J. C. Weaver, a Dallas kindergarten
teacher of local fame, responded to criticism of the woman's club movement by explaining that women had strayed from their separate sphere because of their love of home and children and not in defiance of their womanly duties. She asserted women's duty and preogative for worldly work:

There is much more of the work of the world that women are doing than men have not the time to do, yet it is vitally important that it should be done.
It is said that "the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world." Verily is this so, for while the club woman rocks the cradle with one foot she can with her hands, head and heart not only attend to the needs of her own family but can reach out with her motherly tenderness and sympathy and help the world. 51

As if the legacy of the nineteenth century were not sufficient to call women to attend to problems outside the home that might affect their, and others, children, the "child study" movement of the late nineteenth century further convinced white middle and upper class women of the propriety and the necessity of their involvement. The child study movement began with the work of American psychologist G. Stanley Hall in the 1880s and was received enthusiastically by women's clubs and mother's clubs across the United States. The child study movement reinforced extant ideologies about the sacred significance of motherhood. 52 As historian Joseph F. Kett explains:

Indeed, child study was the perfect answer to criticisms so often made in the 1890s of leisured ladies who selfishly restricted the
size of their families and ignored their social responsibilities, for it provided the same kind of upgrading of motherhood as a role that religious enthusiasm had provided in the early 19th century. 53

In Texas, many clubs incorporated child study into their club curricula. For example, one north Texas club began a meeting in 1904 with a response to roll call on "children's sayings," proceeded to a paper on "The Fears and Sorrows of Childhood," and closed with a discussion of "The Training of Children." Ten years later, the club continued this interest with a regularly scheduled "Child Study Day." 54

Texas club women, in their local women's clubs, demonstrated their concern for the welfare of children through involvement in education and the public schools, through projects or crusades designed to protect children's physical and emotional well-being, and through vigorous promotion of a juvenile justice system. By 1901 most Texas clubs then affiliated with the state federation were doing "educational" work in their home towns, either through the public schools or through library work. 55

Texas club women were most deliberate in their plans for "outside work." The first step was, almost invariably, a club discussion on some aspect of female civic duty. For example, the Ariel Club of Denton began its extensive and long-lived involvement with the local schools at a December meeting in 1899 with a paper and club discussion on
"Woman's Relation to the Schools." These discussions helped club members assess the needs of the schools in their town, determine effective responses, and consider the propriety of various projects and strategies. If uncertain about how to best aid the schools, the club president appointed a committee to investigate and make recommendations. Clubs were also influenced in their choice of projects by what they knew of other clubs within and outside of the state and by what was recommended by the state federation. The next step, once a line of work was chosen, was the creation of a committee, usually called the "School Committee," to oversee the project. This committee would make recommendations about how to raise the money needed for the task and would make arrangements to have the chosen work done or the equipment purchased.

In general, the relation of club women to the public schools and to public school personnel was supportive rather than adversarial. When Texas women's clubs identified a need in the public schools, the initial response was to find a way for the club to fill that need. It was rarely the style of these clubs to "demand" certain improvements or reforms. Often, a representative would confer with the school principal or district superintendent before proceeding with its donation of money, equipment, or services. On these terms, it is not surprising that public
school officials welcomed the interest of club women. When school administrators realized the depth of interest Texas club women had in the public schools, they sometimes courted the ladies' favor--or at least encouraged their zeal. Professor J. S. Kendall, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, addressed the club women at their annual meeting in 1901 on "What Can and What Should the Clubwomen of Texas do for the Schools of the State?"\(^{58}\)

Club women improved the public schools in small and great ways without adding to the work of administrators or to the tax burden of their community. Once certain programs or improvements were made and once the benefit of these programs or improvements was established, club women then invited schools or districts to assume responsibility for their maintenance. In effect, club women took the responsibility for demonstrating the importance and the desirability of certain progressive measures--an attractive and well-equipped school yard, home-making classes, or kindergartens--and, then, having presented the school with a successful fait accompli, encouraged the school to take responsibility for the program's continuation.

It is indeterminable if the recognition of ultimate public responsibility for school improvements was the end goal of the clubs. The pattern of club voluntarism and philanthropy followed by genteel lobbying for public
support was quite common, almost the norm. Given the bare-boned structure of municipal governments in Texas at that time and given the frontier prejudice for weak government and the post-Reconstruction backlash against "expensive government," Texas club women chose an ideal strategy. Voluntarism and benevolence established club women as allies rather than trouble makers. Later, city governments could be persuaded that civic pride required their support of school improvements.

The most popular type of school project for women's clubs in Texas was the campaign to improve school facilities--pedagogically and aesthetically. As mentioned earlier, some clubs donated pianos to encourage schools to provide music education. Other clubs donated art reproductions to adorn school room walls. Some clubs, eager for schools to offer domestic science and manual or industrial training, provided the special equipment for these classes. The San Antonio Woman's Club and the Clover Club of Kaufman, for example, established industrial and manual training in the public schools. The Sesame Club of Marshall and the Ariel Club of Denton were two other clubs that made contributions for domestic science facilities. The City Federation of Women's Clubs in San Antonio, a particularly active city federation, donated $3,000.00 to the local schools for equipment in one year. The Woman's
Club of El Paso introduced physical education to the public schools in 1903 by offering to regularly pay $25.00 of the teacher's $40.00 monthly salary.\textsuperscript{63} Other clubs frequently made gifts to the school libraries.\textsuperscript{64}

Along with improving the local schools' educational facilities, women's clubs sought to make their public schools prettier and healthier. Learning would surely be aided in congenial and sanitary surroundings. Too, the ideal mother would see to the healthfulness of her child's school environment just as she kept certain standards of hygiene in her home. Leaders in the club movement were always quick to point out that club work strengthened woman's involvement in home and school. As TFWC historian Stella Christian wrote in 1919:

\begin{quote}
Instead of the club causing women to neglect their homes and children, the report [from individual clubs at the district meetings of 1905] showed that the club had sent its ideas into the home and school, when the necessity existed for better conditions-- and the club women were giving time and energy to supplying them. \textsuperscript{65}
\end{quote}

School yard and school room improvement was taken up by many clubs. Most clubs achieved the improvement themselves--raising money to provide landscaping or pictures for school rooms. Other clubs, like the Denton Shakespeare Club and the Waco Woman's Club, encouraged initiative among school children by offering prizes--such as pictures--for the best kept room or the most improved
school yard. Women's clubs also investigated problems of overcrowding and poor ventilation.

The installation of drinking fountains to replace the then standard bucket and common dipper was a school-ground improvement that Texas women's clubs undertook for reasons of hygiene. For the Denton Woman's Shakespeare Club, this project became almost as important as their library work. In 1906 the club decided that they would see to it that all the city schools had sanitary water fountains. The club president consulted with the School Superintendent who initially promised to contribute $600.00 to the project if the club would raise the necessary remaining $200.00. For reasons that the club history does not reveal, the school board did not follow through on its agreement. Undaunted, the Woman's Shakespeare Club spent the next five years raising money to purchase the drinking fountains.

The club's efforts to raise the money provides a classic example of fundraising by a woman's club in a medium size Texas town. The women gave dinners, hosted a roller-skating party, gave a stereopticon show, printed and sold a cookbook, revised and reprinted the cookbook four years later, co-hosted an art exhibit with the Ariel Club, and raised $50.00 from a dramatic reading. When the money for four fountains was raised, the club approached the school board again; this time the school board agreed to pay for the freight and installation. The club continued
with their various projects until fountains were installed at all of Denton's schools. 68

A report of the 1906 meeting of women's clubs in the third district of the state federation provides a sampling of school improvement activities:

The Woman's Wednesday Club, of Mineola, and the Woman's Wednesday Club of Forney, fenced the school grounds and planted trees thereon. The Woman's Wednesday Club of Kemp also planted trees and was instrumental in having a Texas flag raised over the school on San Jacinto Day... The Woman's Club of Marshall "hung pictures of Southern heroes on the school room walls. The Pierian Club, Corsicana, gave four pictures to public schools, while the New Era Club, Corsicana, provided funds with which to tint the walls of six school rooms. The 1881 Club of Jefferson, which on October 6th celebrated its twenty-fifth birthday, is striving for the prettiest school grounds in the state. 69

Particularly ambitious clubs chose to establish or sponsor public kindergartens. As early as 1899 several free kindergartens had already been opened by women's clubs. 70 The Woman's Club of El Paso, the Woman's Club of Houston, and the Mothers' Clubs of San Antonio were among those who organized and maintained free public kindergartens. 71 Some clubs, like the Kindergarten Associations of Galveston, Dallas, and Fort Worth made kindergartens their exclusive occupation. Enthusiasm for kindergartens was so great that the TFWC created a standing committee on kindergartens in 1904, and in 1905 a special kindergarten conference was held in conjunction with the
state annual meeting. The TFWC Education Committee reported, in the 1904-1905 yearbook, that fifty-eight club-sponsored kindergartens had been established. Clubs that chose not to take on the responsibility of running a kindergarten supported the movement for pre-school education by contributing to a scholarship fund for future kindergarten teachers and by encouraging policy at the local and state level to incorporate kindergarten education into the public school system.\textsuperscript{72}

The Woman's Club of El Paso formed the first kindergarten association in the state and made El Paso the first Texas city to include kindergarten in the public schools. With these impressive "firsts," the Woman's Club of El Paso provides an excellent example to consider. The club traces its organization to 1881 although it did not use that name until 1899. In 1891 these women called themselves the Child Culture Study Club. It was this group that, in 1892, formed a kindergarten association and urged the local school board to create a kindergarten in the public schools. The board refused, pleading lack of funds. If money was the problem, the kindergarten association resolved to remove that obstacle. Within one year they had raised enough money to provide equipment and a teacher's salary for one year if the Board of Education would make the kindergarten part of the free public school system.
The Board of Education agreed.\textsuperscript{73}

A few club women worked to influence local educational policies by becoming school board trustees themselves. Since Texas women did not have school suffrage in the early years of the century, their occasional successes are particularly momentous. As early as 1901 the El Paso Woman's Clubs began to promote the election of women to the school board and by 1919, five club members had served in that capacity.\textsuperscript{74}

In 1908 the Dallas Federation of Women's Clubs and the Dallas Congress of Mothers determined that womanhood must be represented on the Dallas school board; Adella (Mrs. E.P.) Turner and Mrs. P.P. Tucker were selected as candidates. The incumbent president of the school board refused to run on the same ticket as the two women, so a new ticket headed by another candidate for president was created by a civic group. This setback notwithstanding, Turner and Tucker received a surprising amount of support from civic leaders and the local press. The first women to sit on the Dallas school board were elected with the new ticket in a close race by a margin of twenty-three votes. Both women served for two years and another Dallas club woman was elected in 1919.\textsuperscript{75}

Texas women's clubs identified many ways that their local schools could be improved. Through these improvements they sought to better their communities as
well as enrich the education of their own children. Mary
Burrows Ramsey of El Paso chaired the state federation’s
Education Committee in 1900. The following rather lengthy
excerpt from her committee report conveys the new zeitgeist
of duty that prevailed in Texas clubdom and a hint of why
certain educational reforms seemed so important:

More and more our clubs are becoming
organizations for practical work, having
learned that culture is only found by so
filling our lives with unselfish effort, that
unculture is crowded out. Those whose
interests have been purely literary, or
artistic, or musical, find that their studies
do not suffer by being brought closer to
life.... By the united efforts of the club-
women and the other workers, we have more
kindergartens than ever before--schools for
the little children, where the truth is taught
that each child is part of a
wonderful whole, that one selfish action, one
deviation from truth, creates a discord, and
that a life out of harmony is a joyless life.
We have training classes for kindergartens,
where our young women learn to see with the
wide open eyes of children, that they may know
to lead the little ones. If only the fathers
and mothers might go and learn the same
lesson, there would be a wonderful smoothing
out of the rough places in the home life.
There are mothers’ clubs, where the home
teachers meet with the school teachers, and
study with them to discover how and what to do
and what to leave undone. Industrial classes
are increasing in number, so that hands are
being trained as well as minds, that healthy,
joyous doing and thinking may produce healthy,
joyous living. The little mothers are being
taught to sew, and the little fathers to drive
nails--some are also teaching the little
fathers to sew, and the little mothers to
drive nails. At least one sewing class
conducted by a woman’s club so successfully
proved its usefulness, that the public schools
of the city have taken up the good work, and
one thousand little ones are reaping the benefits. 76

But the "little ones" needed more than good schools in aesthetic and healthful surroundings in order to thrive. Modern notions of childhood emphasized the need for play. In 1908 The Dallas Clubwoman quoted Alice Parker, financial secretary of the Playground Association of America, as saying that "The one thing that the public should understand is that play is not a luxury, it is a necessity."77 Many believed that parks helped to prevent juvenile delinquency. A 1913 article in Harper's Weekly claimed that "thwarting of the 'play instinct' was responsible for fifty percent of the delinquents brought into [juvenile] court."78 Community women's clubs in Texas determined that children should have parks and, even, supervised play. The establishment of recreational parks was an important aspect of "domesticating the city," making the city a "context for family life as well as for work."79

Unless the local community was particularly prosperous and the city officials were unusually disposed to be generous with city money, women's clubs, as with so many other projects and reforms, provided their towns and cities with recreational parks. A group of eighty women in Colorado City organized themselves in 1896 as the Ladies Park Association. By 1900 they owned the city playground,
which included a band stand, and paid for the park's maintenance. Similarly, the Denton Woman's Shakespeare Club worked from 1916 to 1919 to purchase land for a park. A few years earlier the Denton City Federation of Women's Clubs organized college students to supervise children's play on the school grounds during the summer months. The Houston Civic Club, a women's group organized in 1901 to concentrate on beautifying Houston, turned an old downtown cemetery into what is now Sam Houston Park.

The El Paso Woman's Club began a fundraising drive for public playground equipment in 1901. By 1905 the club had formed the Civic Improvement League as the activist arm of the Woman's Club, and they began work with the local street commissioner to improve parks. The Commissioner placed several laborers under the club's direction to plant flowers, trees, and shrubs. The city actually gave control of the city's parks to the club and allocated one hundred dollars a months for the maintenance of four parks. This appropriation barely covered the caretaker's salary, so the clubwomen did much of the gardening work in the parks themselves.

The Dallas Federation of Women's Clubs, a large and powerful city federation, was disappointed with the city's parks and school playgrounds, so they organized to improve them. In 1908 the federation provided several school yards
with recreational equipment, and in 1909 the federation purchased the land for Trinity Park and provided equipment there. These women were as adamant about playground supervision as they were about proper facilities. The group announced in a 1908 article in *The Dallas Clubwoman* that one-third of the proceeds from a recent fund raising drive would be used to hire a playground supervisor. The following excerpt from that article demonstrates the determination of the club women. It also reveals their conviction that the city council was derelict in its duties to the city's youth:

...THERE CAN BE NO PUBLIC PLAYGROUNDS IN DALLAS WITHOUT A PLAYGROUNDS SUPERVISOR.

Obviously girls and boys cannot play unguided on the grounds with gamin, and as surely boys cannot play together in peace and safety until they are shown how.

All the paraphernalia provided six months ago on playgrounds has been demolished by irresponsible hoodlum[s]. The experiment was expensive but necessary.

Now, a man must be found capable of handling this problem and he must have living wages. The City Federation of Women's Clubs will have to shoulder the responsibility and demonstrate to the Commissioners the imperative need of a playgrounds supervisor. NO SUPERVISOR--NO PLAYGROUNDS.

Fortunately, this vital matter is in the hands of conservative, conscientious, capable women who will err only on the right side, and the public may rest assured that their third of the Tag Day Money will go for the good of Dallas and Dallas Children. 85

Dallas club women believed that well-equipped and well-supervised parks would limit the influence of juvenile
delinquents (gamin, or street Arabs, and hoodlums) over other children. The Dallas Federation did hire the city's first playground director, but they were able to do so only after they had convinced the city to pay the salary of the juvenile probation officer. The federation had secured this addition to city services by paying his salary. By 1911 after the DFWC had demonstrated that the parks were heavily used, the City of Dallas agreed to take over Trinity Play Park and to pay the salary of a park director and an assistant.86

Even before Dallas club women began their crusade for proper parks, partly as a way to prevent the spread of youthful hooliganism, the Dallas clubs took the lead in the state on the issue of juvenile delinquency.87 Isadore Callaway, columnist for the Dallas Morning News under the pen name Pauline Periwinkle and a leader in the Dallas club movement, initiated the campaign in 1903 and aroused public concern through several columns urging the establishment of a local juvenile court and a home for juvenile offenders.88 The Dallas City Federation of Women’s Clubs, of which Callaway was a member and the seventh president in 1907, followed Callaway’s lead and was a strong collective voice in Dallas for a juvenile justice system. The Dallas Woman’s Forum, a large department club, aided the crusade in 1907 by hosting public lectures on juvenile justice by national leaders in the movement, Judge
Willis Brown and Judge Ben F. Lindsey of Denver. As noted above, once the state made provision for juvenile courts, the city federation augmented the system by paying the salary of the city's first probation officer. After a short period of time, the city was induced to assume that responsibility.

* * *

The authorized history of the Denton City Federation of Women's Clubs, published in 1929, begins: "Woman like, the first thought of the City Federation after organization was directed to cleaning up the city..." This sentiment was shared by most Texas women's clubs. City beautification and public health crusades were quintessential "municipal housekeeping." True to the expanded conception of woman's duty that club women and other women reformers held in the early twentieth century, Texas club women felt a strong responsibility for improving the urban environment. The geographic and psychic space that once separated the public and the private sphere was disintegrating. As household production became a thing of the past and as urbanization brought new problems, homemakers could no longer protect the private sphere without attending to public problems. The still-popular home economics movement focused on reforms that individual
women could make in their private homes, but this proved insufficient. The generation of women who inherited the nineteenth century "cult of domesticity" now had to move beyond hearth and home to "domesticate the city."

As noted before in reference to the other two major areas of club work in Texas, the new and relatively undeveloped nature of Texas and Texas cities and towns presented Texas club women with a challenge somewhat different from that of their northeastern cohorts. To be sure, there were similar problems that required the reformation of city services, but in addition to "cleaning up," Texas club women also had to plant and build. Their task was both "municipal housekeeping" and "municipal homemaking."

In 1904 the "Civics Committee" of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs reported that "a majority of the smaller towns had started their civic work with 'clean-up' campaigns...." Honey Grove, Clarkesville, Seguin, Corpus Christi, Vernon, Paris, Denton, Victoria, Bowie, and San Marcos were just a few municipalities where local club women had organized efforts. The State Health Officer, W.M. Brumby, M.D., praised the 1908 initiative of San Antonio club women in designating a city clean-up day and urged the state to do the same.

Clubs usually began by initiating town clean up days and then took action to prevent future abuses. The
experience of the women's clubs in Denton, Texas, describes a typical campaign. The City Federation of Women's Clubs led the effort and enlisted the support of local newspapers, city officials, and business elites. After publicizing their plans, the club women divided the town into several districts. A committee was assigned to each district. Each committee began by making a thorough inspection of streets, sidewalks, alleys, storehouses, public buildings, public stairways, and backyards. After the inspection, the club women consulted with property owners and residents and "notified" them of the work to be done. The official history reports that "All joined with hearty good will," although "A few were a little slow about taking hold." Once the needed work was identified, several "soap and water days" were announced. After buildings, stairways, sidewalks, and windows were cleaned, several days were set aside for rubbish removal. The federation followed up with the distribution of one thousand circulars to city residents and local proprietors providing advice and suggestions on how to maintain "attractive and sanitary" conditions.

The next year, 1914, the mayor, at the city federation's request, set aside twelve days in March for an annual clean-up that proceeded much as that of the previous year. The federation placed several trash cans around the
public square and paid to have them regularly emptied for several months. The City Council and local merchants agreed to engage a "garbage hauler" to make monthly collections of garbage.

For several years after this initial effort, the city federation continued to sponsor annual or semi-annual city clean up days. The success that the clubs claimed for their campaign is attributed to the enthusiasm they generated for the project. This was apparently greatly aided with a large dose of civic pride occasioned by a state-wide city beautiful contest in which Denton ran a close second to Bonham, Texas.94

Similarly, Gainesville club women aroused interest by entering the 1912 "cleanest city" contest sponsored by Holland's Magazine. They spoke to groups all over town and raised money to assist in the campaign. On the appointed day, club ladies followed trash wagons in their own buggies to make sure that no alleys were ignored.95 The Dallas City Federation of Women's Clubs enlisted the support of the mayor in their first clean-up campaign. The city supplied wagons and work teams.96

The Civic Improvement League of El Paso, previously identified as a product of El Paso Woman's Club, was so discouraged about their city's sanitation problem that, in 1907, they called for the immediate dismissal of the garbage department superintendent. The superintendent was
not fired, but the mayor agreed to have the League supervise a clean-up campaign and the garbage superintendent put twenty wagons at the club's disposal for the effort.97

Texas clubs also sought ways to help their towns and the residents keep the towns clean. The Etraerio Club of La Grange presented the city with eighteen garbage cans and a street sprinkler to help keep the dust down. The club also placed placards in the local post office to admonish town folk against defacing public buildings.98 Other clubs combined their voluntary efforts with appeals to city authorities to pass or enforce local ordinances that would keep their cities clean. For example, in 1915 the American History Club of Austin sent the following resolution to the city council:

Whereas, proper sanitary regulations are not enforced by those in charge of the rear portions of the University Meat Market and the Cozy Corner Restaurant, each located on 24th and Guadalupe Streets, thereby rendering 24th Street unsightly and disagreeable to those who travel it, including many who attend the University, the Woolridge School, and a nearby church, Therefore, be it resolved by the American History Club that the mayor and the city council of the City of Austin are respectfully and earnestly requested to adopt such measures as may be necessary to prevent the evils herein complained of. 99

City beautification for many Texas cities required clean up campaigns, pressure for new laws such as anti-dumping ordinances, and pressure for regular law
enforcement. It often also required that club women take positive and creative steps as well as the ameliorative measures. Denton club women helped the city improve its sidewalks. In 1904 the city aldermen agreed to contribute fifteen dollars to a project to canvass each house in Denton to encourage homeowners to mend sidewalks in front of their homes. The Ariel Club decided that it would assume one-third of the expense of this effort.100

Tree, shrub, and vine planting were other popular projects that Texas club women chose to beautify their home communities. The Ariel Club of Denton began in 1907 by planting trees around the court house. In a dedication ceremony, each tree was named for a club member who became responsible for the care and maintenance of that tree.101 The Waco Woman's Club adorned Waco's public buildings with clinging vines, but were horrified to discover a few years later that the vines on the library building had been cut down and the vines on the other buildings showed signs of extreme neglect. A delegation of club members complained vociferously to the municipal authorities and extracted an agreement that their efforts be accorded more respect. In the words of the club's annual report for that year:

Through the strenuous efforts of some of our club women, promises were made by our lords in authority that these improvements should not in the future be disturbed. If promises hold good, we are to be congratulated on having among our number women of forcible and
persuasive speech,—and business ability. 102

Vine planting was a rather modest project compared to the work of some clubs in gaining or reforming city services. It is clear, however, that these Waco club women saw nothing trivial about their accomplishments. It was a feminine touch that improved the environment in the same way that women transformed houses into homes. The club secretary wrote that the "vines... had made the Library Building one of the coolest, most restful to look at and one of the prettiest corners in the city."103 The destruction, it seemed a desecration, of this improvement was perceived as a direct affront and perhaps symbolic of male indifference to the contributions of women to the public sphere. It also, no doubt, reinforced, for the club women, the significance of their work. Men were not sufficiently concerned with the aesthetics of the urban environment. Furthermore, there was the distinct pride in being able to confront the "lords of authority." Who else, but woman, would see to these quality of life details; who else would make a house a home?

Texas club women wanted Texas cities to be healthier as well as beautiful. The public health was a major concern of many Progressive Era reformers, and Texas club women were no exception. Addressing the Texas Conference on Social Welfare in 1913, Dr. J.S. Turner praised the state’s women’s clubs for their contributions to public health.104
The range of concerns was broad. The many clean-up campaigns, like those cited above, were designed to improve the public health as much as to beautify the city, and the work of women's clubs in cleaning up their communities was a fit introduction to later public health work. Along with work for anti-dumping ordinances, Texas women's clubs, aware of new evidence of disease transmission, especially in the case of the "white plague," sought anti-expectoration ordinances.\textsuperscript{105} Once prohibitory laws were on the books, clubs then campaigned for their enforcement. In 1914 the Denton City Federation of Women's Clubs published a "Bulletin" that proclaimed the accomplishments of their first year and their ongoing agenda. The "Bulletin" appealed for public support in the enforcement of the city's anti-spitting ordinance, citing spitting as a health hazard, a "revolting spectacle," and a sign of disrespect for the law.\textsuperscript{106} Clubs also hosted exhibits on tuberculosis prevention and distributed literature on the fly and mosquito nuisance.\textsuperscript{107}

The most energetic public health work of Texas women's clubs at the community and state level was the campaign for pure food and pure water. The Thirtieth Legislature of the State of Texas passed a Pure Food Law in 1907. The state federation, as the following chapter will explain, lobbied for this law. Once it was passed, city clubs worked for
local ordinances or other measures that would ensure compliance with the state law. Several clubs became unofficial, and sometimes official, inspection teams monitoring adherence to pure food standards.

The Dallas City Federation of Women's Clubs, allied with the Dallas Woman's Forum, were among the first clubs to act. Even before the state law was passed, the city's women's clubs claimed credit for securing a city chemist. A Board of Health had been appointed to enforce the 1906 local pure food ordinance. The Dallas law was scheduled to go into effect in January 1907, but community grocers persuaded city authorities to suspend enforcement until October of that year. The club women were outraged and made this one of their first crusades. The two large clubs succeeded in advancing the enforcement date from October to June. Inspection of dairies, groceries, and meat markets proceeded from this victory.¹⁰⁸

Many clubs took up this inspection work, but the Denton City Federation of Women's Clubs was one of the most dedicated and thorough in this task.¹⁰⁹ The Denton CFWC was a model club in pure food work for several reasons. For one, Dr. J. S. Abbott, the State Pure Food Inspector, a position created by the 1907 state law, was located at the College of Industrial Arts in Denton. Abbott early identified Texas club women as an ally, and he worked with the Denton clubs as with other clubs around the state.¹¹⁰
Also, Mrs. Cree T. Work, a member of the Denton Woman's Shakespeare Club, had chaired the state federation's Home Economics Committee in 1905-1907 when the TFWC was lobbying for a state pure food law. At that time, pure food concerns came under her committee. Moreover, Mr. Cree T. Work was the first president of the College of Industrial Arts, later called Texas Woman's University, from 1902 through 1910. The College of Industrial Arts, created as an "industrial institute and college for white girls of Texas," owed its existence, in part, to the interest and effort of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs. There were many ties that joined the Denton club women to pure food work.

When the Denton women's clubs created the city federation, the pure food committee was one of the first committees established. It immediately began a program to improve the sanitary conditions of the city's groceries, bakeries, meat markets, restaurants, and confectioners. First, the committee used the daily paper to appeal to merchants to reform their establishments and to housekeepers to be circumspect in their shopping. Next, the committee distributed a list of sanitary guidelines to relevant businesses. With this fair warning and after initial "consultation" meetings with the merchants, the committee began its inspections. Dr. Abbott had advised
the club women what to look for: with a sanitation score card, the club women checked for general cleanliness, proper ventilation, proper storage of perishables, sources of contamination, the presence of cuspidors, soap and towels and wash basins, the condition of tools and other instruments, adequate water supply, and screens. All rooms, the front shop, back rooms and work rooms, storage rooms and basements, and wash rooms were inspected. At the time of the first inspection, the committee issued "merit cards" to the few proprietors whose facilities passed muster. Upon subsequent inspections, the committee used score cards provided by Dr. Abbott. At the end of the first year of this effort, the committee reported:

Where there were a few screened grocery stores at the beginning of these inspections, there are now only four left without them. The walls, ceilings and floors are more carefully looked after; stocks are neat and orderly; refrigerators sanitary; personnel improved; clean towels to be found; in but a few instances does the proprietor fail to see the necessity of having the back rooms of stores as sanitary as front ones, and in some cases efforts are being made to carry only such canned goods as come under the pure food law...The perishables have elevated cases; the garbage is looked after more carefully... and hauled away daily. 114

These inspections continued through 1917. The city federation's pure food committee continued to educate housewives on proper shopping and home storage. The discriminating shopper would be as influential as the committee inspections. "It is the object of the Pure Food
committee," the federation's 1914 bulletin stated, to guarantee to the housekeepers clean and wholesome places where food stuffs are sold,—they in turn being expected to co-operate with it by buying only where such conditions exist. Should they do this, there would soon be no insanitary places of business and only the best grade of products would be carried. 115

Dr. Abbott recognized that the Denton club women were a powerful ally in the enforcement of the state's pure food law. He appointed Mrs. W.C. Murphy, the city federation's pure food committee chair, as assistant pure food commissioner. 116 Other clubs in other Texas cities worked unofficially under the direction of Abbott. In 1911 the Austin American History Club, responding to an appeal from Abbott, convinced the city council to appoint a sanitary inspector for the city, and the first appointment was Mrs. Charles Gardner, a club member. 117 The position of city sanitary inspector or city pure food inspector was one of the early public offices to be held by a woman in in Texas. It is unnecessary to point out that not all cities followed the example of Denton and Austin in this regard. For example, in 1908 the city commissioners of Fort Worth met to consider the recommendation of Dr. Abbott that women be appointed as municipal pure food inspectors, but opinion was solidly against the idea. Commissioner Davidson spoke for the majority when he said:

A woman will not do. It is no job for her.
Slopping around dairies, slaughter houses and the like, holding-up milkmen, sampling food and tramping the streets will not do for a woman's job. It takes a man. 118

Pure water was another important issue for the club women of Texas. The examples of El Paso and Dallas are instructive. In 1908 El Paso's Civic Improvement League retained a lawyer to advise them on how to force the local water company to provide pure water from the near Mesa. They were advised to influence patrons to withhold payment on water bills until the clean water was received.119

The Dallas City Federation of Women's Clubs had a "Water Supply" committee as early as 1908. This committee studied the filtration methods used in other cities. In 1910 the federation president, Mrs. J.J. Hardin, met with the city commissioners and presented the federation's case for a water filtration plant. The city commissioners did not to respond until the federation convinced the Citizen's Association to include a demand for such a plant in their election platform. In 1913 a filtration plant was opened at the Turtle Creek basin. Mayor E.R. Holland is usually credited with the improvement in the city's water supply. His administration did hire a noted engineer to design a water purification and sewage disposal system, and his administration saw that both projects were accomplished. The agitation of the Dallas club women, however, brought the issue to the foreground. It was in this way that Texas
club women often achieved the reforms that they desired.\textsuperscript{120}

This discussion of the "outside work" of Texas women's clubs in the first two decades of the twentieth century not only suggests the kind of work that club women did, it also reveals how these enthusiastic women achieved their desired goals. It is important to recall that despite the advantages of middle and upper class status, Texas club women did not yet have the vote, and most had no independent economic wealth. They did, however, have five resources upon which to draw as they sought to reform and enrich their communities: time, class, energy, ideology, and role models.

It has been observed many times that most Texas club women were from the middle and upper classes, were married, and had domestic assistance. Most, therefore, did not work outside the home. Club work, therefore, became a second career—second to that of homemaker. Without other forms of political and economic power, club projects were often quite time consuming. Fund-raising could be especially time consuming. Although there were several quite active club women who, by choice or necessity, worked outside the home, in general some amount of leisure time was a necessary resource for the accomplishment of local club work.

Class status not only provided time, it also provided access to local authorities and business elites. Wives and
daughters of prominent men could, usually, expect at least a polite hearing when they proposed one action or another. This did not mean that local school boards or city councils readily implemented the recommendations of club women. On the contrary, there was usually initial resistance. It did mean, however, that as long as club women raised the money and did the work, their efforts were rarely obstructed. This chivalry, or perhaps condescension, to allow the "ladies" to proceed would not have obtained for working class groups.

Also, some husbands of club women became unofficial patrons of their wives' club. In Waco, for example, the husband of Kate Rotan—grand dame of the Waco Woman's Club—was the president of the First National Bank of Waco. The family resources often subsidized club ventures, like the traveling library. Furthermore, Mr. Edward Rotan in effect gave a vacant lot of bank property to the club to "improve" and turn into a small downtown park. Like leisure-time, class status offered important advantages, but both would have been for nought without the other three important resources.

Even a brief look at Texas club women reveals the tremendous energy and enthusiasm of these women. Chapter Six will emphasize this point again regarding the state federation of clubs. Establishing public libraries,
conducting pure food inspections, and improving school facilities was time consuming and often frustrating. Most projects required numerous meetings and planning sessions. There was research to be done, letters to write, and people with whom to speak. There were false starts and uncooperative or disinterested officials. Denton club women received a promise for a Carnegie grant in 1903, but it had to be relinquished because the city felt unable to guarantee maintenance of the library.¹²³

This fantastic energy had its source in the club women's belief in and commitment to a certain ideology of womanhood--her talents, her values, and her duties. This ideology--outlined in the first part of this chapter and to be elaborated in chapter seven--was a national phenomenon, but there were distinctive elements in a state like Texas in the early 1900s. Texas club women had two kinds of work to do: municipal housekeeping and community building or municipal homemaking. Streets had to be cleaned and paved and garbage had to be hauled. But also, libraries had to be built, trees had to be planted, local culture had to be developed. Whereas Texas club women had more "building" to do in this new and growing state, club women in more heavily industrialized states had other problems to contend with. In Texas, as the next chapter will explain, one underprivileged class that club women sought to aid was rural folk--especially women. In Chicago, for example, a
targeted group to be aided was more likely to be immigrant or working class groups.\textsuperscript{124} In both cases, the belief in the power and the rectitude of organized womanhood was the source of inspiration and amazing energy.

Finally, Texas club women benefitted from the model of other clubs and from the guidance of the Texas state federation. Women learned what other clubs in the state were doing at the annual TFWC meetings. This was a source of ideas for new projects and advice on tactics. It also spurred competition. For example, the Waco Woman's Club began discussing plans for "outside work" in the fall of 1897 after member Kate Rotan, then serving as the first president of the TFWC, reported on activities of other clubs around the state.\textsuperscript{125} Two years later, after the club had begun its travelling library program and joined with the city federation on other projects, the club secretary recorded in minutes:

Addison tells us "There is no passion which steals into the heart more imperceptibly and covers itself under more disguises than pride." This passion has stolen into our hearts and recognizing it, we nurture it--for have we not reason to be proud of the Woman's Club of Waco? \textsuperscript{126}

Texas clubs also learned--at state meetings, through national publications, and from out-of-state friends--what club women in other states were doing. The "networking" so sought by late twentieth century "liberal feminists"\textsuperscript{127}
was clearly in evidence with the early twentieth century club movement. Of course, aside from regional differences, this was a fairly homogeneous group; but whatever ease was gained through relative homogeneity was countered, in part, by primitive (by 1980s standards) transportation and communication.

Thus, Texas club women compensated for their political disabilities through the resources of time, class, energy, ideology, and role models. With these resources, club women carefully chose their tactics. The most common means for achieving a particular goal was to do it themselves. That is, club women raised the money to purchase improvements—such as books, pianos, or pictures—or to contract for improvements—such as tree planting or park supervision. Given their resources, this voluntarism rarely failed. The next step was to convince local authorities that the maintenance of a particular improvement was a public responsibility.¹²⁸

This was accomplished in two ways. First, the demonstrable success of the club’s project was presented as proof of the project’s worth. Second, club women launched community education campaigns to "arouse public sentiment"—to use the phrase of the day—in favor of particular programs. Club women printed and distributed brochures on the importance of pure food or the dangers of spitting. They sponsored public lectures featuring "experts" on
juvenile courts, public parks, industrial education, and so on. But probably most effective was their use of local print media. Several club women were journalists and their contributions to the success of municipal housekeeping and community building cannot be overestimated. When a club did not have an ally on the staff of the local newspaper, club women were urged to send in articles or letters calling attention to a particular nuisance, an upcoming fundraising event, or a desired reform. The education of public opinion, also a strategy favored by the TFWC and frequently urged upon individual clubs, will be discussed more fully in Chapter Six.

The voluntarism of Texas women’s clubs should be credited with the initiation of many needed reforms and new institutions. The "arousal of public sentiment" should be credited with their survival. The creation, or marshalling, of public opinion was an example of effective female influence. Marlene Wortman, whose article on the municipal work of late nineteenth century women has often been cited in this chapter, aptly describes the tactic of "influence:

Women’s influence on shaping public policy is difficult to measure because women were powerless to affect decision making directly...The methods of female re-formers were adaptations of the techniques used by mothers to manipulate the behavior of family members. The true woman commanded authority through her spiritual power, not her economic,
physical, or political power. She gained her way through personal persuasion by stimulating in others feelings of guilt or gallantry. Female reformers used the expose and social survey in the same way. These approaches orchestrated statistics and well-selected human interest stories to arouse moral indignation and outrage among those in tune with the values of the cult of true womanhood and domesticity...Thus, women sought to bypass partisan politics by working directly on the public conscience. 130

In conclusion, this chapter demonstrates that white Texas club women in the early twentieth century devoted much of their time to "domesticating the city." In 1915 Mary Ritter Beard recognized the variety and significance of this work nationally in her book Women's Work in Municipalities,131 but this work has been largely overlooked after decades of scholarship on the Progressive Era. Until recently, there was no recognition of the community-based reform or activism of Texas women in this period. Without doubt, Texas club women were among the state's most active "progressives," but the progressivism of Texas club women ran along a track different from that which has been heretofore chronicled.132

The Texas Federation of Women's Clubs bound the local Texas clubs to the national club movement and provided the medium through which Texas clubs agreed upon their reform agenda. The structure of the state federation, its place in Texas progressivism, and its work at the state and national level is presented in the next chapter. The TFWC
strengthened the initiative of local clubs, but much of what the club movement in Texas accomplished was achieved at the local level by club women determined to improve the towns and cities in which they and their families lived.
Endnotes for Chapter Four

1 This phrase is borrowed from Marlene Stein Wortman’s important article on the urban reform work of women at the end of the nineteenth century. She briefly describes the distinct social consciousness which women of this era believed they brought to reform efforts and portrays the work of women’s clubs, the W.C.T.U., suffrage workers, and other female activists. She refers to these women as "domestic reformers" meaning that they brought their domestic orientation to urban problems and expanded "the concept of urban reform to include the issue of making the city a viable environment for carrying out family life..." Wortman’s discussion and conceptualization of "municipal housekeeping," the contemporary phrase for "domesticating the city," is one of the most significant published essays on white American women of this period. Marlene Stein Wortman, "Domesticating the Nineteenth-Century American City," Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies, 3 (1977), 531-72.

2 The historian of the Dallas Woman’s Forum presented the purpose of the club with these words: "It was the desire of the Dallas Woman’s Forum in addition to the cultural branch of its work to become more familiar with both municipal and national affairs. It was at this stage of its development a place where women might come to discuss topics of the hour, and interest themselves in whatever came up that might concern the welfare of the citizenship of Dallas." In the same history, long term president of the Forum, Adella Turner, is reported as addressing the club in 1912 in this way: "The Forum is something more than a Club,—it is an institution of educational and philanthropic endeavor. Its purpose will always appeal to those who realize that education is never finished,—that doing and learning means continuous growth, and only in this way is human civilization uplifted...All earnest women are invited to join this movement for the advancement of woman and the elevation of our citizenship." Both quotes are taken from Martha Lavinia Hunter, A Century History of the Dallas Woman’s Forum, 1906-1931 (Dallas: Clyde C. Cockrell Co., 1932), pp. 22, 42. Bengta Culp makes the same observation of the Gainesville XLI club: "The history of a pioneer club portrays the stages of development of clubs in general from institutions for self-improvement to institutions interested in national and international problems." Bengta A. Culp, "The History of the Gainesville XLI Club and its Relation to the General Woman’s Club Movement," Masters Thesis, North Texas State College, 1951, p. 12.

This theme is more fully developed in Chapter Six.


As a frontier state in the nineteenth century, it is not surprising that state and municipal governments would be bare-boned. State government was temporarily bolstered during Reconstruction, but when Democrats regained power the Reconstruction constitution was rescinded and state government weakened and became more ineffectual. One of the accomplishments of "progressivism" in Texas was an increased confidence, or a decreased paranoia, in (or of) government. See Lewis L. Gould, Progressives and Prohibitionists: Texas Democrats in the Wilson Era (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973) and Rupert N. Richardson, Texas: The Lone Star State (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1958), pp. 201-240, 259-295. Of course, denuded state and municipal government was neither a Texas nor a frontier phenomena. In the words of Paula Baker, during the first half of the nineteenth century, "State and local governments gradually relinquished to the marketplace the tasks of regulating economic activity, setting fair prices, and determining product standards...governments largely gave up the tasks of regulating the economic and social behavior of the citizenry." Bakers’ observation is based on her reading of several prominent economic and legal historians. See Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," American Historical Review, 89 (1984), p.629.


With organization came a conscious strength and a sense of responsibility for its use. Literary culture was the raison d’etre of the industrial club, in itself a noble purpose, but it was felt that such an organization of women as the State Federation must stand for some united effort

"They Vote Today," The Dallas Morning News, 3 May 1901; "To Mrs. W.B. Sharp," n.d. 1915, Mrs. W.B. (Estelle) Sharp Collection, Correspondence 1899-1915, Barker Center for Texas History, Austin, Texas.

Texas Federation of Women's Clubs, Yearbook, 1913-1914, p.16, Central Offices, Austin, Texas.

TFWC, Yearbook, 1911-1912, p. 19.


Christian, p. ix. Anna J.H. Pennybacker deserves special note as an extremely influential club woman of national reputation. Born in Virginia in 1861, she graduated with the first class of the Sam Houston Normal School in Huntsville, Texas. She taught school for several years and wrote a Texas history textbook that was used in Texas classrooms for four decades. She was active in the Tyler Woman's Club and the Austin American History Club, serving as president of the latter in 1901. She simultaneously served as president of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs. She was elected president of the General Federation of Women's Clubs in 1912 and served two consecutive terms. She also worked with the League of Women Voters and the Democratic National Committee. She married, was widowed at a fairly young age, and raised three children. As a social feminist and progressive, she was continually involved in politics, philanthropy, and education. See Christian, pp. 78-102; Helen Knox, Mrs. Percy V. Pennybacker: An Appreciation (New York: F.H. Revell Co., 1916); Rebecca Richmond, A Woman of Texas: The Life of Mrs. Percy V. Pennybacker (San Antonio: Naylor Co., 1941); Anna J.H. Pennybacker Collection, Barker Texas History Center, Austin, Texas; Marybelle Granger, "The American History Club 1893-1969," TS, Austin History Center.

A complete list of materials on Texas women's clubs studied for this dissertation is included in the
bibliography. In this chapter I have drawn on manuscript sources and written histories of the following clubs: The Ariel Club of Denton, Texas; The Woman's Shakespeare Club of Denton, Texas; The City Federation of Women's Clubs of Denton, Texas; The Waco Woman's Club; The Waco Shakespeare Club; The City Federation of Women's Clubs of Waco, Texas; The El Paso Woman's Club; The Austin American History Club; The Gainesville XLI Club; The Kingsville Woman's Club; The Woman's Club of Anson, Texas; The Dallas Woman's Forum; and the Dallas City Federation of Women's Clubs.

16 Mary Clayton, "History of the Waco Federation of Women's Clubs, 1898-1963," TS, The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; "Records of Minutes of the Meetings of the Waco Federation of Women's Clubs, 1898-1903," TS, 9 November 1900, pp. 15 and 18, The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

17 Mrs. O.O. Hollingsworth, "Kingsville Woman's Club; History of Organization and Federation," TS, p. 3, John E. Connor Museum, Texas A and I University, Kingsville, Texas; Martha Lavinia Hunter, A Quarter of a Century History of the Dallas Woman's Forum, 1906-1931 (Dallas: Clyde C. Cockrell Co., 1932), pp. 56, 80-1. Another example is the Standard Club of Colorado City, Texas. In 1906 the club was asked to take charge of the local lyceum course. Meeting Minutes, 30 March 1906, The Standard Club of Colorado City, MS Colorado City, Texas Club Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Technological University, Lubbock, Texas.

18 TFWC, Yearbook, 1908-09, p. 46.


20 For example, Miss Elna Wesson of the Dallas Woman's Forum said in her annual secretary's report for the 1915-16 club year: "The various forms of art are but the revelation of man's vision, and humanity itself is the subject and the object of all art, whether that art be form, color, music, or motion. God is the original designer but we are sculptors in our own right and study of ideals of the great masters but help in moulding our lives." Hunter, p. 56.

21 Christian, p. 66.

22 For example, the Waco Woman's Club regularly brought the TFWC Travelling Art Gallery to Waco for display and
advertised free admission to children on Saturdays. Meeting Minutes, The Woman's Club of Waco, 20 January 1903, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

23Christian, p. 121.

24Christian, p. 192.

25Meeting Minutes, The Ariel Club, 14 December 1899, 13 October 1902, 30 November 1903, 2 March 1908, 2 November 1908, The Ariel Club Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas.

26Christian, pp. 172, 232.

27Christian, pp. 173, 207.

28The Twentieth Century Club of Daingerfield, the Shakespeare Club of Abilene, and the Coterie Club of Tyler are examples of clubs that promoted music education in this way. See Christian, pp. 87, 155, 175, 192-3, 241, 382.


33Bride Taylor, founder of the Austin American History Club, provided an example in her 1903 reminiscence of the club: "The idea that we could borrow all the books we needed...was a decided fallacy. Few persons in Austin dared to own any of the late books on American History, and we found very soon, that, except in rare cases, only the
later works were any value to us. Some us of contrived to
get a book now and then from the University through the
favor of a professor or student, but this was uncertain,...
It was finally decided to expend all the club funds for
books, and as a result, on the shelves of Mrs. Hudson's
book cases you will today find a number of volumes dealing
with the Civil War period, some of which represent many
dollars of the clubs carefully hoarded funds, and some
others of which were acquired as the outcome of the
suggestion of one daring member, who proposed a book
donation day." Mrs. Thomas F. (Bride Neill) Taylor, "A
Sketch of the American History Club (1893-1903), TS, p. 8,
American History Club Papers, Austin History Center,
Austin, Texas.
In 1898, eleven women's clubs reported having club

34Marian Laird and Tillie Primm, "The Pierian Family,
1888-1968," TS, p. 4, Pierian Club Papers, Dallas
Historical Society, Dallas, Texas.

35Bengta A. Culp, "The History of the Gainesville XLI
Club and Its Relation to the General Woman's Club
Movement," M.A. Thesis, North Texas State College, 1951,
pp. 38-45.

36Mrs. O.O. Hollingsworth, "Kingsville Woman's Club;
Mrs. O.O. Hollingsworth, "History of the Robert J. Kleberg
Public Library," TS, 1959, John E. Connor Museum, Texas A
and I University, Kingsville, Texas.

37Leonora Barrett, "Woman's Club Plans Golden
Jubilee," The Western Observer, 29 January 1953, n.p.;
Mrs. D.L. Stephens, "A Short History of the Public
Library," news clipping dated 1910-1911, Scrapbook, Woman's
Club of Anson, Texas Records, Southwest Collection, Texas
Technological University.

38Stephens.


40Mildred Dulaney and Wm. H. Oliver Scott, "Waco
Public Library," Texas Libraries, 17, No. 10 (1955), 202-
207; Clayton, pp. 1-4.

41"Annual Report, 1902-1903," Woman's Club of Waco
Papers, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas;
Also on the club's travelling library project: Meeting
Minutes, 8 Nov. 1898, 9 May 1899, 11 Feb. 1902, 6 May 1902,
19 Jan. 1904, 19 Dec. 1905, 5 Nov. 1907, 11 Feb. 1908, 1

42Kate Rotan as quoted by Goldie Capers Smith. For biographical information on Kate Rotan and her husband Edward Rotan, see note number 122, this chapter.

43Christian, pp. 73, 186.

44Christian, pp. 23, 29, 30.


46Chapter Two discussed the eighteenth and early nineteenth century developments in the concept of womanhood and motherhood. Chapter Six will explore these issues in greater detail as regards Texas club women.


50Mrs. John W. Mooar, "Women in Philanthropy--home and as queens," MS, paper presented to the Up-to-Date Club of Colorado City, Texas, n.d., Papers of Mrs. John W. Mooar, Southwest Collection, Texas Technological University, Lubbock, Texas.


52David J. Rothman, pp. 207-208.


54Ariel Club, Yearbook, 1904, 1914, (scheduled meetings
for 5 Dec. 1904 and 4 May 1914), The Ariel Club Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas.

55Christian, p. 65.

56Ariel Club, Yearbook, 1899 (14 Dec. 1899), Ariel Club Collection.

57The work of the Waco Woman’s Club to provide local schools with drinking fountains exemplifies this process. Meeting Minutes: 25 Mar. 1902, 8 Apr 1902, 22 Apr. 1902, 11 Nov. 1902, 18 Apr. 1903 and Annual Report, 1902-03, p. 93, The Woman’s Club of Waco Papers.

58Christian, p. 72.


61Christian, p. 117; Ariel Club Meeting Minutes, 2 Jan. 1911.

62Christian, p. 180; Alice Collins Moon, History of the City Federation of Women’s Clubs, San Antonio, Texas (San Antonio: City Federation of Women’s Clubs, San Antonio, Texas, 1960), Barker Texas History Collection, p. 11.


64Christian, p. 148; Ariel Club Meeting Minutes, 7 Feb. 1910.


66Christian, p. 241; Bessie Shook, Fifty Years of the Woman’s Shakespeare Club (Denton: 1949), p. 9, Woman’s Shakespeare Club of Denton Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Waco Woman’s Club Meeting Minutes, 4 Dec. 1906 and Annual Reports for 1902-03, 1903-04, 1904-05, Waco Woman’s Club Papers.

67Austin American History Club, Meeting Minutes, 24 Feb. 1902, American History Club Papers, Austin History Center, Austin, Texas; Christian, p. 241.
68 Shook, pp. 9-10; regarding a like project in El Paso, see Cunningham, pp. 58-67.

69 Christian, pp. 147-8.

70 Christian, p. 46.


72 Christian, pp. 46, 51, 122, 132, 166-7, 187, 195, 342, 349, 362; TPWC Yearbook, 1904-05, p. 53. Another important function of women's clubs regarding the promotion of kindergarten education was their role in educating public opinion on the issue. For example, in 1904, the Colorado City Woman's Club worked with other local clubs to sponsor a public lecture on kindergarten education. Meeting Minutes, February and March, 1904, The Standard Club of Colorado City, MS. Colorado City, Texas Club Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Technological University, Lubbock, Texas.

73 Cunningham, pp. 2, 8.

74 Cunningham, pp. 55, 233.

75 Past President's Association of the Dallas Federation of Women's Clubs, eds., History of the Dallas Fraternity of Women's Clubs, 1898-1936 (Dallas: Clyde C. Cockrell and Son, 1936), pp. 159-162; Hunter, p. 19. The idea of women serving on local school boards was discussed by Tyler, Texas clubwomen as early as 1898. A discussion entitled "Should Women Serve as Trustees on School Boards" was held on May 18, 1898 at that city's annual meeting of the city federation. Cited by Mrs. Reuben L. Phillips, "Editorial Gleanings," The Club Monthly, 1, No. 8 (1898), 43.

76 Christian, p. 78.

77 Poor Children and the Rich," The Dallas Clubwoman, 14 November 1908, p. 4, Barker Texas History Center, Austin, Texas.

Adella Turner wrote in 1904: "It is a demonstrated fact that the playgrounds of large cities have brought about a fifty per cent reduction of crime among juveniles." Adella Turner, "President's Greetings to the Club Women of Texas," TFMW Yearbook, p. 10, 1904-05.

79 Wortman, p. 556.

80 Ladies Park Association, Clubs Manuscript Collections, Colorado City, Texas, Southwest Collection, Texas Technological University, Lubbock, Texas.

81 Reports of the Recording Secretary, The Woman's Shakespeare Club of Denton, 1916 through 1919, MS, The Woman's Shakespeare Club of Denton Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas.

82 History of the First Sixteen Years of The City Federation of Women's Clubs, Denton, Texas (Denton: The City Federation, 1929), p. 11, The Ariel Club Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

83 Mrs. Henry Fall, ed., The Key to the City of Houston (Houston: Houston City Federation of Women's Clubs, 1908), p. 23, Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.

84 Cunningham, pp. 58, 79-80, 82.

85 "Where Does Tag Day Money Go?" The Dallas Clubwoman, 19 Dec. 1908, p. 2, Barker Texas History Center, Austin, Texas.

86 History of the Dallas Federation of Women's Clubs, pp. 3-9, 48-50, 52, 58, 66; "Where Does Tag Day Money Go?"; "City Federation of Women's Clubs," The Dallas Clubwoman, 16 Jan. 1909, p. 5, Barker Texas History Center, Austin, Texas.

involved in regulating the welfare of children. Women were considered the 'natural caretakers' of wayward children and the new penology incorporated maternalistic roles into its reformatory plan. Women's claim to the public care of children had some historical justification during the nineteenth century and their role in child rearing was considered paramount." Platt, p. 75.


90 Hunter, p. 52. Two articles in The Dallas Clubwoman show that Texas club women shared the prevailing sentiment about the importance of a discrete juvenile justice system. For example, an anonymous article which discusses the Dallas Federation's campaign for a detention home for wayward boys had this to say: "The very trials which cause incorrigibility might, if properly handled, make model citizens, and it is poor economy in a state to give away her bright children just because they have caused trouble by getting into mischief. "Wasted Manhood and Womanhood
Which Could Be Saved to Society," The Dallas Clubwoman, 24 Oct. 1908, p. 4, Barker Center for Texas History. Also see "Juvenile Court Law Question By Women (From the Fort Worth Record)," The Dallas Clubwoman, 19 July 1908, p. 7, Barker Center for Texas History.

91 History of the First Sixteen Years of The City Federation of Women's Clubs, Denton, Texas, p. 7.


93 "A Resume of Work Done by the State Health Department," Texas State Journal of Medicine, 4 (1908), 77-82.

94 History of the First Sixteen Years of The City Federation of Women's Clubs, Denton, Texas, p. 7; Bulletin of the City Federation of Women's Clubs, Denton, Texas (Denton: n.p., 1914), pp. 3-4, 28-9.

95 Culp, pp. 58-60.


97 Cunningham, pp. 95, 110.


99 Meeting Minutes, Austin American History Club, 1 March 1915, MS., American History Club Papers, Austin History Center, Austin, Texas.

100 Meeting Minutes, 14 Nov. 1902, Ariel Club Papers.

101 The History of the Ariel Club, 1891-1960, TS, p. 10, The Ariel Club Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas.

102 Annual Report, 1908-09," Meeting Minutes of the Waco Woman's Club, MS, pp. 4-5, The Woman's Club of Waco Papers, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas. Also see the 1903-04 and 1904-05 annual reports and the meeting minutes for 1 March 1904.

103 Annual Report, 1908-09," Waco Woman's Club, p. 4.


For information on clubs other than the Denton Federation see Cunningham, p. 95; Christian, pp. 166-7, 302; "American History Club Second Club in City, Leader in Improvements", unattributed news clipping, 4 Mar. 1934, American History Club Papers, Austin History Center, Austin, Texas.

"Pure Food Commissioner Active," Texas State Journal of Medicine 3 (1907), 203; History of ...the City Federation of Women's Clubs. Denton, Texas, p. 8.

Christian, p. 141; Yearbook, 1904-05, The Woman's Shakespeare Club of Denton Papers, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas.


Bulletin, p. 22.

History of...the City Federation of Women's Clubs, Denton, Texas, p. 8.

"American History Club...Leader in Improvements."

"No Women Pure FoodInspectors," Texas State Journal of Medicine, 3 (1908), 220.

Cunningham, p. 101.

History of the Dallas Federation of Women's Clubs,
pp. 54, 65-6; Lee Milazzo, ed., *Sam Acheson: Dallas Yesterday* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1977), p. 169; Mrs. C. M. Bland of the Dallas Federation Water Supply Committee reported in December 1908 that she had received information from the Water Supply Inspector in Washington City that convinced her that much "education and agitation" would be needed to gain the proper water filtration system for Dallas: "The City Federation Holds Regular Meeting," *The Dallas Clubwoman*, 5 December 1908, p. 2, Barker Center for Texas History, Austin, Texas.

121 Kate McCall Rotan was born in Kentucky in 1851 and raised in an educated, aristocratic southern home. After her family moved to Texas, where her father served as a prominent judge, she attended Waco Female College and graduated with high marks in mathematics. She taught school for a few years before she married Edward Rotan, a rising local entrepreneur, in 1869. Edward Rotan was proprietor and president of Rotan Grocery before ascending to the presidency and later board chairmanship of the First National Bank of Waco. He was also president of numerous local enterprises and served on the Waco School Board for twenty-one years.

In 1897 Kate Rotan helped organize the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs and served two consecutive terms as its first president. She held offices in the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Colonial Dames, and the Waco City Federation of Women's Clubs. In the 1890s she also was president of the Home Association of Texas—a charity organization. She was a vice-president of the Texas Conference of Social Welfare from 1914 to 1916. In the late nineteen-teens, she served as vice-president of the Texas Town and City Planning Association and sat with the Board of Directors of the State Home for Girls at Gainesville, Texas.


122 Kate Rotan donated sixteen cases of books to the club to be used as the travelling library. Meeting Minutes, 11 Oct. 1898, Waco Woman's Club. At Mrs. Rotan's
suggestion, the club gained permission from Edward Rotan and the First National Bank of Waco to transform a piece of downtown property, bank property adjacent to the bank, into a small downtown park. Meeting Minutes, 28 Oct. 1908 and Annual Report 1908-1908, Waco Woman's Club.

123Shook, pp. 6-7; Bulletin, pp. 29-30.

124Wortman, pp. 549-550.

125Meeting Minutes, 9 Nov. 1897, Waco Woman's Club.


This pride and genial competition was reinforced by club reports at the annual TFWC meetings. But clubs had other sources of information about other Texas clubs. Whenever a club woman was visiting in another city, it was quite common for her to be the guest of one or more of the local women's clubs. She would learn of their work and share news of her home club. For example, a prominent San Antonio club woman visited with the Austin American History Club in November 1898. The next month, the club received Kate Rotan from Waco. The following February (1899), a former member of the El Paso Woman's Club sat in and told the group about her club's work in starting a library. The month after that, there were even more visitors, including one woman representing the Iowa Federation of Women's Clubs. Meeting Minutes, 11 Nov. 1898, 23 Dec. 1898, 3 Feb. 1899, 3 Mar. 1899, Austin American History Club Papers.


128"Although historians have not yet fully described the mechanism by which government took on work that had been the responsibility of voluntary organizations, a few hypotheses seem safe. Municipal governments were undoubtedly responding to demands for better social services--ones in part created by women's attempts to form public opinion. Turning to existing institutions would have been a logical choice for municipal governments. Office holders may also have seen new opportunities for patronage--opportunities that gained importance as older sources (service contracts arranged with private businesses, for example) fell under attack." Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," The American Historical
For example, in 1902 the Woman's Shakespeare Club of Denton decided to take action to have the sidewalks around the city square improved. Prior to sending a petition, also signed by women from other Denton clubs, to the city council, the club agreed that the issue should first "be agitated by having papers, also editorials, on the subject published in our city papers."

Meeting Minutes, 1 May 1902, Woman's Shakespeare Club of Denton Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas. When the same club joined the local city clean-up campaign, they began by sending a letter to the local paper urging community support for the effort. Meeting Minutes, 25 Mar. 1909, Woman's Shakespeare Club of Denton Collection.

Wortman, p. 564.


Nancy Schrom Dye makes this observation in her 1986 paper "'Sacred Motherhood': Women and Progressivism Reform," forthcoming in her book on women and Progressivism to be published by Indiana University Press.
Chapter Five
Organized Womanhood in Progressive Era Texas: The Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs, 1897-1920

By the early years of the twentieth-century, most white women’s clubs in Texas were organized for one or two main purposes: the personal growth of the members and the improvement of the local community. Chapter Three focused on the early women’s study clubs in Texas and illustrated the ways in which these clubs fostered "mutual improvement" or "self culture" and a new sense of intellectual and social competence. Chapter Four described the new ethos of public duty that suffused women’s clubs in the early twentieth century and the way that domestic values were translated into the public sphere.

Just as the local clubs had an internal focus--personal growth and a sense of sisterhood--and an external focus--"outside work" or "municipal housekeeping"--so too the state federation of clubs functioned in two related spheres. The Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs became a large multi-layered organization with the dual goal of supporting the intellectual, social, and even political development of women--especially club women--and promoting social and political change within the state and the nation.

These two goals were interdependent and reinforcing--
for the local club and for the state federation. As women became more confident of their intellectual and organizational skills, they were more able and more eager to take on the challenge of social change. Likewise, involvement in social change, whether philanthropic or political, was educational and satisfying on a deeply personal level.

This chapter describes the organization and the development of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs. Beginning with the pre-history of the state federation, its organization in 1897, and its reorganization in 1898 and 1899, the chapter then traces the growth of the TFWC through World War I. The widening arc of the federation's interest and involvement in social issues is presented through the history of the federation's "outside work" committees. The expansion of the federation's reform agenda and the relationship of the federation to other state and national reform groups establishes the TFWC as an aspect of Progressive Era reform in Texas and as part of the national club woman's movement.

As this is not a legislative history of early twentieth century social reform, no absolute claims are made as to the degree of influence the TFWC may have had in the achievement of certain statutory or constitutional reforms. To note that legislation the TFWC endorsed or campaigned for was passed is not to suggest a simple causal
relationship, i.e. one can not assume that legislation the TFWC supported was passed because of TFWC support. The focus of this study is the organized white women's club movement in Texas, and the focus of this chapter is the constellation of issues the TFWC considered important. The issues that the TFWC chose to work on qualifies the Texas club movement as part of Progressive Era reform in Texas and establishes the movement in close cooperation with the national club movement. Whether their work for reform constituted a little influence or a lot of influence, the story reveals that thousands of Texas women were involved, in various ways, with many of the most pressing issues of the day.

*     *     *

In the early 1890s dozens of small women's voluntary associations were organized in Texas: literary clubs, music groups, church associations, and temperance groups. The Texas Women's Christian Temperance Union chapter, organized in Paris, Texas, in 1882 by Frances Willard, was the only statewide women's organization other than denominational associations.¹ There were three attempts to organize a state union of women's groups before the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs was formed. The first was the "Woman's Congress" which met for the first time during the
State Fair of Texas in Dallas in the fall of 1894. The purpose of the Congress was "to serve as a medium of communication" between like-minded women's associations. One of the group's first official actions was to adopt the name "The State Council of the Women of Texas" to demonstrate its sympathy with the National Council of Women, which had been organized in 1888. The new name was also chosen

...to free the federation from the objectionable inference that it had any political significance whatever, the word 'Congress' being clothed with only a political definition by some. 2

The 1894 meeting of the State Council featured women speaking on a variety of topics: the importance of poetry and the visual arts, temperance education in the public schools, the work of community women's clubs, the achievements of the Women's Relief Corps, and women and higher education. Despite the interest in union, the group's goals were too diffuse to sustain the organization.3 Like the National Council and other early social feminists organizations, it foundered, and just as the General Federation of Women's Clubs succeeded in realizing the hopes of many for a viable national women's organization, the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs became the vehicle for organized womanhood in the state.

The following year, 1895, the Wednesday Club of Fort Worth polled several women's clubs in the state regarding a
federation of clubs, but nothing came of this effort. Then in 1896 the Pierian Club of Dallas convened a "Congress of Woman's Clubs" that was attended by representatives of several north Texas clubs. This meeting focused on literary work, and this common denominator was enough to keep the group going for two more years. But there was still an interest in a state union of clubs, and by the time the "Third Annual Congress of Clubs" met on May 8, 1898, the Texas Federation of Women's Literary Clubs had held its second meeting. ⁴

Texas club women were keen to the advantages of federation and were anxious to participate in the growing enthusiasm for organized womanhood. Even before the organization of the State Council of the Women of Texas, a few Texas club women were reaching out to the national club movement. In 1892, three Texas clubs were represented at the Chicago meeting of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. ⁵ It was, however, the initiative of the Waco Woman's Club, flourishing since 1892 that launched the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs.

Though the TFWC became the largest and most important organization of white women in the state in the early twentieth century, its beginning seems inauspicious from the record of the Waco Woman's Club minutes. At the March 27 meeting in 1897, club member Mrs. J.D. Thomas proposed
that the club form a state federation of women's clubs. If there was much discussion, it was not recorded. Rather, the secretary noted that the meeting ended with a scene from Friedrich von Schiller's \textit{Don Carlos}. A month later the club elected delegates to send to the organizational meeting that they would host.\footnote{Thirty-five women representing eighteen Texas women's clubs met in Waco in May of the same year. All were eager and determined to create a permanent state federation. The small gathering received an encouraging letter from Ellen M. Henrotin of Chicago, then president of the General Federation of clubs. Mrs. G. K. Meyer of the Dallas Pierian Club presented a paper on the benefits of federation, and the first day of the meeting closed with the election of officers: president, six vice-presidents, two secretaries, and a treasurer.} By the end of the second day, the first constitution and by-laws were written and accepted. According to that document, the association's name was the Texas Federation of Women's Literary Clubs (TFWLC). The object of the federation was to encourage Texas women in literary work and to promote cooperation between the literary clubs of the state. Kate Rotan of Waco, the newly elected president of the TFWLC, wrote to veteran club woman Jennie Croly about her hopes for the new organization:

This first year of our work will be missionary
work in many ways. There are so many small clubs in the very small towns of this new country [Texas] that are struggling to know how to study, how to enlarge their lives, and how to grow stronger for their various duties in life. To many women in this comparatively new State an afternoon in a club-room, some study of books, some instruction in household economics, some touch with the progressive spirit that pervades the older and more advanced communities, means renewed spirit, a larger energy, and a determination to make their home lives better, to instruct their children differently, and to carry higher ideals into all their duties. 8

Any woman's literary club in Texas was eligible to become a member upon recommendation of two member clubs and a two-thirds vote of the present membership. It was understood, however, that the federation would be composed of white women's clubs only.9

In October, after the 1897 organizational meeting, the federation's Executive Board met for the first time in Dallas. In line with the group's literary interests, plans were discussed for lecture series and for facilitating the correspondence between clubs. But a new note was also sounded. May Dickson Exall, president of the Dallas Shakespeare Club that hosted the meeting, made this statement to the Executive Board in her welcome address:

Our Texas clubs are just beginning to aspire to that higher plane of club life where the desire for self-culture and the enjoyment of the individual are not the only aims, but where associated with these is a spirit of altruism, a desire to promote the welfare of humanity, to better the communities in which we live, and to advance in every way possible the noblest ideals of womanhood. 10
Many of the Board members must have shared Exall's interests, for the subject of public libraries "claimed a large share of attention" and anticipated the federation's involvement in affairs beyond those of study and self-culture.11

When the Texas Federation of Women's Literary Clubs convened in April 1898 in Tyler for its first annual meeting, the assembled women took their first step toward claiming civic responsibility as a goal for the new federation. There were many speeches and presentations on various aspects of the club movement, e.g. "Advantages of Federation to the Club and to the Individual," "Women's Clubs in County Neighborhoods," "The Club in Relation to the Home," "Is the Club Woman a Better Mother and Homemaker," "The Mother and the School from the Teacher's Point of View," and "What Other State Federations Are Doing." The two main features of this meeting were an inspirational address by TFWLC president Kate Rotan and a speech by Fort Worth club woman Annie McLean Moore entitled, "Public Libraries, the Proposed Work of the Federation."12 Rotan's address was almost religious in tone. She exhorted club women to heed to vast opportunities and responsibilities that awaited them. She articulated the "spirit" of club work that would increasingly compel thousands of women to join the ranks.
In her words,

We have accepted--nay, we have had thrust upon us--the duty and responsibility of conducting a great movement, for which the harvest is already ripe...Splendid opportunities lie in our way...It is for us to take the initiative and to set in motion those forces which so immeasurably advance the cause of civilization, of education and of religion. We have come to recognize and accept the utility of co-operation. Concert of action and unity of purpose are necessary to every large measure of success. Association obliterates prejudice and bestows power, influence and unanimity or purpose. The work in which we are engaged is not unwomanly, as is charged by some who refuse to understand. This Federation stands for the highest and best of all God's gifts--for woman, for home and for religion. It stands for good to sisters, to wives and to mothers. It stands for purity and happiness in every home and beneath every roof-tree in the land...Today we are the chosen exponents of a new idea in the development of the race, which has taken firm root in every civilized land. This new idea is the necessary complement of the social, artistic and educational progress of the age in which we live. It is the friend of civilization, the companion of fine arts and the handmaiden of religion. It is the altruism of today, which has happily succeeded the egotism of yesterday. Whether we, as individuals, win or lose, this thought has come to stay. It will permeate all hearts, fructify all lands and carry us a day's march nearer the Utopia of our dreams.

Such stirring language and near-utopian hopes continued to characterize the speeches and writings of Texas club women. Texas club women expressed a zeal and a special sense of mission that explains the prodigious activity of the Texas club movement and the great importance of the club movement for thousands of individual
women.

Annie McLean Moore’s address on public libraries prompted the momentous resolution introduced by Mrs. J.C. Terrell on the last day of the convention: "That the establishment of Public Free Libraries in Texas be adopted as the work of the Federation." The enthusiastic reception of this charge was predictable; club women were in a special position to recognize the need for public libraries.

By the time the TFWLC met in 1899 for its second annual meeting, it was obvious to Texas club women that their new federation could not contain its collective energies and ambitions for the singular purpose of self-culture. Accordingly, the convention agreed that the federation’s name should reflect its newly adopted larger purpose. Thus, the Texas Federation of Women’s Literary Clubs became the Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs. As Mrs. J.C. Terrell, second president of the TFWC, reflected in 1903,

...literary culture was the raison d'etre of the...club,...but it was felt that such an organization of women as the State Federation must stand for some united effort for social advancement in Texas.

For one thing, in 1899, several Texas women’s clubs had already taken up municipal housekeeping tasks and some clubs had been organized purely for civic work with little interest in literary study. Also, the assembled club women
were eager to have their federation join the national club movement and voted unanimously to "unite its destiny with the GFWC."\(^{17}\)

Texas club women sought affiliation with the GFWC for the same reasons that they desired state federation. Cooperation and reciprocity could aid the efforts of individual clubs whatever their line of work of study. Moreover, the club movement of white American women, by then signified by the GFWC and its state federations, had already demonstrated considerable success as an organization for women and as an association through which women pursued new goals—first of self-culture and then of civic involvement.

The new name, a revised constitution, and the affiliation with the GFWC were all indications of a changed emphasis and a new agenda. But the removal of the word "Literary" from the federation name did not mean that Texas club women had abandoned literary study or other forms of self-culture. Club women always claimed that literary study had vast implications. For club women, the accumulation of knowledge was the first new obligation of womanhood. It was also, importantly, what women in these turn-of-the-century decades could do. The combination of a cultured intelligence and feminine sensibility allowed women to insist upon their involvement in the re-creation
of the public sphere. Thus the transformation from literary federation to a federation organized around the principle of the necessity of female involvement, and even leadership, in social advancement emerged from the internal logic of the social feminism and the cult of true womanhood of late-nineteenth-century white American middle- and upper-class women.

* * *

When the state federation was formed, and largely because the state federation was formed, the club movement entered a new phase which was characterized by a rapidly growing membership of clubs and club women, by an ever-expanding agenda for social change on the state as well as the local level, and by increasingly political means used to achieve desired goals.

Twenty-one clubs were charter members of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs, though there were surely many more clubs in the state at the time. Existing clubs soon began to apply for membership in the state federation, and new clubs were organized as the news and enthusiasm of the club movement became widespread. Three thousand women from 132 clubs belonged to the state federation by 1901. The rate of growth was astonishing. In 1905 over five thousand women from 196 clubs were in the TFWC, and by 1910 the federation boasted ten thousand members. When the
federation celebrated its twentieth anniversary in 1917, it claimed to represent thirty thousand women. This number was probably an exaggeration, but twenty thousand would have been a realistic estimate. There were over seven hundred clubs in the federation at that time, and some of them were large department clubs that often included two hundred or more women.¹⁹

The exponential growth in membership was due to many factors. Women's clubs were "all the rage" for middle and upper class women in the early twentieth century, and, as noted in earlier chapters, this was a national phenomenon. But also, as Rotan's letter to Croly indicated, the TFWC was almost evangelical in its effort to extend the reaches of clubdom. A special committee was created in 1899 to oversee this important mission. The Club Extension Committee provided guidelines to interested women on how to organize a women's club in their community. It also regularly encouraged existing federated clubs to spread the word of the club movement and to assist in the organization of new women's clubs. The advantages of club membership, and federation involvement, were frequently touted: individual women would benefit from club work, and club work was the way for individual women to effect social change—in their communities, for the state of Texas, and for the nation. The Club Extension Committee was
particularly eager to spread the club movement to the countryside and to involve rural women, who, it was believed, would especially profit from both the sorority and the self-improvement that women gained in club work.\textsuperscript{20}

The dramatic increase in membership was matched by the massive development in the federation's operational machinery. The organizational structure of the TFWC grew five-fold when, in 1901, the Anna Pennybacker administration divided the state into five districts. Each district was like a sub-federation headed by one of the elected TFWC vice-presidents and a full complement of district-elected officers. Districts held annual meetings that were modeled after the TFWC annual convention. The establishment of districts and district meetings allowed closer involvement with the TFWC for those who, in such a large state, could not regularly attend the TFWC meetings. Each district had its own committees that represented the TFWC committees at the district level. A sixth district was created in 1915 and a seventh in 1921.\textsuperscript{21}

Thus, the white women's club movement in Texas operated at several different levels. First, there was the individual federated club with officers and committees. Committees were appointed to preside over club business and to organize particular club-sponsored community projects. Often new committees were created to reflect new priorities of the federation. As early as 1900, TFWC President Mary Y.
Terrell recommended that each club create a committee of one or more in correspondence with federation committees. Further, she urged these committees regularly to write short articles in local papers about their work in order to "awaken public interest in the efforts of women's clubs for public good." In some communities there were also city or county federations composed of representatives of the individual clubs, elected officials, and work committees.

Second, there was the district federation that encompassed the clubs within its boundaries and that acted as a middle structure between the TFWC leadership and the individual clubs. Third, there was the TFWC with officers elected by club delegates at the annual conventions and with committees established by the current president usually in response to resolutions passed at annual meetings.

The workhorses of the TFWC were its committees. Committees were created or renewed by each administration, and they reflected that administration's priorities or lines of work determined by the federation's annual meeting. Rarely were committees deleted, but new ones were added regularly. In 1904 the GFWC recommended that state federation standing committees be "in harmony with the standing committees of the GFWC in names and duties." The TFWC committees closely resembled those of the GFWC, but it
was many years before the two structures were uniform.\textsuperscript{24}

In 1897, the federation's first year, there were three standing committees: Printing, Literary Program, and Lecture. The first two of these committees were appointed to organize the federation's 1898 state meeting. The Lecture Committee was in charge of inviting noted lecturers to Texas; local clubs would then host public meetings featuring the lecturer as a way of bringing culture and education to their communities.\textsuperscript{25} For example, from 1902 to 1904, the Lecture Committee scheduled several engagements: Miss Maria Daniels of Boston, household science demonstrator; Mr. Lorado Taft, American sculptor and art critic; Mr. Marshall Darrach of New York, Shakespeare interpreter; and Mrs. Alonza Millett, a Texas musician, and Jacob Riis, social reformer.\textsuperscript{26}

The number of standing committees grew, and can be divided into three major areas: federation or club business, study interests, and "outside work." In 1917, twenty years after the TFWC was founded, the work of the federation was supervised by thirty-eight committees: twelve were devoted to federation business matters such as fund-raising and planning for the annual meeting; six represented particular study interests such as art, history, and music; and twenty committees directed the club movement's "outside work" in areas ranging from "Civic Art" to "Waterways and Forestry."\textsuperscript{27}
In 1899 TFWC president Mrs. J.D. Terrell appointed the first committees to encourage and guide study within individual clubs: art, history, music, household economics, and literature. For the most part, these remained through the federation's first two decades with the addition of political science as a study area in 1913.\textsuperscript{28}

The most significant expansion in the TFWC's activities occurred in the area of "outside work." The proliferation in the number of TFWC standing committees, or "departments of work" as they were later called, is the best index of this change as well as of the development of the club movement as a whole. When the federation first moved beyond self-culture in 1898 to make the provision of public libraries the special work of the TFWC, the Library Committee became the TFWC's first committee on "outside work."\textsuperscript{29} In the next year, 1899, Mrs. Terrell added outside work committees on education and village improvement and continued the Library Committee.\textsuperscript{30}

As the number of "outside work" committees grew from three in 1899 to twenty in 1917, the new social concerns that became the TFWC's reform agenda were elaborations of these first three committees, e.g. Libraries, Education, and Village Improvement. That is, the initial concern with public libraries grew to include ways of supporting and cultivating the fine arts; the early interest in education
expanded to include child welfare issues; and village improvement engendered a host of committees dedicated to various aspects of social housekeeping and civic reform. Two other outside work committees were added in these two decades: the Outlook, or Legislative, Committee created in 1906 "to investigate and determine exactly what legislation shall be supported and what opposed by the Federation at the coming session of the legislature" and a special committee to study and reform unjust laws pertaining to women and children. The development of the TFWC's reform agenda in the three areas of libraries and the fine arts, education and child welfare, and village improvement or social housekeeping will be briefly traced through the work of the many TFWC committees formed between 1897 and 1917. The Legislative Committee and the Laws Affecting Women and Children Committee are discussed in the following chapter.

* * *

Libraries and the Fine Arts

The first Library Committee was headed by Mrs. J.C. Terrell, whom Texas clubwomen referred to as the "Mother of Texas Libraries." Terrell's committee wrote in 1899:

The first and most important work of the clubs is to agitate the question of local libraries, thus fostering and educating public sentiment in this direction until the radiating influence shall compass the State, compelling more favorable legislation. 32
Thus, the committee encouraged the clubs of the TFWC to promote the cause of free public libraries in the state in two ways. First, individual clubs were urged to take up library work in their home communities by beginning a local public library campaign and creating traveling libraries. In 1901 the committee wrote guidelines to assist local clubs in these endeavors. Second, clubs were urged to support a statewide campaign for legislation that would create a Library Commission that would "place this great public beneficence under the strong fostering care of the state."\textsuperscript{33}

The next year the TFWC joined the University of Texas and the State Teachers' Association to create the State Library Association (SLA) to "unite the influence of all those interested in securing needed legislation for the aid and encouragement of forming public libraries in Texas." The TFWC Library Committee thereafter used the new association to further the cause and yearly implored member clubs to join the association.\textsuperscript{34} At each annual TFWC meeting the Library Committee reported on the progress of clubs in sending out traveling libraries and starting public libraries. It also kept the goal of a Library Commission squarely before the federation. In 1903 the committee presented a resolution, which passed, that the TFWC would support no legislative cause during the next administration except that of public libraries.\textsuperscript{35}
By 1909 the TFWC and the State Library Association had gained the Library Commission Bill for which they had worked. Led by the Library Committee, club's had joined the SLA and had distributed copies of the desired bill all over the state. The Library Committee, its goal of favorable state legislation met, was replaced by the Library Extension committee in 1911. The federation sent all of its traveling libraries to the State Library Commission in 1913. The TFWC continued its work of promoting the establishment of public libraries in every Texas community and began work for a County Free Library Law to make libraries accessible to rural folk. That legislation was passed in 1917, and the TFWC has been credited with assisting its passage and with later gaining appropriations for county libraries.36

The federation's first project to cultivate aesthetic sensibilities among their fellow Texans was the TFWC Travelling Art Gallery. First proposed in 1900, the Art Committee had it on the road by 1901. A "small but very choice collection of water colors, carbon, photographic and other reproductions of noted works of art," accompanied by descriptive material, was exhibited by individual women's clubs. In 1902 the Travelling Gallery featured reproductions of masterpieces of English Art. It was accompanied by a "personal conductor." The following year
featured Italian Art, and the 1904 exhibit presented reproductions of German, Flemish, and Dutch masterpieces. During the first six months of 1904 the gallery visited ninety-five communities. The TFWC was proud of the boast that theirs was the only traveling art gallery accompanied by a docent. At the end of the four years the gallery was no longer self-supporting. The federation agreed to discontinue its own travelling art gallery and to make use of the General Federation’s Travelling Art Gallery. By 1907 twenty-five clubs had engaged the GFWC gallery for a visit to their town or city.37

After the death of the Austin-based sculptor, Elizabeth Ney, club woman Ella Dibrell purchased Ney’s home and converted it to an art museum. The TFWC supported Dibrell in this venture with moral, if not financial, support.38 In 1908 the federation began work for a State Art Commission to supervise the selection of all public art, e.g. monuments and memorials.39

The TFWC also enthusiastically supported the performing arts, especially music. The music committee urged member clubs to study music, to sponsor musical events in their communities, and to promote music education in the public schools. The study of music was "ethical and ennobling." The music committee also provided musical entertainment for the TFWC conventions. In 1906 the Music Committee sponsored what became an annual competition for
the best original musical composition by a Texas musician. The winners performed at the TFWC meetings.40

The Music Committee had always functioned in a somewhat autonomous manner, relating primarily to the federated clubs that were music clubs. In 1915 the music clubs of the federation created the Texas Federation of Music Clubs as an organization separate from the TFWC.41

**Education and Child Welfare**

The TFWC devoted more collective energy to educational issues that any other single category of social concerns. Like the campaign for libraries, interest in education grew from the taproot of the women's club movement. In a sense, all federation work was educational in that learning about an issue was always, for club women, the first and most important step in achieving reform. Kate Rotan spoke of education as the "keynote" of club work when she addressed the new federation in 1897.42 In 1904 Adella Kelsey Turner--TFWC president, a prominent Dallas club woman, and one of the first women in Texas to be elected to a municipal school board--wrote to Texas club women about the importance of work for education:

> Our many phases of club life are bound together by invisible bonds--are held in poise by one central attraction, which is: That education is the source of all progress, and a higher civilization its result. This means of uplifting by educating naturally brings the club movement in close contact with our public schools, colleges and universities. 43
The Education Committee was created in 1899 when the TFWC constitution was rewritten to reflect the expanded scope of the federation. In that year the federation made its first commitment to support an educational project when it unanimously passed a resolution to work for the passage of a bill, then under consideration by the Texas legislature, to establish an industrial school for young women:

Resolved, by the Texas Federation of Clubs, that the establishment of the Industrial School for Girls in Texas would not only be an act of justice long denied to the future wives and mothers of the state, but be the means of elevating the homes and bettering the home life of our people...Resolved, that we commend to Senator J. B. Dibrell the care of the measure in the upper house of the legislature, with confidence in his skill to manage, and reliance upon the chivalric manliness of senators to pass this measure, so necessary to the future well-being of the daughters of Texas. 45

This resolution was the beginning of more than a decade of work for what was to become the state's most important institution of higher education for women, Texas Woman's University.

When, in 1899, the TFWC resolved to support the proposal for a woman's vocational school, it joined the WCTU in actively campaigning for the school. The two groups made common cause around the issue again in 1901. Miss Eleanor Brackenridge, club woman, suffragist, and civic activist from San Antonio, led the lobbying effort.
Texas club women interviewed legislators, made speeches, and sent letters and petitions to members of the Texas House and Senate. The enabling legislation passed in 1901, creating the Texas Industrial Institute and College for the Education of the White Girls of the State of Texas in Arts and Sciences. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction commented that the TFWC campaign had been extremely influential. The TFWC continued to support the college for many years through regular petitions to the legislature for additional appropriations. Three club women, Eleanor Brackenridge, Mrs. Cone Johnson, and Helen Stoddard—who was also president of the Texas WCTU and one of the earliest proponents for the school—were appointed by Governor Joseph D. Sayers to serve on the school’s board of trustees. The school, located in Denton, was known as the College of Industrial Arts before it gained its present name, Texas Woman’s University, in 1945.

The federation’s second political activity regarding education was also on behalf of women’s higher education. Texas club women had a special affection for college-level education for women. As a banner displayed at the TFWC Twentieth Anniversary celebration proclaimed: "When you educate a man you educate an individual; when you educate a woman you educate an entire family." Also, club women believed that higher education closely resembled the work
to which they aspired in their club study sessions. At the TFWC annual meeting in 1901 the assembly of delegates unanimously resolved to "use their influence" to gain a dormitory for women students at the University of Texas in Austin. At the time, there was a dormitory--Brackenridge Hall--for men students, but female students had to live off campus at considerably greater expense. Mary Terrell, then president of the TFWC, urged every club woman to "interest her husband, brother or gentleman friend who had a vote [in the legislature] in this matter, so as to bring it prominently before the members of the Legislature." 50

In the months that followed, the newly elected TFWC president, Anna J. H. Pennybacker, who later served two terms as president of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, wrote to every club in the federation to encourage action. She also wrote to all state senators and representatives to express the interest of the TFWC for the women's dormitory. The legislature was persuaded, by a majority of one vote, and $50,000 was appropriated to build the dormitory. 51

The Texas Federation of Women's Clubs also supported higher education for women by providing scholarships. In 1901 the federation created the University Scholarship to assist "some worthy girl...through her course at the State University." Each club woman was to contribute one dollar to establish a principle of $3,500. In 1906 a scholarship
for kindergarten teacher training was created. In addition to these two scholarships and others created by individual club women, the federation administered scholarships at the behest of institutions or generous individuals. Thirty-one scholarships for young women were funded or administered by the TFWC by 1907, and by 1915 the number had risen to fifty-two.52

The Education Committee promoted other issues in 1901. First, the committee asked Texas club women to become aware of and involved in their home town public schools. Women should visit schools, form allegiances with teachers, and note areas that needed improvement. State Superintendant of Public Instruction J. S. Kendall encouraged these visits and commended involvement in public education as an important field for club women. The committee advised the formation of Mothers' Clubs to foster positive relations with local schools and to pursue the study of child life. Second, the committee announced plans to place kindergartens and industrial training in the public schools. Kindergartens allowed instruction of children "at the most tractable age," and industrial training held "the interest for a greater number of years of many who now leave the school at an early age."53

The interest in kindergartens grew, and in 1903 a special committee on kindergartens was created in addition
to the Education Committee. In 1904 the TFWC further emphasized kindergarten education by making the special committee a "standing committee," and the TFWC convention in 1906 passed a resolution to work for legislation that would place kindergarten in the public schools. The Thirtieth Legislature approved several educational reforms in 1907, including legislation that authorized school districts to establish kindergartens in the public schools. Enabling legislation did not, however, make public kindergartens a reality. So, the Kindergarten Committee continued to lead the Texas club women in the campaign for stronger laws. W. F. Doughty, the State Superintendent of Education from 1913 to 1919, appealed to the club women at the 1916 TFWC meeting for their support of a kindergarten bill that he had written. Hundreds of letters were mailed to promote Doughty's bill, which passed the following year. The Kindergarten Committee distributed eight hundred copies of the new kindergarten law throughout the state.54

While waiting for favorable legislation the Kindergarten Committee urged clubs to establish or support local kindergarten projects, and there are several indications that Texas women's clubs took this injunction seriously. When the General Federation of Women's Clubs met in 1904, fifty-eight free kindergartens were reported to have been established in Texas with the assistance of club women. In 1906 an article in The Annals of the
American Academy of Political and Social Science on white women's club work in the South singled out the TFWC in a discussion of kindergarten work. After the enabling legislation was passed in 1907, seven Texas cities had incorporated kindergartens into the public school system, and many other towns had private or free kindergartens.55

The TFWC was interested in higher education for women and in kindergarten education for children from the first, but much of the state federation's work for education centered on public education at the primary and secondary level. Public education in Texas was in sad shape in the early twentieth century. By any measure, Texas lagged behind the national averages. In 1900, Texas ranked thirty-eighth in the nation in an evaluation of several aspects of public education. In the same year, Texas ranked fifth among the southern states in the average length of the school term; 108 days per year compared to a national average of 144 days per year. While Texas was second among southern states, in 1900, in expenditures per pupil—$1.46, the national average was almost double that amount. Texas teachers were poorly paid, rural schools—usually one-teacher and ungraded in 1900—were especially underfunded, and education for black children was almost nonexistent.56

Texas club women responded to this crisis in several
ways. First they pursued improvements that they could make themselves, such as the improvement of parks and school grounds. Parks and School Grounds became a special committee in 1903, was made a standing committee in 1907, and continued until 1915. At that time a new committee, Parks and Playgrounds, was established, but its emphasis was more on city beautification than on education.\textsuperscript{57}

The TFWC Education Committee, along with several of the federation's presidents, repeatedly encouraged the formation of Mother's Clubs to assist in school improvement. Working at the local level in cooperation with teachers and school officials, Mother's Clubs, it was hoped, could assist with many reforms. The TFWC never had a special committee for the establishment of Mother's Clubs, but they certainly supported the movement. At the eleventh annual TFWC meeting in 1908, the Mothers' Clubs in the federation organized an afternoon session called the "Mothers' Council." Two of the topics addressed were "The Meaning of Child Study" and "The Effect of Environment upon the Child." In 1909 the TFWC created the short-lived Home and School Club Committee, which was intended to serve the same function as the Mother's Clubs.\textsuperscript{58}

The TFWC realized, however, that the poor quality of primary and secondary education in Texas could not be significantly improved by beautifying school grounds or even by organizing Mother's Clubs. The state's lamentable
record in public education could only be changed when legislation or amendments to the state constitution favored public education. Club women saw the need for a compulsory education bill, state-supported industrial or vocational training, and child labor legislation.

The TFWC played a supporting, rather than a leading, role in these educational reforms. The Conference for Education in Texas, organized in 1907, deserves most of the credit for the major educational reforms passed in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Between 1905 and 1910 state laws and constitutional amendments increased local taxation for public schools 153 percent. It is no coincidence, however, that several club women were married to members of the Conference for Education. Also, the TFWC repeatedly endorsed the Conference on Education, beginning in 1907 just months after the conference had been organized.

There were other groups whose work for educational reforms was significant: the Texas Conference on Social Welfare, the Mother's Congress and the Parent-Teachers Association, the State Teachers Association, and the Conference for Child Welfare in Texas. Texas club women were involved in all of these groups. The TFWC was officially represented in the Texas Conference on Social Welfare, and several TFWC members held offices. Many club
women were active in Mothers Clubs, and many club women were members of the State Teachers Association. The Conference for Child Welfare was organized in 1910 by delegates from twenty different organizations in Texas, and a Texas club woman served as its first president.\textsuperscript{62}

In addition to supporting other "progressive" organizations, the TFWC waged its own campaign for educational reform. As early as 1902 the federation urged the adoption of the poll tax, ostensibly to increase the common school fund which had been designated to receive the new monies. It was also common knowledge that the poll tax would also disfranchise black voters. White Texas club women may have found both consequences of the poll tax desirable, but they emphasized only the benefit to public schools in their campaign. Through the first two decades of the twentieth century, the TFWC continued to support numerous proposals to increase monies available to public schools.\textsuperscript{63}

For example, TFWC President Ella Dibrell wrote a letter to club presidents in Texas that was published in The Dallas Clubwoman in October 1908. Dibrell described the situation in Texas public schools and explained that the TFWC advocated support for a pending constitutional amendment that would have allowed rural school districts to raise taxes. She identified several ways in which women's clubs could favorably influence the vote for the
constitutional amendment. She urged club presidents to hold public meetings, publish relevant articles in local newspapers, encourage ministers to speak of the problem from the pulpit, have clubs pass resolutions to work for the needed constitutional amendment, and work with local school officials. Similarly, the Education Committee urged every club woman to "use her influence" for the amendment's passage.64

The constitutional amendment to increase the school tax limit was ratified, but this did not substantially help rural schools. School districts still had to agree, by a simple majority vote, actually to raise the tax rate, and many rural districts were too impoverished to do so. By 1913, 6,500 of the 8,500 rural schools were still one-teacher schools; 2,000 of the rural schools were in session less than five months each year, and 300 were in session less than three months each year.65 Club women, through the TFWC, had been studying the problems of rural life for several years, but they had not specifically focused on the dreadful state of education in the common school districts.

When, in 1915, Governor James Ferguson's plan to assist rural schools with a special appropriation of one million dollars was approved by the state legislature, the TFWC Education Committee made this recommendation to Texas club women:
The $1,000,000 rural school fund created by Gov. Ferguson will materially assist improvement of the rural schools, which need better buildings, better trained teachers, a course of study adapted to the needs of the child. Clubwomen are urged to make a study of the school laws of Texas; to make a survey of their own county schools; name and location, name and address of some of the mothers; to adopt one of the county schools, and contribute something to their improvement.  

In subsequent reports, the Education Committee gave no indication of how clubs responded to these recommendations. Club records, however, show that some clubs did follow through. The Waco Woman’s Club, for example, "adopted" a rural school and created an oversight committee to study the school’s needs and to help the school take advantage of the new rural school legislation.  

In addition to the need for the increased financial support for public education, the TFWC was particularly concerned to achieve a compulsory education law and a system of industrial education. Both issues had been on the TFWC agenda since 1902, but the federation concentrated its efforts for these reforms in the public schools in the years 1908 to 1914. Different committees at different times and, on occasion, at the same time, worked for these reforms: the Education Committee, the Industrial School Committee of 1907, the Industrial School Committee of 1908, the Training School Committee of 1913, and the Social Services Committee, first created in 1911 as a subcommittee
to the Civics Committee Committee. Often these issues were pressed through resolutions passed at the TFWC annual meetings. The seeming confusion regarding who was responsible for work on a compulsory education law or an industrial education curriculum or a particular industrial school was not just an example of bureaucratic inefficiency or entanglement. Rather, compulsory education, industrial training, and even juvenile delinquency and child labor were, for club women, inextricably related issues.

TFWC President Dibrell explained the connection and the preferred solution in her published address to Texas club women in 1909:

When we have good trade schools located in conjunction with farms and gardening in every Congressional District, then Texas will be ready for her compulsory education law and not before. For six years your president in every public address has urged compulsory education combined with trade schools. Frequently the argument has been met by, "Texas is not ready, nor is the South ready, for compulsory education." When we take the children who are not qualified for what is known in common parlance as "book learning" and our idle children who do not care for study, from the streets and put them in institutions where they are taught to be useful and trained to habits of industry, the word "delinquent" will be blotted from the list, and a child will be educated according to its natural bent into useful citizenship without stain or stigma upon its young life. Let us try the character building plan, rather than the character reform. 69

The interest in "social control" is blatant. Club women had no argument with the class structure of the
status quo. Their goal was not to flatten class distinctions by way of equal opportunities in education. Accepting that certain groups were better suited for certain types of labor, club women endorsed proposals which they believed would enable children to become productive members of society within their particular class or social environment. They were, in fact, following the lead of a host of southern "progressive" reformers who believed that vocational or industrial education was an essential ingredient for the economic development of the New South. 70

When the TFWC met in 1909 for its annual meeting, the delegates passed this resolution:

Whereas, the logical corollary of free education is compulsory education, and
Whereas, the logical corollary of compulsory education is industrial education, therefore
be it Resolved, that compulsory education would be impracticable unless associated with
a system of training in our schools which would fit such children for economic
independence. 71

In the same year, State Superintendent of Public Instruction R. B. Cousins—who also served on the Executive Board of the Texas Conference on Education—had introduced agricultural study, home economics, and manual training into the public schools. 72

Mrs. S.J. Wright, who succeeded Dibrell as TFWC president, was satisfied with the inclusion of industrial training in the public school curriculum, but the state still lacked a compulsory education law. In her retiring
address she wrote:

Inasmuch as ninety-five per cent of pupils make their living by industrial pursuits, while only five per cent enter college, certain provision has been made for all. But there still remains a grave defect in our educational system. If the people of the South were rightly instructed would we ship our cotton to New England to be manufactured into goods...? Our Federation endorses and urges Industrial Training in our schools and that it be co-related with Compulsory Education. Of the forty-nine states of the Union there are but seven which have not enacted Compulsory Education Laws; these all belong to the Old South and Texas is one of the number...Many instances might be cited proving that the crimes committed are frequently the result of ignorance, not only of the rudiments of education, but of State and moral laws. So our Federation insists that if education were made compulsory, practical and within the reach of all that the decrease in malefactors will be in proportion to the spread of instruction. 73

Industrial education in the public schools would be meaningless if the children who most required such instruction were not in attendance. The resistance to a compulsory education law had long been justified by two claims: First, school attendance was a private family matter that should not be usurped by the state; second, many children labored on farms or in factories and their labor or income was required by their families. The TFWC rejected both arguments. Mrs. E. E. Bramlette, writing for the Education Committee in 1912, said:

...if the state is under obligations to provide free schools for the benefit of the children of Texas, then it is also the duty of
the state to see to it that, by enactment and enforcement of proper laws, the parents or guardians or labor shall not deprive the children of the free education provided by the state... We should also bear in mind that compulsory school attendance is the most efficient anti-child labor law. 74

When Bramlette wrote these words, it was estimated that 300,000 school age children living in Texas rural school districts never attended school. 75

Despite the social control interests of club women that were so prominent in their support of industrial training programs, the TFWC was unalterably opposed to child labor. The TFWC first condemned child labor in 1902. In 1903 club women who attended the annual meeting of the Fifth District, held in Cuero, Texas, paid a visit to the Cuero Cotton Mills. Stella Christian, the TFWC historian, commented that the visit made an indelible impression on the club women because

...it awakened [them] to the realization that the child labor problem was present with them, and that Texas should begin at once to enact legislation which would protect the children, while not discouraging industrial development. 76

The state's first child labor law was enacted in 1903. The lobbying efforts of Texas labor groups were probably more instrumental in gaining the 1903 law than the TFWC, 77 but it remains significant that the TFWC recognized child labor as a problem at that early date. Texas club women sought anti-child labor laws and a compulsory school
attendance law for several reasons. Their primary concern was that child labor was not in the best interest of children, physically and mentally, and that child labor deprived children of the education they deserved. Club women also had strong opinions about the impact of child labor on the family and on the status of wages for adults, particularly men. An editorial in the December 12, 1908, issue of The Dallas Clubwoman explained these connections. The article cited several paragraphs from another Dallas paper that sounded the views held by Texas club women:

The Dispatch says:
"It ought to be made a high crime, punishable by the severest of penalties, to cause children to work indoors before they are 16 years of age. Those who engage in this unholy traffic are not only doing a tremendous injustice to the present generation, but they are committing a crime against posterity... wherever child labor prevails, the competition of the children cuts down the wages of the adult or reduces his opportunity for employment...Compulsory education is one means of abolishing child labor. Texas needs a compulsory education law." 78

Another child labor law was passed in 1911. This law established age fifteen as the minimum age for factory or mill work and age seventeen for work in mines or quarries.79 The TFWC did claim some credit for this legislation: the federation had presented the legislature with the findings of an inquiry regarding the horrors of child labor in Texas.80 The enforcement of child labor laws was difficult. One historian of Progressive Era Texas
concluded, as did Texas club women in 1912, that the compulsory attendance law aided the prohibition of child labor.81

A compulsory education bill was finally passed by the Texas legislature in 1915. Prior to its passage, the TFWC had "agitated" the issue since 1907. In 1912 the Education Committee distributed literature to all federated clubs on the need for a compulsory education law. Clubs were encouraged to have discussions at their meetings and to create public forums for such discussions. In that year, sixty newspapers printed articles by club women on the subject. Three thousand leaflets and postcards were printed to distribute, especially among the state legislators.82

The Education Committee continued to lead the TFWC campaign for a compulsory education law in 1913. When the committee reported at the end of the year, it expressed outrage that the desired statute had not passed, while a bill that prevented illiterates from voting had passed. Writing for the committee, Bramlette commented on the absurdity of the legislature's actions:

The last legislature recognized the evils of illiteracy from a political standpoint, and promptly passed the Boehmer Illiteracy Bill, which would have prevented the ignorant from voting, but the same lawmakers defeated the Compulsory Attendance law, which would have made intelligent voters, not only of our foreign population, but also of our own tribe and kinsmen. A school tax can only be
justified on the ground that it will be used to overcome illiteracy, or in other words, to make intelligent citizens of all the people; and the state should not levy such a school tax, and then permit its object to be defeated by non-attendance [of] the schools thus maintained. 83

Dismayed by the actions of the Texas legislature, the TFWC resolved, in 1914, to concentrate on the passage of a Compulsory Education Law and a stronger Child Labor Law. 84 Estelle Sharp, then head of the TFWC Social Service Committee, wrote in early 1915:

We are beginning to be asked—why this stand for a new Child Labor Law? Texas needs so many things that are more important, and Texas already has a Child Labor Law. The last is quite true. Texas has a Child Labor Law—yes, indeed! According to statistics, only seven states in the Union have more worthless, ineffective ones. And only seven states have more illiterate children as a consequence. 85

When the legislature met in 1915, the state representatives and state senators were finally persuaded by the efforts of the TFWC and of other concerned organizations such as the Texas State Teachers Association. 86

Texas club women were among the first in the state to be concerned about the causes and prevention of juvenile delinquency. Industrial education, for example was preventive medicine for juvenile delinquency. As the statements by Dibrell and Wright, cited above, suggest, it was popularly believed that idleness—being out of school or being out of work—was a major factor in the development of delinquency. When young people did run afoul of the
law, Texas club women held with other "progressives" of the day that a special judicial system was required to reclaim young offenders for society.  

In 1905 Judge G.P. Webb requested the federation's support for a state juvenile court law that he had written. The president of the Colorado Federation of Women's Clubs also spoke to the assembled Texas club women about the role of Colorado clubs in the achievement of a juvenile court law in that state. The federation resolved to support legislation regarding the care and treatment of dependent, neglected, and delinquent children. Each club in the federation was urged to study the issue and to begin the work of educating public opinion. The concern of Texas club women for the plight of juvenile delinquents was a mixture of compassion and social control. Juvenile delinquents were usually perceived as innocents who had been led astray and whose future could be redeemed through a separate juvenile justice system. On the other hand, juvenile delinquents required management lest they influence other children. In a 1905 article that appeared in one of the publications edited by Dallas Club woman Louella Styles Vincent, the proposed juvenile court was described as a particularly "noble" cause of the TFWC that could save a child from becoming a criminal. The article also cited the new court as essential to protect "good" children:
When society is impressed with the fact that good children of the good are upon the unstable edge of a yawning abyss while there exist bad children of the bad, then will begin the cure of the latter and in proportion to its efficacy will the safety of the former be assured. 89

The proposed legislation failed in the 1905 legislative session. In 1906 Mrs. Cone Johnson, new TFWC president, appointed a special committee to support the bill that would be resubmitted to the 1907 Texas Legislature. The federation reaffirmed its commitment to the bill at the November 1906 annual meeting. The state’s Juvenile Court Law was passed in 1907.90

As soon as the Juvenile Court Law had been passed, supporters recognized that the effectiveness of the law would be hampered for lack of a special Industrial Training School for juvenile delinquents. A reformatory for delinquent youths had been established in Texas in 1900, but progressives believed that a reformatory was more punitive than actually "reforming." When Ella Dibrell wrote of the TFWC’s request to the legislature for an Industrial Home or Training School for Children, she added that we are "praying that the word reformatory be blotted from the records of Texas institutions." These "wayward youths" needed education and guidance if they were to be truly reformed. In 1907 the TFWC began to lobby for such an institution. From 1907 through 1910, TFWC annual meetings and TFWC district meetings featured talks on an industrial
school for juvenile delinquents. Judge G.P. Webb often spoke at these club meetings and welcomed the federation’s interest. 91

In 1908 TFWC president Ella Dibrell appointed a special committee to meet with the Legislative Committee of the County Judges and Commissioners Association in order to support their preparations for a bill to establish an Industrial Training School for Juvenile Delinquents. The TFWC committee met with the Judges and Commissioners and reported to the annual meeting later in the same year. The response was the following resolution:

Resolved: That the Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs do most earnestly concert their every effort as mothers, to liberate the children now in jails of our state, by securing an ample appropriation for an Industrial School and Probation Officers, and for carrying into effect the Juvenile Court Law passed at the last Texas Legislature. Resolved, further: That we officially request the Governor to include this in his message to the Legislature in the name of the mothers of the state. 92

When the legislature met in 1909, it passed three separate bills that converted the Gatesville Reformatory into the State Juvenile Training School. Mrs. J.A. Jackson—an Austin club woman—was one of two women appointed to the board of the institution. The legislature had changed the Gatesville Reformatory in name only, for the bills provided only two teachers and no industrial education facilities. One of the many resolutions passed
at the 1911 TFWC meeting concerned the State Juvenile Training School, but the Texas Conference on Social Welfare appeared to be the group that lobbied most effectively for additional appropriations, which were finally achieved in 1913.93

The intense efforts of white Texas club women for the related reforms of industrial training in public schools, compulsory school attendance legislation, a juvenile justic system, and an industrial training school for juvenile delinquents reflect a curious mix of humanitarian--sometimes sentimental--concern for child welfare and social control of the lower classes. In this, they were like other progressives of the period who hoped to assist disadvantaged and ill-treated groups through political and institutional reforms--i.e. the creation of new services, programs, or institutions--without fully considering the possible relevance of economic or structural realities.

Vocational education for women and girls was also a concern as demonstrated by the TFWC's early support for the College of Industrial Arts in Denton. But, "preparing girls for what will be the life work of a majority of them--the making and keeping of a home" needed to begin early in a girl's education. The Household Economics and Sanitary Science Committee of 1900 made several recommendations to Texas clubs regarding the promotion of this "most practical
subject of club work," including arousing public sentiment so that Household Science would be taught in the public schools. From that point on, most of this work was carried on at the local level, as explained in Chapter Four.94

The TFWC continued to encourage local clubs in that initiative. It also sought to facilitate domestic science in the public schools by advocating a domestic science curriculum at the University of Texas. In addition to providing home economics training for college-age women who planned to be homemakers, a domestic science program could train teachers for the public high schools. When the Domestic Economy Division was established in 1912 at the University of Texas, initially through the extension school, Austin club woman Mary E. Gearing was on the faculty. She became head of the division in 1914.95

The TFWC was also concerned to see a state training school for delinquent and dependent girls though there was not nearly as much attention to this cause as to the Industrial School for Boys. Club woman Kate Rotan, a member and an officer in the Texas Conference on Social Welfare as well as the TFWC, stressed this need at the 1912 meeting of the TCSW. In 1913 the TFWC took up the issue and began their usual campaign of encouraging clubs to hold public meetings, write articles in local papers, and in general arouse sentiment in favor of enabling legislation.96 The state legislature, in 1913, made
provision for a girl's state training school in Gainesville and allocated $25,000 to be matched by private donation. Mrs. Henry B. Fall was president of the TFWC that year and, as such, was appointed to the Finance Committee of the new school, which would be located in Gainesville. In recognition of Fall's work for the Girl's Industrial Training School, Governor James Ferguson later appointed her to the Board of Regents.97

When the Smith-Hughes Vocational Education bill was passed by the United States Congress in 1917, Texas club women saw another possibility for improving vocational education in the state. Mrs. Fred Fleming, TFWC president from 1915 to 1917, urged clubs to carefully study the legislation.98

There were many other causes or issues having to do with education or child welfare that the TFWC addressed in one form or another. The federation supported laws regulating adoption, and recommended a mandatory eye exam for all school children. It supported a law that levied criminal penalties for abandonment of a wife and family and a law that required a portion of a convict's pay be sent to his dependent family. It repeatedly recommended that women should be appointed to the boards of state institutions that dealt with women or children. It worked for new provisions to the 1907 juvenile court law that specified
the care and treatment of juvenile delinquents.\textsuperscript{99}

The TFWC Education Committee raised the issue of "sex hygiene" education in 1912, but insisted that this instruction was best provided in the home.\textsuperscript{100} Texas club women also encouraged education regarding the humane treatment of animals. The Humane Committee was first appointed in 1911 to distribute literature to local clubs and to encourage their work along this line. Club women hoped to set an example by forsaking the then fashionable hats adorned with bird feathers.\textsuperscript{101}

It was a sort of poetic coincidence that near the end of the period under discussion, 1897-1919, a prominent educator and Texas club woman, Dr. Annie Webb Blanton, was elected state superintendent of public instruction. She served two terms, from 1919 through 1924. Blanton held the BA and MA degrees from the University of Texas and later received the PhD degree from Cornell University. She was associate professor of English at North Texas State College for seventeen years before her 1918 election to state school superintendent.\textsuperscript{102} Once in office, Blanton's first project was to launch the "Better Schools Campaign" that urged the public's adoption of an amendment to the Texas constitution that would remove restrictions on the level of local taxation for schools. This campaign was financed by over $30,000 in private donations, more than $6,000 of which came from teachers. Organizations to promote a "yes"
vote on the amendment were created in most counties, literature was distributed, and many speeches were made. One political slogan designed to persuade voters of the importance of the amendment appealed to state pride:

**Texas**

*First in Size.*
*First in Agricultural Products.*
*First in Production of Cotton.*
*Third in Production of Oil.*
*Seventh in Wealth.*
*Thirty-Ninth in Education.*

Shall Texas keep this rank?

Work and vote for the Better Schools Amendment, November 2.

The amendment passed, and many school districts took advantage of the new situation to raise local schools taxes in order to better maintain their schools.104

When it came to education and issues of child welfare, the TFWC perceived a clear mandate for action. They believed that education was perhaps the key to individual success and to social amelioration. To be sure, their goals for education in Texas were circumscribed by class and race bias. They assumed the justice of class hierarchy, and therefore sought industrial education for those whose lower social standing appeared, to club women, to fit them more appropriately for blue collar work. Whatever concern they may have had for the especially poor quality of education in black schools was not mentioned in
their discussions regarding the disgrace of the Texas educational system. If their support for better schools through, for example, increased taxation, benefited black schools, club women would have likely have been pleased. But they never made black schools a target for special reform.

Regarding child welfare, their interest in the abolition of child labor was not compromised by the fact that most child laborers were from poor white or poor black families. Similarly, their concern for deserted families or families where the father was in prison may smack of the "lady bountiful" motif, but the assistance sought for these families was still quite real.

The most important work of the TFWC in these two areas, and probably the areas in which they made a real contribution, was their unflagging support for what later became Texas Woman's University and their work for a compulsory education law. Texas Woman's University has long served women of all social classes and races in Texas and has provided liberal arts education along with vocational education. As for the compulsory education law, the TFWC was one of several organizations working for its passage. Still, the amount of "educating the public sentiment" that the TFWC did on this issue quite likely contributed to the final achievement of the law.
Village Improvement and Social Housekeeping

TFWC President Mary Terrell appointed the federation's first Village Improvement Committee in 1899. The GFWC had included a session on civic work and village improvement at its 1898 biennial meeting, so the TFWC was following the lead of the national federation and responding to the interests of Texas club women.\textsuperscript{105} Social housekeeping at the local level, often called "municipal housekeeping," had already been enthusiastically undertaken by several local clubs. The role of the TFWC was to encourage and guide local clubs in this work.

Over the next twenty years, village improvement ballooned into social housekeeping—the idea that women had responsibilities to clean up and improve whatever in the world needed improvement. The social housekeeping agenda of the TFWC began with the Village Improvement Committee, but, by 1917, it included work in sixteen different departments: Civics, Civic Art, Parks and Playgrounds, Civil Service Reform, Conservation, Fire Prevention, Good Roads, Waterways and Forests, Industrial and Social Conditions, Social Service, Girls' Welfare, Pure Food or Food Sanitation, Public Health, Motion Picture Survey, Rural Life, and International Peace.\textsuperscript{106}

These social housekeeping committees reflected the TFWC's own "Do Everything" policy.\textsuperscript{107} Texas club women did not involve themselves in business or banking reforms that
in Texas, as elsewhere, were a major concern for many Progressives.\textsuperscript{108} Excepting these issues, however, Texas club women found it proper and, indeed, mandatory to say or do something about almost everything else. Once women committed themselves to social housekeeping on the municipal level, there was no automatic reason to stop there.

Village Improvement work meant city beautification or city sanitation. The \textit{1900-1901 TFWC Yearbook} report by the Village Improvement Committee described the work as "sanitation and ornamentation" and commended such work in terms of "positive environmentalism:"

Such improvements not only add to the natural attractions of a place, but they inevitably raise the moral and intellectual standard of its citizens, arouse civic pride and enhance property values. \textsuperscript{109}

The committee went on to describe the kind of work that was needed in most Texas communities: achieving and maintaining a good water supply and proper drainage, street cleaning, tree planting, creating and beautifying public parks and school grounds, improving sidewalks, removing public nuisances and eyesores, banning advertisements from trees and fences, and gaining and enforcing stock laws. To these ends, the TFWC committee recommended that each club create a Village Improvement committee "whose first duty should be to create a public sentiment favorable to the
cause." Once public opinion had been aroused, clubs should then plan some special, visible form of Village Improvement work, such as the observance of Arbor Day. Finally, the federation committee advised local clubs to create a "Ways and Means Committee" composed of city officials and "public spirited gentlemen" who will aid and cooperate in the work of village improvement.\textsuperscript{110}

The committees appointed in 1901 and 1902 by TFWC President Anna Pennybacker made similar recommendations to local clubs with the additional requests that each club should be responsible for at least one civic improvement and each club should organize a Civic Improvement League composed of interested individuals, city officials, and leading club women. In this way, club women would set an example in civic work and would develop a wider base of support better to insure the permanence of achieved reform and the initiation of new projects.\textsuperscript{111}

When Adella Turner was elected TFWC president in 1903, she emphasized civic work. Turner had just completed a successful term as chair of the General Federation's Civics Committee during which time "civic beauty and cleanliness took hold of the club women throughout the entire Federation." Turner changed the TFWC Village Improvement Committee to the Civics Committee, and a time of "Civic Renaissance" was proclaimed. Turner also initiated the mitosis of the Civics Committee, which led to the
development of new social housekeeping committees within the TFWC, when she created the Parks and Playgrounds Committee in 1903. This work was accomplished on the local level with consistent encouragement from the TFWC committee. In the summary of reports from the 1903 meeting, much enthusiasm was already in evidence:

Each town vies with the next in its crusade of cleansing, purifying, beautifying every cranny and crooked place, and the zealous club woman begins with her home and pauses not till she has reached the seats of the mighty. Nearly every town in the state sends word of improvement effected, and the work is just begun.

By 1908 fifty clubs were planting trees and otherwise beautifying parks and school grounds. Also the TFWC committee urged club women to "insist that city councils appoint a Commissioner on Parks and Playgrounds for their establishment, maintenance, and supervision." Mrs. David Franklin Houston, chair of the Education Committee at that time, explained to Texas club women why they must take the initiative in these issues:

Since question[s] of health and aesthetics and morality are left largely to women, we should be alive to every opportunity to improve our public schools, enforce and originate sanitary regulations[,] and beautify our towns.

The new Civics Committee, appointed by Turner to serve from 1903 to 1905, urged many of the same projects as previous committees, e.g. sanitation and ornamentation but other projects were suggested that foreshadowed the
development of additional committees to supervise other aspects of social housekeeping, e.g., pure food. 116 The Civics Committee raised the issue of pure food, but the Household Economics Committee—primarily a study committee—led the TFWC in the quest for pure food legislation. The need for a new pure food law was discussed at the state and district level in 1905. The Household Economics Committee had encouraged club women to "agitate" the issue in their home towns and in 1906 a special committee was dispatched to gain endorsement for a new pure food bill from the National Association of Grocers then meeting in Dallas. 117

When the state legislature passed a new pure food law during its 1907 session, the TFWC claimed that it was "largely responsible" for the law. 118 There is evidence to substantiate this claim but, if true, it was a dubious distinction. The new pure food law removed the administration of pure food statutory requirements from the State Health Department and created a Dairy and Food Commissioner to be headquartered at the College of Industrial Arts in Denton. The college's board of directors was empowered to make arrangements with the commissioner whereby C.I.A. students could gain educational benefits from involvement in or observation of the commissioner's work. 119

An editorial in the Texas State Journal of Medicine,
which severely criticized the law, compared this to "moving the legal business from the Attorney General's office." As the editorial explained,

By removing the administration of this law from the State Health Department no use is made of the 174 county and 80 municipal health officers. These 254 men, under a proper board of health law, could all be under the direction of a State health officer, could report, collect samples and enforce the pure food law, as well as sanitary and quarantine regulations, without State expense. Compared with the power of such an organization the possibilities of an isolated food commissioner at Denton seems puny indeed. 120

The placement of the pure food commissioner at the College of Industrial Arts is difficult to understand except as a recommendation from the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs. As demonstrated in this chapter and in Chapter Four, the ties between the TFWC and the College of Industrial Arts were strong. The establishment of the college was one of the first achievements of the TFWC, and support for the college through legislated appropriations was always a priority for the federation. The head of the Household Economics Committee that led the campaign for the new pure food law was Mrs. Cree T. Work whose husband was the president of the college. It was Mrs. Work who stated, in 1908, that the TFWC was "largely responsible" for the Blanton law and that Dr. J.S. Abbott, the appointed Pure Food Commissioner, had been the TFWC's choice for commissioner. Moreover, one of the club women appointed to
the college's Board of Trustees and still in that position in 1907 was one of the most revered women in the state, Miss Eleanor M. Brackinridge.¹²¹

The law did bring Texas pure food standards closer to established federal standards and, small as the appropriation was, it was larger than that previously allowed the state health officer. Still this quirk in administration seemed extremely inefficient. Just months after the new law was passed, Abbott spoke at the November 1907 TFWC convention to explain the law and to ask for the assistance of club women in the enforcement of the law. The meager appropriation that the legislation made for Abbott made voluntary help almost essential. In response to his plea, the current TFWC president, Ella Dibrell, appointed a Pure Food Committee to be headed by Mrs. Cree T. Work.¹²²

Though one can only speculate, it seems likely that the TFWC was party to the legislation that was written and passed by the Thirtieth Legislature. While there is no reason to assume that the TFWC lacked confidence in the State Board of Health, influential Texas club women may well have believed that club women, mostly homemakers, all across the state would be an especially vigilant voluntary corps where the possibility of adulterated food was concerned. The placement of the commissioner at the College of Industrial Arts—though technically independant
of the college--would have strengthened the ties between club women and the pure food commissioner. Further, Texas club women probably thought that the instruction that the students, all women, would receive from the commissioner would prepare them for professional careers in food sanitation or pure food inspection or, at the least, would be beneficial to them as future homemakers.

In 1908 Mrs. Work, as chair of the TFWC Pure Food Committee, sent a circular letter to the district pure food committees and to the pure food committees of city federations, department clubs, and individual clubs. In her letter she urged club women to assist Dr. Abbott. The Dallas Clubwoman wrote of Work's "call to action:"

The appropriations cannot support the Department nor even Dr. Abbott's travelling expenses. Mrs. Work urges that all public spirited people in every town send Dr. Abbott samples of drugs, foods, soft drinks, and other things in which adulteration is suspected...The club woman should be on the lookout for adulterated foodstuffs, tainted meats, impure canned goods, cheese, vinegar, etc. They began the splendid crusade and it is their duty to see it through to the good of the State and humanity in general. 123

The enthusiasm of Texas club women was not, however, enough successfully to enforce the new standards. In 1911 the office of the Dairy and Food Commissioner was relocated to the State Capitol pursuant to the recommendation of the State Board of Health. In 1915 appropriations for the commissioner were increased to provide eight inspectors.
Chester T. Crowell, writing in Holland's Magazine, commented that prior to the 1915 appropriations, attempts to enforce the 1907 law had been virtually meaningless. Pure food and drug legislation remained under the Dairy and Food Commissioner until 1921 when it was returned to the State Board of Health.124

The efforts of Texas club women to seize the initiative in guaranteeing unadulterated and properly labelled food, milk, and drugs to the people of Texas were, at best, only partly successful. The requirements of the 1907 law were a distinct improvement, but the implementation provisions that unofficially shared enforcement responsibilities with Texas club women was extremely ill-advised. The episode reveals quite a lot about how the leadership of the Texas women's club movement perceived its role in reform. The salient revelation is the immense confidence the leaders had in the ability and enthusiasm of Texas club women and in the propriety of entrusting the success of the law to ordinary citizens. The vision implicit in the administrative provisions of the Blanton statute was one of organized Texas womanhood serving as unofficial deputies to the appointed expert. With the assistance of Texas club women, the unscrupulous practices of slaughterhouses, food processors, patent drug manufacturers, dairymen, retailers and wholesalers would be
stopped and the public health would be effectively guarded.

The leadership of the white women’s club movement in Texas believed that the club woman’s role in reform should often be one of direct participation. So much of what Texas club women did accomplish was a product of community-based initiatives or community-based education and agitation for certain reforms such as the establishment of libraries or the organization of city clean-up campaigns. On the other hand, club women often initiated programs with the intention that they should be assumed by the stronger, protective arms of the state, e.g., kindergartens, playgrounds, domestic science education. The pure food law episode is curious because it avoided placing the entire responsibility for enforcement upon the state. After the law was passed, the efforts of the TFWC regarding pure food were directed toward keeping club women involved as community watch-dogs for adulterated or mislabelled substances. In some cities, such as Denton as described in Chapter Four, local club women did have an impact on "pure food" issues. The path not taken by the club women was to urge larger and more sufficient appropriations for the Commissioner. The problem was not that club women placed their own interests for significant public sphere involvement before the interest of pure food and drugs for the citizens of the state. Rather, they believed that the two goals were compatible. In this they vastly
overestimated the capacities of the Texas club movement—especially since pure food was but one of several reform goals—and they underestimated the enormity of the task.

By 1914 the state Dairy and Food Commissioner and the TFWC Pure Food Committee recognized that the state law had been virtually unenforceable. Still, Commissioner E.H. Golaz, Abbott's successor, continued to view Texas club women as the natural allies of the underfunded Dairy and Food Commission. He urged club women to seek municipal ordinances that could be enforced without resort to the state agency. 125 Club women knew this was sound advice, and the federation's committee passed this recommendation on to the local clubs. From that point on, the TFWC Pure Food Committee, which became the Food Sanitation Committee in 1915, stressed local work for local regulation and enforcement. Further modifying the club movements' role in enforcement, the committee enjoined individual club women to be their families' pure food inspectors by "informing themselves on the subject of what constitutes good food" and by carefully reading labels on canned foods and medicines. Some clubs and individual club women continued to inspect local stores and markets and to agitate the issue with the public, but the high point of enthusiasm was passed as the federation added new social housekeeping chores. 126
In its first decade, from 1897 to 1907, the TFWC established three social housekeeping committees: Village Improvement or Civics, Parks and Play Grounds, and the Pure Food Committee. During the federation's second decade, 1907 to 1917, the TFWC established thirteen social housekeeping committees. Before 1907, club women through the TFWC had concerned themselves with issues that were easily drawn from their work as homemakers and culture-bearers: libraries, schools, city beautification and sanitation, play grounds, and pure food. Also, most of the work to achieve these reforms was carried out at the local or municipal level. After 1907, the TFWC increasingly, though not exclusively, pursued reforms that were not primarily local but that required state or national action.

There were at least two indications in 1907 that the TFWC was expanding its sphere of public involvement. First, when the Civics Committee made its report at the Tenth Annual TFWC meeting in 1907, it recommended work on several new issues including public health concerns such as tuberculosis and mosquito extermination, civil service reform, forest conservation, and laws regarding women and children. 127 Within a short time, all these issues became the subjects of newly created committees. Second, Ella Peyton Dancy Dibrell was elected TFWC president in 1907, and she initiated changes that fostered the significant expansion of the TFWC social housekeeping agenda and that
institutionalized the role of the TFWC as an organization that pursued social change through legislative enactment.

Like Adella Turner before, Dibrell was chairman of the GFWC Civics Committee before she became the sixth president of the TFWC. Turner modernized the Civics Committee and pulled Parks and Playgrounds from it to become a separate committee. Similarly, Dibrell created the Pure Food Committee as separate from both the Household Economics Committee and the Civics Committee and in recognition of the great effort that would be required of club women to assist in the enforcement of the new state pure food law. Dibrell also created the first committee on laws affecting women and children. But most important, Dibrell—wife of an influential state senator—appointed the first Outlook, or Legislative, Committee. The committee had been approved by the federation in 1906 pursuant to a resolution presented by a committee headed by Dibrell. This action acknowledged the federation’s willingness to seek statutory reform—as club women had done regarding the issue of adulterated food—and announced the federation’s increasing interest in legislative action in addition to the more modest, but often more successful, accomplishments that women’s clubs could make in their home towns.¹²⁸

Of the thirteen social housekeeping committees established after Dibrell’s presidency through 1917, eight
centered their attention on legislative goals, three concentrated on educating the public on certain issues, and two promoted various types of social or public services.\textsuperscript{129} These classifications cannot, however, be construed too rigidly. For example, all TFWC outside work committees took the education of public opinion as the essential starting point in any line of work. Each of these committees will be briefly described in the following pages.

Following the lead of the GFWC, a Health Committee was created in 1909 to concentrate on the fight against tuberculosis. But, Texas club women were concerned about the White Plague before 1909, and there were signs that they were esteemed as valuable allies in public health campaigns. When the Texas Anti-Tuberculosis Association was founded in 1906, two club women were elected to serve as vice presidents: Ella Dibrell and Katie Daffan. Dallas club woman Annie C. Briggs was appointed by Dr. George Brown, president of the American Anti-Tuberculosis League, to head the new Women's Anti-Tuberculosis League--organized to concentrate on education for TB prevention and on state aid for consumptives. In 1907 Ida Caldwell Saunders, whose husband--Bacon Saunders--was a prominent Fort Worth surgeon and professor of surgery, attended the American Anti-Tuberculosis Association meeting as a representative of the TFWC Civics Committee.\textsuperscript{130}
Furthermore, in 1908 the TFWC resolved to support the Red Cross in its sale of Christmas stamps and to petition the Texas Legislature for the establishment of a state tuberculosis sanitorium. Several 1908 issues of The Dallas Clubwoman featured articles about tuberculosis and the need for a state tuberculosis hospital, and the sale of Red Cross Stamps continued for many years. One state-supported sanitarium "for whites only" was opened in Carlsbad in 1912, but the TFWC continued to recommend the establishment of more sanitoria, preferably in each TFWC district. Dr. J. S. Turner or Terrell, who had written about the problem of tuberculosis in Texas, commended women's clubs along with the State Medical Association and the State Board of Health for their work to improve public health conditions. The TFWC Health Committee, changed to the Public Health Department of Work in 1915, made other recommendations to federated clubs. Foremost, they suggested that women's clubs set aside one meeting in each club year for the consideration of public health topics. Many TFWC committee's exhorted clubs to this practice. Clubs responded to these suggestions in various ways. Some clubs found their calendars almost wholly taken up with these recommended special days, e.g. Education Day, Health Day, Household Economics Day, and so on. The Health Committee, like others, provided interested clubs with
program guides or other study materials as well as suggestions for public action.\footnote{132}

The TFWC committee on Waterways and Forests was also created in 1909 although conservation issues had been discussed since 1901. In that year women's clubs from New York and New Jersey asked Texas club women to assist them in the preservation of the Palisades on the west bank of the Hudson River. The form of support that Texas club women provided is unclear, but it was sufficiently appreciated to gain Mrs. J.E. Leith, club woman from Terrell who had recently attended the GFWC Biennial Convention as a TFWC delegate, appointment as an officer in the National Association for the Preservation of the Palisades. In 1906 the TFWC responded to the request of the American Civic Association to endorse the effort to preserve Niagra Falls.\footnote{133}

Mrs. Cone Johnson, TFWC president from 1905 to 1907, suggested work for a state Forestry Commission to the TFWC Executive Board in 1907. Her interest must have been known to the annual meeting program committee, for Mr. Enos Mills--a "representative of the [U.S.] government, on Forestry"--spoke to the 1907 convention. He encouraged club women to spread the "doctrines of tree and bird preservation." Before the 1907 meeting adjourned, the assembled club women resolved to support a federal Bureau of Forestry and to work for state forestry laws.\footnote{134}
The impetus for the new Waterways and Forest Committee came from the national federation; in 1908 GFWC president Sarah Platt Decker suggested that Texas club women do more in terms of forest preservation. In the same year, the GFWC added a Waterways sub-committee to its Forestry Committee to promote legislation for navigable waterways that also protected populations that lived along the river banks. 135

The organization, in 1908, of the Women's National Rivers and Harbors Congress—a women's auxilliary to the National Rivers and Harbors Congress—also influenced Texas club women. News of the new women's organization was reported in The Dallas Clubwoman:

The idea [behind the formation of the WNRHC] is to utilize both the women's clubs already formed for various lines of public endeavor and the men's organizations which have waterway improvements and conservation in view to the end that women everywhere may cooperate with the men everywhere inmolding public opinion. 136

The TFWC endorsed the goals of the WNRHC at the 1908 TFWC meeting and pledged support of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress at the TFWC meeting in 1910. 137

The work of the committee, called Waterways and Forest Conservation in 1911, was to keep Texas women's clubs aware of related issues and to advise clubs when concerted action was required. Between 1911 and 1913 the committee sent over three thousand circular letters to Texas clubs. One
round of letters was occasioned in 1912 when the GFWC Conservation Chairman [sic] asked the TFWC committee to help defeat pending legislation which would place national forests under state control. The TFWC committee asked clubs to pass resolutions against this measure and to send copies of their resolutions to Congressional representatives. Another round of letters suggested that all clubs observe Arbor Day. It goes without saying that clubs were asked to include "conservation" in their course of study.\textsuperscript{138}

A TFWC Conservation Committee separate from the Waterways and Forest Committee was created in 1913 although the two seemed to work in tandem. The committees continued to present resolutions in support of various conservation efforts. In 1916 the TFWC meeting endorsed a resolution passed by the First District in Seymour, Texas to establish Palo Duro Canyon as a national park. Palo Duro Canyon did not become a national park, but the TFWC was eventually successful in promoting its preservation as a state park.\textsuperscript{139}

In 1911 TFWC president Anna Hertzberg, an active club woman from San Antonio and a past vice-president of the National Council of Jewish Women, appointed two new committees to raise the civic consciousness on two separate issues: fire prevention and civil service reform.\textsuperscript{140} The
Fire Prevention Committee, which remained on the TFWC committee roster through the 1930s, provided educational materials to Texas clubs, elected officials, and civic organizations from across the nation.\footnote{141}

Civil Service Reform was an especially important issue for Texas club women. Through their calls for civil service reform, club women criticized political patronage as it pertained to appointments of boards which supervised eleemosynary institutions, in particular those institutions which served women and children. Club women, thus, joined a movement which dated from the late nineteenth century and became a staple of "progressive" reform in the early twentieth century. In 1904 the GFWC announced that civil service reform would be a priority issue. The club movement's contribution to this reform tradition was its presumption that meritorious and humane appointments would be achieved when more women were designated to supervise state institutions.\footnote{142}

The TFWC first resolved to "create a public sentiment" for civil service reform" at its 1908 meeting. The TFWC Yearbook distributed at that meeting included a message from GFWC President Sarah Platt Decker in which she challenged Texas club women:

\begin{quote}
Are the helpless and sick in your State under the care of trained and experienced assistants, or at the mercy of political appointees? \footnote{143}
\end{quote}
Two years later, the TFWC annual meeting featured an address on the "Meaning of Civil Service Reform as Applied to Club Efforts," a subcommittee on Civil Service Reform was added to the Civics Committee, and a resolution was passed "appealing to the state authorities to have women added on the boards of all institutions having to do with women and children." When civil service reform was elevated to its own committee in 1911, the new committee proceeded in the established pattern: it provided clubs with literature on the issue, recommended that one meeting be devoted to the study of civil service reform, and urged clubs to inform the public at large through articles or editorials in local newspapers. In subsequent years, the TFWC continued to pass resolutions favoring civil service reform and suggesting the appointment of women to particular positions. The TFWC achieved a measure of success with this goal; in the nineteen-teens, more women, especially club women, were designated to serve on various state boards and commissions. In 1917, for example, Governor Ferguson appointed past TFWC president Mrs. Henry Fall to the Board of Regents of the Girls' Industrial Training School in Gainseville and Mrs. G.R. Scott to the board of the State Library and Historical Association. This may have been a result of the TFWC's frequent calls for such appointments, but it was also a reflection of the recognition which club women had achieved.¹⁴⁴
The Civic Art Committee, the Motion Picture Survey Committee, and the Good Roads Committee—all created in 1915—were three committees that had legislative objectives but which also had strong educational objectives. The Civic Art Committee was not particularly active nor particularly long-lived. Through this committee, club women hoped to elevate the public's aesthetic sensibilities. As mentioned earlier, the TFWC resolved, in 1908, to work for a State Art Commission comprised of art critics who would approve plans for civic art such as monuments and memorials. The desired commission was not, however, created.\textsuperscript{145}

Where the new moving pictures were concerned, club women worked not only to elevate the public's taste; it also sought to "protect" the public through movie censorship. In 1915 club women passed a resolution to seek a State Board of Censors of Moving Pictures. Until the state assumed this responsibility, club women would work in their local communities for boards of movie censorship or other restraints. Just as "good art" was needed, in school rooms and on public buildings, for example, to inspire noble thoughts and deeds, "bad art"—and club women believed that some of the new moving pictures fell into this category—should be kept from public view. Club women met with the local movie theater managers and gained
agreements to cooperate with the club women as unofficial censors. In some cities, club women received the managers' promises for educational films for children.\textsuperscript{146}

The TFWC's work for good roads was in support of the Texas Good Roads Association in its effort to improve public highways. Speakers from the Association attended TFWC meetings and commended the TFWC for its assistance. The Good Roads Committee continued its work of educating club women and sponsoring resolutions for state legislation for several years before being replaced by committees that stressed motor vehicle safety. By endorsing the movement for a better public highway system, Texas club women demonstrated their interest in issues not traditionally associated with women. It was also a way to demonstrate state patriotism as was their enthusiastic participation in the Buy-it-Made-in-Texas movement of the late nineteen-teens.\textsuperscript{147}

The Social Service Committee supported work for several legislative objectives, but the mandate of the Social Service Committee during its brief tenure, 1913-1915, was never entirely clear. The various goals of the committee reflected the many concerns of the committee's chair, Estelle Sharp--an enthusiastic club woman from Houston. Mrs. S.J. Wright created a Social Service Committee in 1911, as a committee in the Civics Department of Work, to report on the numerous philanthropic projects
undertaken by local clubs and the TFWC that did not fall under the auspices of the established committees. But, under the leadership of Sharp, the committee’s scope was much larger. In fact, Sharp fashioned the goal of her committee to be the amelioration of "social evils and injustices as they exist" so that much charitable work would be unnecessary. While the committee was under the Civics Department, Sharp encouraged work for child welfare measures including enforcement of child labor laws through factory inspections, a compulsory school attendance law, and moving picture censorship. She also began investigating problems of rural women.\(^{148}\)

When the committee was elevated to the status of standing committee or department in 1913, Sharp emphasized the need for adequate appropriations for the new girls' industrial school and the importance of merit-based appointments to that school's governing board. She also recommended federation work for stronger child labor and compulsory education laws. Her correspondence with groups like the National Women’s Trade Union League reveals that she planned to have the Social Service Committee lead the federation in campaigns for other reforms such as minimum wage laws, protective labor legislation for women, prison reform, and the care and treatment of the feebleminded.\(^{149}\)

The Social Service Committee was not reappointed in
1915; its goals had been too vague and diverse to be effective. Its objectives were assigned to other committees: the Rural Life Committee appointed in 1913, the Motion Picture Survey Committee and the Industrial and Social Conditions Committee both appointed in 1915, and the Girls' Welfare Committee appointed in 1917. Sharp's ambitions and energy, however, had been recognized. In 1916 the GFWC Board appointed Sharp as the Texas Director of the GFWC—a new position within the club movement that, along with the State Secretary to the General Federation, was created to oversee GFWC affairs at the state level. The next year, 1917, TFWC president Mrs. Fred Fleming named Estelle Sharp to head the federation's newly created War Work Council.  

Two of the committees that pursued the work which Sharp's committee had begun were the Rural Life Committee and the Industrial and Social Conditions Committee. By contrasting the two committees at the state level and their effect on individual Texas clubs, one can observe the way that local conditions influenced the priorities of the club movement at the local level. As noted several times during this study, there was an astounding degree of uniformity between the TFWC and the GFWC and between the TFWC and other state federations. The state federations conformed to the committee structure prescribed by the General Federation. The extent to which individual clubs followed
through on goals set by the GFWC and, in turn, the state federation's committees was determined by the problems that club women observed closer to home. Therefore, it is not surprising that the activities and services recommended by the TFWC Rural Life Committee were picked up enthusiastically by women around the state.

In contrast, the Industrial and Social Conditions Committee, did not engender much enthusiasm and was not--during the second decade of the twentieth century--particularly clear about its goals. Legislation favoring better working conditions or the abolition of child labor, for example, had been part of the TFWC's reform agenda for years and had been promoted at different times by different committees. The Industrial and Social Conditions Committee was, in a sense, a committee in search of itself. Of course there were industrial and social problems--Sharp had called them "social evils and injustices"--but Texas club women did not probe this area too deeply. There was more interest after the war when Texas club women determined to help the nation address certain domestic challenges. Accordingly, the TFWC encouraged clubs to study issues such as "labor and race problems." Before then, however, Texas club women were much more concerned about the quality of rural life.151

Although the Rural Life Committee was not created
until 1913, Texas club women had been talking about ways to improve the conditions of rural life and the situation of rural women since the early days of the federation. In the late 1890s, most white Texas club women lived in urban communities or, at least, in towns and villages. Their view of rural life was thoroughly bleak. Writing in an 1898 issue of The Club Monthly, one club woman described the "isolation and loneliness, [and] the utter lack of all social intercourse" of rural life. Another club woman described country women as "cramped and fettered by the privations of a city's advantages," e.g. lecturers, great preachers, artists, actors, local politicians, daily newspapers, and women's clubs.\textsuperscript{152}

With missionary zeal, Texas club women hoped to improve the lives of country women, and the country women themselves, through the extension of the woman's club movement to rural neighborhoods. This topic was discussed at virtually every annual meeting from the federation's founding in 1897; and one of the earliest standing committees of the TFWC, the Club Extension Committee, was created to further this goal.\textsuperscript{153} Initially, this presumption reflected a distinct anti-rural bias and a paternalistic concern for country women. Whereas club women in the more industrialized states identified working class women as a disadvantaged group in need of protection and/or assistance,\textsuperscript{154} Texas club women understood their
mission to be in aid of rural women. If women's clubs were helpful to the women who lived in towns or cities, it would do wonders for the over-worked, isolated, and benighted country women. With characteristic hyperbole, one Texas club woman proclaimed at the first annual TFWC meeting:

"...the club in the country neighborhood has, is, and will ever be the throne of knowledge, and the temple of pleasure around which will revolve the woman of the present generation, who has transformed the desert of mental neglect into a garden of intellectual culture."

Of course, Texas club women were not alone with their concerns for rural women and the conditions of rural life. Southern progressives in the early twentieth century realized that the rural South was in crisis. As historian Dewey Grantham explains, the agricultural economy was "precarious," and the rural South "contained the harshest and most concentrated evidence of the section's poverty, ignorance, and injustice." By 1908 the status of the farmer seemed to warrant national attention, and President Theodore Roosevelt appointed the Country Life Commission to investigate the situation. Texas club women immediately endorsed the presidential inquiry. The independent farmer was in peril. Country folk needed assistance if country life--and the cherished agrarian values that it symbolized--was to be preserved. There was widespread concern that farmers and their families were escaping to
the cities.

By this time, the TFWC's interest in rural life went beyond that of extending culture and companionship to rural women. Texas club women were also worried that too many people were leaving the farms. There was particular concern that young country girls were rushing to the cities where, too often, they were "drawn into that frightful whirlpool which casts them into the shadows of oblivion."\(^{158}\) As discussed earlier, the TFWC Education Committee led the federation in its work for better rural schools. TFWC president Mrs. S.J. Wright wrote to Texas club women in 1911 to recommend a more direct role that the federation should play in the improvement of rural life:

How to keep the boys and girls on the farm is a problem that has been vexing some of the wisest heads of our land. The first step is to make mothers contented, for it is largely her attitude toward the farm which makes or mars the lives of her children there; unless she "ordains" her son for the farm he will not be apt to become a good farmer, nor will the daughter be contented if she sees nothing better in the future for herself than the dreary routine and drudgery of a mother's existence. So let us aid in every way possible the farm or country women's Clubs and extend an enthusiastic welcome to all those that affiliate with our organization. \(^{159}\)

This statement is remarkable not only for the influence attributed to the country woman's club, but also for the influence attributed to mothers. Similarly, in 1915 when Estelle Sharp was addressing the problems of
rural life through the Social Service Committee, she complained indignantly that a larger percent of Smith-Lever funds for agricultural extension work were not apportioned for home economics education for rural women:

The home can not improve past the mother no matter how much the crops are rotated or the income increased. 160

The Rural Life Committee had no innovative solutions to recommend. Along with the Club Extension Committee, it encouraged federated clubs to contribute to the uplift of rural life, and in particular rural women, through the activities that had been proposed for over a decade: the establishment of women's clubs in rural areas and the provision of rest rooms in cities or market towns for rural women. Neither activity required legislative initiative but were dependent on the initiatives of local city women's clubs. Texas club women were most successful in extending clubdom into rural areas through the creation of county federations. By 1917 six county federations had been organized. During the war years when club women were emphasizing thrift and food conservation, women's clubs and district federations organized canning clubs in rural areas.161

Many clubs worked enthusiastically to provide rest rooms for country women. This service was proposed as early as 1901 and reports made at annual meetings indicated
that clubs were taking up this line of work. A rest room, usually established in a county courthouse, was a place where country women could pause on market days to eat lunch, to rest, to visit with one another, to corral children. Mary Gearing, on the home economics faculty at the University of Texas and head of the TFWC Rural Life Committee in 1914, suggested that these rest rooms could also become market houses for rural women’s products.\textsuperscript{162} The Gainesville XLI Club talked with county commissioners about their plans to create a rest room for country women in 1909: if the county would allow use of a room in the courthouse, the club women would keep the room tidy and provide magazines and literature. In 1916, the club asked the county commissioners to provide a woman assistant for the courthouse rest room, but the commissioners declined. The club continued to maintain the rest room and, by the end of the nineteen-teens, provided child care for country women on First Mondays and provided entertainment for the women on Trades Day.\textsuperscript{163}

The Dallas Federation of Women’s Clubs assisted the Rural Welfare Association in establishing a rest room for rural women in 1914. Three years later, the federation hosted a luncheon for the Dallas County Commissioners and asked the commissioners to assume the cost of maintaining the rest room. The commissioners agreed to pay the salary of the room’s attendant, but their commitment lapsed after
three months. During World War I, the Dallas federation sponsored a Canning School at the courthouse rest room. 164

In a largely rural and comparatively unindustrialized state, Texas club women were more interested in the problems of rural life than the problems that attended a more advanced stage of industrialization. But, their relative inattention to the one set of issues and the particular solutions proposed regarding the other have more in common than is immediately obvious. In general, Texas club women were not prepared to tackle economic issues or problems that derived from economic arrangements. Despite the fact that annual meetings featured several "experts" on the problems of rural life, for example, a University of Texas professor who spoke on the social and economic organization of rural life, club women rarely considered the economic aspects of the crisis and so rarely recommended economic or political solutions. The closest they came to this awareness was in their concern for the inadequacy of rural schools. 165

Although Texas club women invested more time and energy in the aid of rural women, they were not oblivious to the problems of young working class women. The Girls' Welfare Committee--created first as a subcommittee to the Industrial and Social Conditions Committee and then, in 1917, appointed as a standing committee--recognized that
increasing numbers of young women were working outside the home. The committee was not particularly active until after World War I.\(^{166}\)

The social housekeeping committee that remains to be discussed was the Peace Committee. This committee had its origins as a subcommittee to the Education Committee in 1912. In that year the TFWC passed a resolution to endorse international peace and arbitration movements. In 1913 sentiments for peace activism were strong enough to warrant the appointment of a standing committee. The new committee identified two main goals:

...we educate and impress upon our children the terror and needlessness of war, and to teach our children that the men who fight are but the slaves of the men who bring about the war.\(^{167}\)

To this end the committee recommended the observance of a Peace Day by all women's clubs. The chair of the committee even wrote every governor in the nation to urge observance of May 18 as Peace Day. Closer to home, sympathetic Texas legislators agreed to endorse a resolution in the state legislature for Peace Day in Texas. The committee urged individual clubs and federation districts to encourage "the study of peace" by, for example, offering cash prizes for the best essay on the subject. In these modest ways, the TFWC Peace Committee hoped to affect the cause for international peace. Education and awareness was, for Texas club women, always the first and often the most
important activity to promote for lasting social change. The Peace Committee remained intact through the war years. At the 1918 TFWC meeting, the federation adopted the platform of the National Peace League and recorded their support for a League of Nations. 168

The federation's concern for international peace notwithstanding, Texas club women found good reasons to support the United States war effort during World War I. In many ways the "war work" of Texas club women was their most prodigious and concerted effort. In 1917 the TFWC established the War Work Council composed of an appointed state chairwoman, two vice chairwomen, the officers of the TFWC, and the heads of the departments of work. The main accomplishment of this Council was the establishment and maintenance of recreational canteens in each of the five cantonment towns in the state.

The Council raised the amazing sum of $50,000 to support its work; $11,000 was collected at the 1917 TFWC convention when Estelle Sharp, head of the TFWC War Work Council, announced the budget for the work and asked for donations. Half of the money supported the state recreational canteens, and the other half was used for the GFWC recreational canteen established in France. The overseas canteen program was the recommendation of the TFWC War Work Council, and a Texas club woman--Kate Friend of Waco--was selected to serve as one of the four
supervisors. 169

Individual clubs devoted most of their time to war work, suspending or de-emphasizing other projects—literary, political, or social. Clubs often relinquished the cherished social hour with refreshments to afford more time for war work and to promote food conservation. Club women worked with the Red Cross, organized Thrift Clubs, sponsored War Gardens, bought Liberty Bonds, and—if one of the five cantonments was nearby—volunteered in the recreational canteen. 170

*     *     *

In conclusion, the issues that white club women through the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs pursued, often with fierce dedication, establishes the TFWC as a major component of the social welfare contingent of Progressive Era reform in Texas. Texas club women, like other contemporaneous progressives, saw themselves as enlightened leaders who would improve the nation, the state, their home communities, their families, and themselves with new policies and new institutions. They shared with other progressives the conviction that the material and social environment was the root of all evil and that the transformation of that environment would produce virtuous and competent citizens. They emphasized organization and efficiency and trusted in "scientific" or
expert knowledge to guide their plans for social redemption. Education and proper training, whether one's goal was wholesome homemaking or social reclamation, was, they believed, the indispensable ingredient for the effective exertion of influence.

Often in coalition with other state progressive groups, the TFWC contributed to the achievement of several progressive state statutes including the pure food law, educational reforms, the establishment of Texas Woman's University, protective legislation for women and children, the juvenile court law and the establishment of industrial training schools for boys and girls. The effect and effectiveness of these reforms, and many others, can be judged differently. Nonetheless, one's evaluation of the success or desirability of these reforms aside, it remains that the work of the white Texas club women--like their cohorts in other states--enlarged the area of public or governmental responsibility.

When club women in Texas moved from self-culture to civic Although Texas club women invested more time and energy in the aid of rural women, they were not oblivious to the problems of young working class women. The Girls' Welfare Committee--created first as a subcommittee to the Industrial and Social Conditions Committee and then, in 1997, appointed as a standing committee--recognized that
increasing numbers of young women were working outside the home. The committee was not particularly active until after World War I. determined to make changes in their home towns and in their state—as well as in themselves—they began by providing new services or establishing new institutions. Soon they were persuading the public and public officials that these new services and institutions were important enough for them to become public responsibilities. In the words of historian Paula Baker, politics became "domesticated:" "...women passed on to the state the work of social policy that they found increasingly unmanageable." 171

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the TFWC resembled the Women’s Christian Temperance Union of the late nineteenth century in the way it moved from concentration on a single issue to concern over a host of social problems. Under Frances Willard’s leadership from 1879 to 1898, the WCTU adopted a "Do Everything" policy. In ten years’ time Willard had organized thirty-nine departments that included kindergartens and welfare work as well as temperance, social purity, and temperance education. 172 The TFWC first moved beyond its original purpose as a union of women’s literary societies to promote the establishment of free public libraries. Soon, Texas club women were "doing everything," or almost everything. Once the club movement adopted the social feminist ideology
that women were justified, even compelled, to extend their influence beyond the private home, the possibilities of involvement seemed almost limitless.

The TFWC was not unique in its resemblance to the WCTU of earlier years. The General Federation of Women's Clubs, the model and inspiration for the Texas Federation, began to move beyond purely literary interests in the late 1890s, and other state federations followed the same pattern. The influence and leadership of the GFWC surely had a broadening effect upon the TFWC. Eventually the committee structure and refom agenda was virtually identical. Texas club women emphasized what they believed was most important to Texas, for example, in the emphasis on rural women. But what is more remarkable is the degree to which the Texas club women and the TFWC participated in the national club movement.

The coherence of the white women's club movement is, in fact, nothing short of astounding, and the implications have not been fully explored. Considering the inevitable regional differences, the viability of an active national movement that functioned at several different levels—the individual club woman, the individual club, the city federation, the regional federation, the state federation, and the national federation—is a forceful testament to the unifying influence of gender and class. First and
foremost, the club movement was a woman's movement borne of
and sustained by the burgeoning desire of white middle- and
upper-class women to be of use and to be recognized as
essentially useful. The success of the women's club
movement—which continues to this day but which achieved
its apex in the early decades of this century—indicates
that the similarities of white middle- and upper-class
women were much greater than their differences. As a
woman's movement, club women developed political strategies
that reflected their values and their capacities. Having
demonstrated the wide range of activity of the TFWC, the
following chapter describes these political strategies.
Endnotes for Chapter Five


3Christian, pp. 7-9.

4"Third Annual Congress of Clubs," The Club Monthly 1, No. 7 (1898), p. 34; Christian, p. 9, 23.


6The Woman's Club of Waco Minutes, 27 Mar. 1897 and 27 Apr. 1897, The Woman's Club of Waco Papers, The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.


8Kate Rotan as quoted by Mrs. J.C. Croly in her History of the Woman's Club Movement, pp. 1095-1096; Christian, pp. 13-20; Terrell, "Succinct History."


10Mrs. Henry Exall as cited by Croly in her History of the Woman's Club Movement, p. 1097.

11Mrs. Edward R. (Kate) Rotan, "President's Address"
[First Annual TFWLC meeting in 1898], reprinted in The Club Monthly, 1, No. 8 (1898), pp. 3-4.

12 An invitation to this meeting, complete with a detailed schedule of events and presentations, was printed in The Club Monthly, 1, No. 7 (1898), pp. 30-32. The XX Century Club of Tyler published this journal for Texas club women during the federation’s first year. At the April 1898 TFWC meeting, the federation decided not to take over the publication which the Tyler club women could no longer continue. See Christian, pp. 30-31 and "Editorials," The Club Monthly, 1, No. 8 (1898), pp. 38-39.

For the remainder of the period under discussion, the TFWC publicized its activities through various daily newspapers. This is discussed more fully in Chapter Six. Louella Styles Vincent of Dallas privately published The Dallas Clubwoman through, at least, 1908 and 1909. It contained news and editorials regarding the TFWC in addition to information about the Dallas clubs.

13 Mrs. Edward R. (Kate) Rotan, "President’s Address," 1898, p. 5.

14 Christian, pp. 29-30; Terrell, "Succinct History."

15 Christian, p. 37; Terrell, "Succinct History."

16 Terrell, "Succinct History."

17 Christian, p. 37.


19 Christian, pp. 64, 258, 367; Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs Yearbook, 1904-1905, pp. 13, 55 [Yearbooks are hereafter referred to as TFWC Yearbook]. The 30,000 number was cited by Mrs. C.W. Connery, "Communication in Press to the Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs (May 1918)" in History of the TFWC, 1917-1931, Decca Lamar West, comp., TS, pp. 69-71, TFWC Offices, Austin, Texas.

The total of "over seven hundred clubs" (729) was derived by adding the numbers of clubs that joined the TFWC each year, as reported by Stella Christian, and subtracting the clubs that withdrew or which were dropped. The relevant pages in Christian are: 32, 38, 49, 62, 84-85, 93, 115, 129, 158-159, 169, 185, 214, 239, 257-258, 264, 277, 287-288, 308, 321-322, 343, 356-357. Several cities had large department clubs. Dallas had two: the Dallas Woman’s Forum (DWF) and the city federation (DFWC). See,

The General Federation of Women's Clubs acknowledged the growth of the club movement in Texas. In 1914, Texas and Illinois brought in the largest number of new clubs to the GFWC; and in 1915, Texas ranked third in the number of federation clubs. See Christian, pp. 310, 321.


21 Christian, pp. 63-64, 80, 82, 109, 245, 300; Potter, p. 82; "Texas [report]," *The Club Woman, 10*, No. 6 (1903), p. 219.


23 For example, Waco, Dallas, and San Antonio had city federations. See Christian, pp. 179, 206, 289, 305, 323, 329, 347.

24 Letter from Sarah Platt Decker, GFWC President in 1904, to the TFWC Executive Board as cited by Christian, p. 127.

25 Christian, p. 22.


27 Potter, pp. 53-54.

28 Christian, pp. 45, 297. In 1899 Literature and
Lecture were one committee; Literature was dropped in 1903 and reappeared in 1907 as a separate committee when the Lecture Committee was deemed no longer necessary. In 1915 the Literature Committee was the Literature and Library Extension Committee. See Christian, pp. 45, 105, 199, 336.


30 Terrell, "Succinct History;" Christian, p. 45.

31 Christian, pp. 169, 198-199.


33 Mrs. J.C. Terrell, resolution presented at TFWC Annual Meeting, 27 November 1903, as cited by Christian, p. 97; Mrs. H.F. Ring, "Prospectus of Library Committee," TFWC Yearbook, 1900-1901, p. 15.


36 Christian, pp. 120, 156, 162, 221, 240, 272, 300-301, 341, 342, 347; Richardson, pp. 419-420; Toler, p. 26.

The TFWC's work for public libraries was like that of other state federations. In 1904, the GFWC Library Committee reported that 4655 traveling libraries had been established in the thirty-four states with GFWC state federations. Also, state library commissions had been established in eighteen states, largely through the efforts of club women. See Mary I. Wood, History of the General Federation of Women's Clubs for the First Twenty-Two Years of Its Organization (New York: GFWC, 1912), p. 169.

37 The quote is cited by Christian, p. 66. Also see: Mrs. M.C. Kimball, "Prospectus of the Art Committee," TFWC

38Christian, pp. 220, 224-5. Also see Emily Fourmy Cutrer, The Art of the Woman: The Life and Work of Elisabet Ney (Lincoln, Neb.: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1988).

39Christian, p. 220.


41Christian, pp. 321, 327.

42Christian, p. 11.


Adella Kelsey Turner (1856-1938) was elected TFWC president in 1903. She concurrently served as president of the Dallas [City] Federation of Women's Clubs and president of the Oak Cliff Improvement Association. She was a charter member of the Dallas Standard Club (organized 1886). She was the preeminent leader of the Dallas Woman's Forum and served as president of that group from its founding in 1906 until 1919. In the DFWC she chaired the Industrial Home Committee in 1908 and the Juvenile Court Committee in 1909. She was one of three of the first women in Dallas elected to the city school board in 1908.

Adella Turner's husband, E.P. Turner, had a prosperous career in transportation. In 1914 he was president of four Dallas interurban railway lines. Mr. Turner was also civic-minded. In 1900 he served on the Board of Directors for the Oak Cliff Public Schools. He was also a member of the prestigious Dallas Club. The couple was listed with
elite Dallas families in the Dallas Social Directory from 1900 on. They had four sons, but only two survived to adulthood.

In 1921 Adella Kelsey Turner formed the Women's Good Citizenship Association which later became the Dallas League of Women Voters.


44Christian, p. 37.

45Christian, pp. 39-40. Senator J.B. Dibrell was the state senator from Seguin, Texas and was married to leading Texas club woman Ella Peyton Dancy Dibrell. See "State Legislators," Austin City Directory, 1897-8; "Mrs. Joseph Burton Dibrell," Seguin Enterprise, 20 Feb. 1920.

46A proposal to establish a vocational school for young women was first presented to the Texas Legislature in 1889. In 1893 Helen Stoddard, president of the Texas Women's Christian Temperance Union, drafted a bill to establish a woman's college which would teach dressmaking, scientific and practical cooking, housekeeping, trained nursing, and child development. She submitted her proposal to Judge V. W. Grubbs of Greensville, and he presented it to the Texas Legislature in 1899. Regarding the early attempts to establish the school, see, Joyce Thompson, Marking a Trail: A History of the Texas Woman's University (Denton: Texas Woman's University Press, 1982), pp. 1-4; E. V. White, Historical Record of the Texas State College for Women, The First Forty-Five Years, 1903-1948, College Bulletin No. 364, December 1, 1948 (Denton, Texas: Texas State College for Women, 1948), p. 5; Janelle Scott, "Texas Woman's University," unpublished MS, Austin, Texas; Toler, "Educational Activities of TFWC," pp. 57-60; Press and Club Bulletin, 4, No. 6 (1899), p. 10. It is also significant that the Texas WCTU was a member of the TFWC as of 1900. See Toler, p. 60.
Regarding Eleanor Brackenridge's lobbying, see Toler, p. 58 and White, p. 5.

(Mary) Eleanor Brackenridge (1837-1924) was a stalwart club woman and women's rights activist. She was the backbone of several San Antonio club efforts including the San Antonio Woman's Club for which she served as president for seven years. She was a leader in the Texas Congress of Mothers although she never married or bore children. She published and distributed Lawrence Neff's The Legal Status of Women in Texas in an effort to influence opinion in favor of a proposed married women's property act (see Chapter Six). She was a leader of the woman suffrage movement in Texas and was elected president of the state woman suffrage association in 1913. For information regarding Eleanor Brackenridge, see "Eleanor Brackenridge," The Handbook of Texas, vol. 1 (Austin, Texas: Texas State Historical Association, 1952), p. 203; Sinclair Moreland, "Eleanor Brackenridge," The Texas Woman's Hall of Fame (Austin: Biographical Press, 1917), pp. 111-112; Jane Y. McCallum, "Woman Suffrage," Handbook of Texas, vol. 2, pp. 928-9; A. Elizabeth Taylor, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Texas," Journal of Southern History, 17 (May 1951), p. 203; Jesse Daniel Ames, et. al., comp., History: The Texas League of Women Voters, 1903-1940 [printed pamphlet]. Texas League of Women Voters Reference Files, Southwest Collection, Texas Technological University, Lubbock, Texas; Marilyn McAdams Sibley, George W. Brackenridge: Maverick Philanthropist (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1973), pp. 49, 126, 133.

47Thompson, Marking a Trail, pp. 2, 9 (note no. 2);
White, Texas State College for Women, pp. 5-7; "They Vote Today," Dallas Morning News, 3 May 1901.

48Thompson, Marking a Trail, pp. 21, 24, 53, 85, 94, 97, 125, 147, 173; Christian, pp. 87, 123, 167, 261, 315. Regarding board members, see Thompson, p. 3 and White, Texas State College for Women, p. 7.

49Christian, p. 388 regarding banner; Mrs. J.C. Coit of Denton, who also used the quotation when she addressed the TFWC at the twentieth anniversary celebration, attributed the statement to Jules Simon, Christian, p. 378.

50Christian, pp. 68, 81. The quotation is Mrs. J.C. Terrell's cited by Terrell in 1903 article. Also see Toler, p. 119.

The following year, 1902, the TFWC resolved to appoint a committee to advertise the new women’s dormitory at the state medical school in Galveston. The women’s residence was constructed in 1898 with funds donated by philanthropist, and University of Texas Regent, George W. Brackenridge. He provided the gift when he was told, in response to his specific inquiry about the very few women enrolled in either the medical or pharmacy school there, that the small number of women students was because there were no living quarters for women. Male students lived in community rooming houses, but this was not considered appropriate for women students. He also tried to assist women in medical education through generous scholarships. "...virtually every woman who entered the medical school in the early twentieth century was his beneficiary." George Brackenridge was Eleanor Brackenridge’s brother. Eleanor lived with her brother and his wife. See Sibley, George Brackenridge, pp. 178-9; Christian, p. 87; Mrs. Percy V. [Anna] Pennybacker, "President’s Greetings," TFWC Yearbook, 1902-1903, p. 9.

Eleanor Brackenridge, through the San Antonio Woman’s Club, provided several scholarships for women medical students. M. Eleanor Brackenridge, Letter to the Board of Regents of the University of Texas, 28 July 1903, University of Texas Board of Regents Minutes, 3-5 August, 1903, pp. 50-51, Offices of the University of Texas Board of Regents, Austin, Texas.

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53 Mary Burrows Ramsey, "Prospectus of Work to be Undertaken by the Committee on Education," TFWC Yearbook, 1900-1901, p. 13; J.S. Kendall, as cited in "They Vote Today."


58In 1904-05, the Education Committee reported the existence of sixty Mothers’ Clubs; "Summary of Reports," TFWC Yearbook, 1904-1905, p. 53. In 1909 the TFWC passed a resolution to have each district president support the work of Mother’s Clubs: Christian, p. 244; also see Christian, pp. 220, 250. The Dallas Woman’s Forum was especially energetic in its support of Mothers’ Clubs: Hunter, DWF, p. 17. Frederick Eby notes the role of the TFWC in the formation of Mothers’ Clubs and the subsequent growth and significance of these groups: Eby, Education in Texas, pp. 235-236.

59Regarding the Conference for Education in Texas, see: Evans, Texas Schools, pp., 115-116, 226-227; Steen, Twentieth Century Texas, p. 158; The WPA Guide to Texas

For example, two active club women whose husbands were prominently involved in the Conference for Education in Texas were Mary Hurd [Mrs. A. Caswell] Ellis, a member of the Austin Shakespeare Club and Mrs. David Franklin Houston, member of the Austin American History Club and chair of the TFWC Education Committee from 1907-1909. A. Caswell Ellis and David Franklin Houston are listed by Tinsley (p. 186) as two of the leaders of the Conference. Regarding Mary Hurd Ellis, see Shakespeare Club Papers, Austin History Center, Austin, Texas. Regarding Mrs. D.F. Houston, see the Austin American History Club Papers, Barker Texas History Center, Austin, Texas and Christian, p. 198. The TFWC’s endorsement of the Conference for Education in Texas is discussed by Christian, pp. 193-194, 259, 261.


Eby credits the Conference on Education, the Congress of Mothers and the Parent-Teachers Association, and the State Teachers Association with creating much enthusiasm for educational reforms in the early twentieth century: Eby, Development of Education, pp. 230-231. In Steen’s discussion of early twentieth century educational reform, he mentions the State Teachers’ Association, the TFWC, the Texas Congress of Mothers, and, later, the Parent-Teachers Association, and the WCTU: Steen, Twentieth Century Texas, p. 158.


Steen, Twentieth Century Texas, pp. 144-146.


Minutes of the Waco Woman's Club, 7 Nov. 1916, 23 Jan. 1917, 6 Feb. 1917, 6 Mar. 1917; Annual Report of the Waco Woman's Club, 1916-1917, Waco Woman's Club Papers. In 1919 the Hesperian Club of Colorado City, Texas reported that it had adopted two rural schools. Their first act of assistance to these schools was to furnish them with the "standard periodicals." The Hesperian Club also sent pamphlets on the prevention of tuberculosis to all the schools in the county. Mrs. J.B. Heitchew, "Report of President of Sixth District," 22nd TFWC Annual Meeting, Nov. 1919, in West, History, 1917-1938, p. 144.


Grantham, Progressivism, p. 263; Hugh C. Bailey, Liberalism in the New South: Southern Social Reformers and the Progressive Movement (Coral Gables, Florida, 1969), p. 131; Eby, Education in Texas, p. 253. The interest in industrial training was not, however limited to the South. It was a national concern for the country's continued economic and industrial progress. Regarding industrial or vocational training as an early twentieth century educational reform, in general, see Chudacoff, pp. 164-165. In 1913 the TFWC Education Committee cited a recommendation from the GFWC to support post-secondary school vocational training. In this recommendation, the GFWC quoted C.A. Prosser, Secretary of the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Training: "Germany boasts that within ten years there will be no such thing as untrained
workmen from chimney sweep to high-grade artisan, in the Empire. Of the 20,000,000 workmen in the United States, not 25,000 have any opportunity to secure proper education of the kind that Germany gives for their callings." Bramlette, "Education Committee for 1913," pp. 46-47.

71Christian, p. 246.

72Evans, Texas Schools, p. 116. Regarding the history of manual training in Texas schools, also see Eby, Education in Texas, pp. 237-238, 253.

73Wright, "Retiring President," pp. 15-16.


75Steen, Twentieth Century Texas, p. 146.

76Christian, p. 111. Regarding the 1902 condemnation, see Christian, p. 86.


78"Well Said," The Dallas Clubwoman, 12 Dec. 1908, p. 4.


80Wright, "Retiring President," p. 13.


82Evans, Texas Schools, pp. 120-121; "Compulsory Education Bill," The Dallas Clubwoman, 23 Jan. 1909, p. 6; Bramlette, "Education Committee for 1912," p. 43.


84Christian, pp. 307-308.


87 Christian, pp. 131, 137.


90 Christian, pp. 143, 168, 187; Thompson, "TCSW," p. 82. Texas club women did not stop with the 1907 law, but worked with the Texas Conference on Social Welfare for an improved law, which was passed in 1913.


92 Christian, pp. 222-223. In 1909 an editorial in The Dallas Clubwoman urged readers to write "to your friends in the legislature" regarding the need for "a training school for incorrigible boys...[to save them] from inoculation with the crime germ...." "Industrial School," The Dallas Clubwoman, 23 Jan. 1909, p. 6.

93 Christian, pp. 243, 268; Thompson, TCSW, pp. 77-79.


95 Stone, "Education," p. 23. Mary E. Gearing was a member of the Austin American History Club. She was also active in TFWC affairs. Austin American History Club Papers; Directory of the City of Austin, 1914 (Houston: R.L. Polk and Co., 1914); Polk's Morrison and Foromy Austin City Directory, 1920 (Houston: Morrison and Foromy, 1920); Emma L.M. Jackson, "Petticoat Politics: Political Activism Among Texas Women in the 1920s," Ph.D. diss. University of Texas at Austin 1980, pp. 170, 177.

96 Thompson, TCSW, p. 79; Mrs. Henry B. Fall, "From the State President," TFWC Yearbook, 1913-1914, p. 18.

97 Steen, Twentieth Century Texas, p. 183; Thompson, TCSW, p. 79; Christian, pp. 303, 319, 350-351.


102 Evans, Texas Schools, p. 124.

103 Evans, Texas Schools, pp. 125.

104 Evans, Texas Schools, pp. 124-127; Eby, Development of Education, p. 234. Also see Toler, pp. 97-104.


107 This is a reference to Frances Willard's "Do Everything" policy for the Women's Christian Temperance


Mrs. C.C. Cody, "Village Improvement," TFWC Yearbook, 1900-1901, p. 22.

Cody, "Village Improvement," p. 22.


Houston, "Committee on Education," p. 25.


Christian, pp. 132, 146, 150, 163, 167-168, 177. A pure food law was passed by the state legislature in 1883, but no money was appropriated for its implementation. It was later deemed "inoperable and unenforceable." See George W. Cox, History of Public Health in Texas (Austin, Texas: Texas State Department of Health, 1950), pp. 17-18. Mrs. Cree T. Work, "Pure Food Committee," circular letter to all Pure Food Committees in the federation. The
Dallas Clubwoman, 19 August 1908, p. 2.


"The New Blanton Pure Food Law," TSJM, 3, no. 1 (1907), p. 4

Mrs. Cree T. Work was head of the TFWC Household Economics Committee in 1905-1907 and head of the first TFWC Pure Food Committee in 1907: Christian, pp. 141, 163, 199. Her husband was the first president of the College of Industrial Arts and served from 1903 through 1910: White Historical Record, p. 8. Mrs. Work was a member of the Denton Woman's Shakespeare Club and, in 1904, was president of the Denton Civic League, the forerunner to the Denton City Federation of Women's Clubs: Yearbooks, 1903-1904 through 1909-1910, Woman's Shakespeare Club of Denton Papers, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; Mildred G. Montgomery, "For Mrs. R.H. Garrison," TS, Woman's Shakespeare Club of Denton Papers. Mrs. Work named Abbott as the federation's choice for pure food commissioner in her letter reprinted in *The Dallas Clubwoman,* "Pure Food Committee."

Regarding Eleanor Brackenridge, see note 46, this chapter.

Christian, pp. 188, 199.

Work, "Pure Food Committee."


Christian, p. 310.


After her term as TFWC president, Dibrell was appointed State Secretary to the GFWC for 1909-1911. She then served two terms (1911-1913 and 1913-1915) as head of the Legislative Committee. Christian, pp. 163, 168-169, 196, 199, 247.

In addition to her active service in the women's club movement, Ella Dibrell was a member and one-time president of the Texas Chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy and a member of the Daughters of the Republic and the Daughters of the American Revolution. In 1920, the year of her death, she was president of the San Antonio Drama League and an officer in the Equal Franchise Society. She bore three children and was step-mother to four sons. "Mrs. Joseph Burton Dibrell," Sequin Enterprise, 20 Feb. 1920.

The eight committees that sought legislative goals were Health, Waterways and Forest, Conservation, Civic Art, Good Roads, Motion Picture Survey, and Industrial and Social Conditions. The three committees that concentrated on education were Peace, Fire Prevention, and Civil Service Reform. The two committees that encouraged the provision of certain services were Girls' Welfare and Rural Life.

At the 1908 biennial meeting of the GFWC, the Health Committee, then a subcommittee of the Civic Committee, made a series of recommendations for work regarding the cure and prevention of tuberculosis. The committee urged that state federations conduct public education campaigns on the prevention of TB, work for the establishment of sanatoria and hospitals, work for anti-expectoration laws, and organize state and local TB associations. See Wood, History of the GFWC, p. ?. The GFWC Board of Directors (1908-1910) wrote to state federations that the GFWC Health Department of the Civics Committee had been expressly created to "assist in the great warfare against tuberculosis" and that a leading medical journal reported that the GFWC's interest in TB was "the best news that they had had for many moons." See "Open Letter to Women's Clubs," p. 9.

Regarding Texas and the TFWC, see: Christian, p. 178; Friend, "Summary," p. 47; "Women's Anti-Tubercular League," Texas State Journal of Medicine, 2, No. 11 (1907), p. 312; "Miscellaneous," Texas State Journal of Medicine, 4, no. 7 (1908); Cox, Public Health, pp. 25-6. Regarding Ida Saunders, see the biography of her husband, Bacon Saunders, Handbook of Texas, vol 2., pp. 574-5. Annie Briggs was a Dallas club woman and vice-president of the Dallas Federation of Women's Clubs in 1913: Past President's Assn., DFWC.


Christian, p. 71, 144; "They Vote Today."

Christian, pp. 182, 189, 194.


"Tenth Resolution Passed at 22nd Annual Meeting TFWC, Port Arthur, Texas, Nov. 1919," in West, History, 1917-1931, p. 152; Christian, pp. 296-297; regarding the resolution to preserve Palo Duro Canyon as a national park, see Christian, pp. 349-350; regarding resolution to President Woodrow Wilson in support of the conservation movement, see Christian, p. 352. Also regarding Palo Duro Canyon, see Megan Seaholm, "Texas Federation of Women's Clubs," The Handbook of Texas (Austin, Texas: Texas State Historical Association, forthcoming).

Christian, p. 272. Anna Hertzberg had a distinguished career in women's voluntary associations. In San Antonio, her home, she served as president of the local city federation of women's clubs, president of the Kindergarten Association, president of the San Antonio Woman's Club, president of the Tuesday Musical Club from its founding until her death in 1937, and was one of the founders of the Symphony Society. She served as an elected member of the San Antonio School Board from 1913 to 1917. She also served on the boards of the local Carnegie Library, the Humane Society, and the Southwestern Juvenile Training School. She was president of the San Antonio Section of the Council of Jewish Women and was first vice president of the National Council of Jewish Women. See Alice Collins Moon [Mrs. Evan R. Moon], History of the City


143 Sarah Platt Decker, "Message from effective--the helpless members of the body politic." This was stated in the "Open Letter to Women's Clubs," p. 9.

At the 1908 meeting at which Decker spoke, the TFWC assembly resolved to "create a public sentiment for Civil Service reform." See Christian, p. 220.


145 Christian, pp. 334-337.

146 Christian, pp. 276, 329, 340, 354. Two examples of municipal-based action regarding movie censorship: In 1913 Denton's Ariel Club appointed a committee to confer with moving picture show managers. The committee reported that "they had been received most courteously and had been assured that every effort would be made to keep the shows morally clean." Minutes, 7 April 1913, The Ariel Club Collection and "Bulletin of the City Federation of Women's Clubs, Denton, Texas," May 1914, p. 31, The Ariel Club Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas. As early as 1910, the Dallas Woman's Forum presented a petition to the city council requesting a Moving Picture Censorship Board. Hunter, DWF, p. 25.

The TFWC and Texas club women may have been ahead of other state federations in their work for motion picture censorship. Margaret Nell Price, who has studied the state federations of the southeastern states, found that these federations began agitating for motion picture censorship around 1920. Price, "The Development of Leadership," pp. 147-148.


151 Christian, pp. 336, 360; Wood, History of the GFWC, pp. 309-310 regarding the GFWC and its "industrial and social conditions" goals in 1912; Mrs. C.W. Connery, "President’s Message, Dallas, November, 1918, Reconstruction," in West, History, 1917-1938, pp. 79-82; Mrs. Robert Browning, "International Peace Report (Nov. 1918)," in West, History, 1917-1938, pp. 94-95; Decca Lamar West, "Ninth Resolution" (adopted at 22nd TFWC Annual Meeting, Nov. 1919), reprinted in West, History, 1917-1938, pp. 151-2; Potter, p. 70 re plans to assist women wage earners. Individual clubs also were involved, in varying degrees, with "industrial issues" such as working conditions for women. For example, the Dallas City
Federation of Women's Clubs passed resolutions for female factory inspectors in places where women worked. The DFWC also campaigned to have businesses close early on Saturdays so workers could have more time during the weekend to spend with their families. See Past Presidents' Assn., DFWC, p. 90.


153 Christian, pp. 69 (1901), 80 (1901), 130 (1905), 140 (1905), 159 (1906), 216 (1908), 257 (1910), 265 (1911).

154 For example, the recording secretary for the GFWC in 1906 wrote: "Much is being done in several states to bring about closer relations between the club women and the working women. In Ohio, for example, the club women are going into the factories and making a thorough study of conditions by personal acquaintance with the women operatives. A typical philanthropy is that of the Klio Association of Chicago, an organization of women that serves meals at cost to 1,000 working women a day. The quarters include rest and sick rooms and a reading-room with a library of over 1,000 volumes." Mrs. John Dickinson Sherman, "The Women's Clubs in the Middle Western States," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 28, No. 2 (1906), p. 39. May Alden Ward also wrote in 1906 about the efforts and successes of women's clubs and state federations in regarding the industrial conditions of women and children and protective labor legislative. For example, a joint committee from the Massachusetts Federation of Women's Clubs and the Women's Educational and Industrial Union conducted an investigation into dangerous trades which employed women. The results of this survey were presented to the Massachusetts legislature to gain appropriations for an official investigation conducted by the state board of health. Ward, "The Influence of Women's Clubs in New England and in the Middle-Eastern States," The Annals, p. 23.

Kathryn Kish Sklar has noted the work of the Chicago Woman's Club with Hull House on behalf of working class women. See Sklar, "Hull House in the 1890s: A Community of Reformers," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 10, No. 4 (1985), 658-77.


156 Grantham, Southern Progressivism, p. 320.

Wright, "Retiring President," p. 18.

Wright, "Retiring President," p. 17.


Christian, pp. 311.


Past Presidents' Assn., *DFWC*, pp. 73-4, 80-81, 89. The Dallas Woman's Forum also assisted with the rest room at the county court house, and the DWF's Rural Welfare Committee provided domestic science demonstrations for rural women. See Hunter, *DFW*, pp. 52, 61.

Christian, pp. 290, 303, 311. See pages 27 and 28, this chapter.

Christian, p. 357; Potter, p. 54.

Mrs. Mary Logon Christensen, "Report of Peace Committee," *TFWC Yearbook, 1913-1914*, p. 51. As early as 1907 Anna Pennybacker attended a "peace conference" and reported encouraged support of peace work to the TFWC: Friend, "Summary," p. 44. Also see Wright, "Retiring President," p. 19; Christian, pp. 277, 281-282.

Christensen, "Peace Committee," pp. 50-52; Christian, pp. 281-282, 300, 312. In 1915 Christensen's work for the TFWC Peace Committee and that committee's views on war, arbitration, and peace were covered in an Austin new report: Mrs. Charles Stephenson, "Happenings in Local Clubs," *Austin Daily News*, 21 March 1915. Regarding
post war TFWC peace work, see Mrs. Robert Browning, "International Peace Report (1918)," in West History, 1918-1938, p. 94.


Chapter Six

Righteousness, Enthusiasm, Harmony, and Influence: The Politics of the Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs

As Chapter Four demonstrated the work of white women’s clubs in Texas at the local or municipal level, and as Chapter Five presented the development of the club movement’s agenda for reform at the state level as exemplified by the Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs, this chapter will focus on the strategies employed by the TFWC to accomplish their reform goals and to maintain an organization relevant to the interests and needs of the membership. These strategies are best understood as the Politics of Righteousness, the Politics of Enthusiasm, the Politics of Harmony, and the Politics of Influence.¹

Texas club women did not describe their movement in so schematic a manner. They were extremely thoughtful and deliberate about the means they chose to further their goals, but club women did not formulate an ideology of political practice that then informed their plans for work. Club women were concerned to pursue desired reforms in, the most for them, appropriate and effective manner. Their political practices emerged as a pastiche of womanly virtues and a new ethos of feminine duty that inhered so strongly in the woman’s club movement. They combined the gentility of well-bred and educated ladydom with the exuberance of the social reformer. "Educate, agitate, then

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"legislative" was a phrase Texas club women often used to describe their plans for social change. "Influence" was another word that appeared in numerous resolutions, as in, "will use all possible influence" toward one or another particular goal. These were tactics that appealed to club women because of their compatibility with the larger, though unarticulated, ideology of political practice.

The viability of the club movement depended upon political practices in the public sphere and upon political practices within the club movement. In other words, there was an external and an internal aspect to the way the club movement conducted its affairs. The successes and the failures of the white women's clubs movement in Texas were, to some extent, attributable to their practical politics. But the following explanation of how and why the club movement worked the way it did reveals much more about the phenomenon of the TFWC and the women who participated in it than about its successes or failures. Success and failure had as much to do with other variables such as the social class of the club women, the nation-wide reform impulse that has been labeled the "Progressive Era," and, in the case of Texas, a period of vigorous economic growth in the early twentieth century. The political strategies and the particular tactics the club movement employed are examined in this chapter.
The Politics of Righteousness

All reformers, social changers, and community builders believe in the rightness, even the righteousness, of their work. White club women in Texas were no exception. Even before the club movement in Texas expanded its horizons beyond literary study, club women were convinced of the righteousness of their work. When Mrs. Charles T. Bonner welcomed the Texas Federation of Women’s Literary Clubs to Tyler for the first annual meeting, she spoke of the federation’s noble purpose:

...thus banded together we shall go forward to learn what we may, and propagate what we may learn for the interest of those we love. Every consideration of happiness, security and success should bind us together, so that each should feel the vigor and strength of a prosperous, aggressive organization, having for its purpose the advancement of literary research; the attainment of intellectual superiority, and the highest standard of womanhood. 2

When the federation’s work became "the uplift of humanity," this righteousness provided a frame of reference that allowed club women to initiate reforms in the public sphere with confidence. The Politics of Righteousness impelled club women to be about the business of social amelioration, for the duties and obligations of virtuous and earnest women could no longer remain private, family-centered responsibilities. Women now had a distinctively feminine responsibility in the world. Club women were surely aware of female predecessors who had sought change
in the public sphere, but, for most Texas club women, their involvement in work outside the home was a new experience. Despite the work and courage of certain nineteenth-century forebears, woman's involvement in the public sphere was still considered a new and sometimes suspect activity. Thus, the Politics of Righteousness not only mandated women's responsibilities beyond the traditional woman's sphere, it also justified and elevated the new work that club women pursued. According to the Politics of Righteousness, women were called to serve the world as well as their families. Mrs. Henry Fall of Houston cited the clergyman Henry Van Dyke in her 1913 presidential message to Texas club women:

All around the world we hear the cry for women to go to the forefront; women to take the leadership in great movements; women who are willing to go out and enlighten, uplift, comfort and strengthen their fellow man--for women are sure and victorious, when interested. 3

The Politics of Righteousness presented women with a new opportunity to express their "true womanhood" through service to others and to receive due recognition. The club movement created a new standard of female duty by which women should measure themselves. The righteousness of the club movement beckoned women to a new field of service. It also made joining the ranks of the women's club movement unassailable, at least as far as the women themselves were
concerned. Service to such a righteous calling was surely the utmost expression of female virtue.

The Politics of Righteousness allowed club women to enter the public sphere with confidence. It was also the frame of reference that allowed the club movement, and especially the leaders of the movement, to enlist in so many reform programs and to ask so much of the individual club and the individual club women for the prosecution of these many commitments. Kate Rotan’s speech at the first TFWC annual convention was suffused with the Politics of Righteousness, and its appeal was strong. In brief, she said to the assembled club women:

...we have had thrust upon us the duty and responsibility of conducting a great movement, ...we are the chosen exponents of a new idea in the development of the race...the altruism of today, which has happily succeeded the egotism of yesterday. 4

Almost twenty years later, Rotan remained secure in her convictions of the righteousness of the women’s club movement. When she addressed the Twentieth Anniversary TFWC meeting, she said:

The development of the woman’s club is the greatest of modern movement[s], greatest in promoting the growth of womanhood whence must come all wholesome progress and true ethical culture. 5

As a frame of reference, the Politics of Righteousness was based on the righteousness of the causes that club women supported and on the righteousness of the club women
themselves. Opponents could, and did, argue that kindergartens were expensive, that child labor was a family matter, that supervised playgrounds were extravagant, and so on. Club women, however, felt supremely assured of their work and their goals, for they were working to protect children, to educate future mothers and homemakers, to protect the public health, to make their cities wholesome and beautiful, and to enliven the frontier with good literature, good music, and good art. There was not always unanimity within the club movement about priorities, but club women did not doubt the righteousness of their work.

The Politics of Righteousness was also a product of the personnel of the club movement—the earnest, concerned women. When leading club woman Mary Y. Terrell wrote of the early years of the Texas club movement in 1903, she reflected:

Women of leisure have been drawn from the constant rounds of society to see the more serious side of life. Deeper earnestness has come to the individual worker, for contact has brought out the best, and a consciousness that the federation must stand for higher ideals in private and public life must be the work of the Master in uplifting the children of men.

When it came to "culture," to the protection of children and families or of the helpless, to the diffusion of educational opportunities, or to the many aspects of municipal housekeeping, club women were the self-acknowledged experts. Moreover, their commitment, if not
always their expertise, was often acknowledged by many others as well. School superintendents, public health officials, city councils, judges, and other reformers regularly appealed to the club women of Texas for support in their work.

Texas club women took this righteousness seriously. Righteous causes and righteous women must proceed in ways that betokened their righteousness. Thus, it was important that meetings, from the individual club to the annual TFWC convention, were conducted in a serious and business-like manner befitting the dignity of the club women and their movement. The significance of parliamentary procedure, as discussed in Chapter Three, was one way of demonstrating their serious intent. It was equally important that the TFWC be scrupulously fair and democratic as it conducted business. Several measures were taken to assure club women, and the interested public, that the TFWC would not fall prey to the machinations and power plays of partisan politics. For example, when officers were elected at the 1897 organizational meeting, the small assembly agreed that officers should come from different regions in the state and not be clustered in any one area. This procedure was repeated in 1899 and reported in a Galveston Daily News article:

... Many ladies of strong clubs waived nominations that would doubtless have given
them election, in order that the offices might be scattered, geographically speaking, or given to weaker clubs that they felt needed the educative results of responsibility. Similarly when TFWC President Mary Y. Terrell appointed standing committees in 1900, she distributed the appointments geographically so that each area of the state would have a representative in each area of Federation work.

Another effort to restrain "politicking" within the federation came in 1904 when the delegates at the TFWC meeting unanimously agreed that candidates for office could not announce their intentions more than two months before the election. Some clubs tried to elicit support for their candidate before the TFWC elections by requesting endorsements from other Texas clubs. Most clubs, however, maintained a policy of sending their delegates to the meetings "uninstructed." The nominations procedures were reiterated in 1916.

The vitality of the club movement, as much as its righteousness, depended upon an unwritten ethic of mutual respect among club women. Club women sought every opportunity to acknowledge each other's accomplishments. There were, among club women, some who were leaders and some who were followers, but the sisterhood of the club world tried to recognize the value of each member's contribution. A Dallas club woman of the Shakespeare
Followers wrote this about a 1908 meeting of her club:

All are "stars" and all shine while differing in glory. Not one woman present sat in a corner and looked small. 10

The woman's club world was, however, not perfection. From time to time, club women reminded each other that righteous behavior within the woman's club was essential for the happy and productive club and for the success of the club movement. Elizabeth Patterson Keist wrote an article in the May 1898 issue of The Club Monthly on "Club Ethics." After talking about deference, individual responsibility, and sympathy, she makes this statement: "The intrinsic worth of a woman is a standard a club should adopt." She went on to discuss the sins and virtues of club life, forsaking gossip and egotism and encouraging courtesy, charity, and unselfishness.11

Texas club women insisted on "pure politics" within the federation. Also, as if anticipating comments that would trivialize their work, club women were careful to present the proper face to the public. They viewed themselves as earnest and serious and wished to be perceived as such. The exuberance of Texas club women for their state federation sometimes became lavish hospitality on the part of the clubs hosting an annual meeting. In 1900 the TFWC delegates accepted the invitation of the Dallas Clubs to meet in that city the following year, but they also passed a resolution requesting their hostesses to
provide no more than one social function in honor of the TFWC. Club women did not want their activities confused with the ostentatious spectacles of "high society," even though—or perhaps because—Texas clubdom included many wealthy women. TFWC President Fall recommended simpler entertainments and simpler dresses for the State and District meetings of 1915, probably in recognition of the human suffering in Europe since the outbreak of World War I.  

In 1908 The Dallas Clubwoman delivered a sharp rebuke to a reporter who "had the bad taste" to write about Ella Dibrell’s clothes rather than the substance of her remarks when she spoke at the GFWC Biennial Convention. In the same article, "Echoes From the Biennial," this note was inserted:

Mrs. Ed Rotan [Kate], of Waco, urged that there be less display at weddings and that the extravagant gift evil be abated in some way.

When one recalls that Kate Rotan was quite wealthy, her remarks to the GFWC take on a special meaning. Extravagance was not in keeping with the modest, earnest, and serious demeanor of the day’s club woman, the woman with a mission to the world. Club women believed they were doing serious work and, hence, they wished to be taken seriously. One aspect of the Politics of Righteousness was the concern to maintain a righteous countenance.
In the early years of the TFWC, this righteous countenance meant that club women would work above the tawdry business of politics. By 1899 the club women had set the TFWC imprimatur on several legislative objectives such as a state library commission and an industrial school for white girls. After discussion at the 1899 TFWC meeting, the assembled women decided that the federation as an organization wished to eschew even the appearance of meddling in matters political, hence no legislative committee had been provided. Following out this policy, no "lobbying" would be permitted.... 16

But, of course, there were different kinds of "lobbying."
The TFWC may have, initially, avoided public lobbying at the State Capitol, but another kind of lobbying was a staple of TFWC political practice. As the article cited above continued

...when [it is] considered that the husbands, fathers, brothers, and sweethearts of club women were men of influence in affairs of State, it was conclusive that they were not without ways and means of influencing legislation, hence the custom was adopted that the president should issue circular letters to each club asking that in the home and social circles the influence of each member should be used, with voters who could directly influence legislation. Thus was created a great, silent force for the enactment of good laws. 17

The Politics of Righteousness was a mainstay for the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs. The federation, as the embodiment of the white women's club movement in Texas,
kindled the Politics of Righteousness in individual club women. The Politics of Righteousness was the twentieth century manifestation of the previous century's ideology of true womanhood. Mrs. Cone Johnson, TFWC President from 1905 to 1907 and after 1920 a leader in the state's Democratic Party, spoke of the club movement's vivifying influence upon its members:

We have aided tremendously in broadening and strengthening woman's rightful conception of her true mission and in giving her a clearer and broader outlook. 18

The Politics of Enthusiasm

The speeches of Texas club women, the reports printed in the TFWC Yearbooks, the committee and district reports made at annual meetings, the newspaper articles written by club women, the minutes of individual clubs, and the correspondence between club women were all suffused with remarkable enthusiasm. Texas club women were enthusiastic about their clubs, their federation, the national club movement, the opportunities for service, the accomplishments of the state and national federation, the accomplishments of individual club women, and the recognition that the club movement received for its efforts. The following report of the Mutual Improvement Club of Bryan, made in 1898, is typical:

This club has done good work in the past and is still full of zeal and earnestness. We love our circle and its work, and hope by our "good example," to influence many more to
enter and enjoy the beauties and pleasures of "clubdom." 19

The strength of the Texas club movement for its first twenty years and beyond lay largely in its ability to engender and maintain a high pitch of enthusiasm among club women. This enthusiasm was a product of the shared belief that the club movement was a truly righteous endeavor that would transform the state and even the nation. Texas club women constantly reminded themselves and others of their great mission, and they unabashedly congratulated themselves on their accomplishments. To believe that one is on the leading edge of social transformation is a special, intoxicating excitement. When Mrs. Mooar told her home club about the TFWC meeting in 1903, she said that she wished "for a thousand tongues...[that]...I might give you some idea of the great work and vast improvement done by the energetic women." Later in her report she commented,

...I might go on forever on the great work done by these noble women, and deep down in my heart I am thankful that I am an American woman, and more so that I am also a club woman, for I am simply dumb with admiration. 20

As Mrs. Mooar's testimony shows, the TFWC annual meetings were inspirational events, and the enthusiasm evident in the meetings was clearly infectious. One does not know the extent to which the enthusiastic, congratulatory, and inspiring ambience of the meetings was calculated or planned. Speakers surely did hope to inspire
club women when they told of accomplishments or when they presented an issue which they hoped the federation would embrace. But this enthusiasm, this conviction in the righteousness of club work and in the abilities of organized womanhood, was such a hallmark of every aspect of the white women's club movement that its sincerity is difficult to doubt. Enthusiasm begat enthusiasm. From a functionalist perspective, one of the significant contributions of the early twentieth century women's club movement was that it provided this celebratory space in which middle and upper class women could feel a distinct pride in their association and in their work.

The "Summary of Reports" from the 1903 TFWC meeting is an example of the congratulatory style that was an important part of the Politics of Enthusiasm. The opening and closing paragraphs follow:

The Convention of the Women's Federated Clubs of Texas at Fort Worth, in November, 1903, was in the nature of a triumph--not of oratory, but of deeds done. It was with pride that the reports of the various committees were listened to and applauded. No better illustration of what the Federation is doing for the state, no better evidence of what the individual club is doing for its Federation, no better application of our national motto, "Unity in Diversity," could have been presented. The long honor roll of the departments was responded to from every branch of progress and philanthropy by committees whose generous aims were well directed, work systematically and thoroughly done, efforts earnest and ideals high, which will serve as precedents for future time, showing that what
woman has done, woman can do....

Simple, true, direct were these reports of the far-reaching influences of our Federation. New fields are opened with a new year, and united effort, promptness, and enthusiasm are required to attain the good that is possible. 21

The perfection described in the "Summary's" preface was surely hyperbole, but it was also a reflection of how intensely gratified club women were by their accomplishments. It is unlikely, for example, that work was always "systematically and thoroughly done," but in whatever manner, work was done. The Library Committee presented the most impressive report: in six years time, Texas women's clubs had opened fifty-two local public libraries and thirty-seven traveling libraries.22 The "Summary" exuded enthusiasm and pride and ended with a straight-forward recognition that enthusiasm was an essential ingredient for continued success.

TFWC President Anna Hertzberg included a message to Texas club women in the 1911-12 Yearbook in which she praised the women for their splendid work:

It is evident that Club Women grow more and more, to regard seriously the deep sense of responsibility that confronts our Federation, and that they are keenly alive to the duty of assuming same, is apparent by the enthusiasm with which they are meeting the many vital problems presented, and toward the solution of which they are doing much. 23

Hertzberg's words were both descriptive and prescriptive. She recognized the enthusiasm and seriousness of club
women, and by doing so, she commended club women to sustain their enthusiasm for the work of the federation. The generous praise that club women lavished on one another had its roots in the "female world of love and ritual" that was discussed in relation to women's clubs in Chapter Three. But the women's club movement elevated the female discourse of praise, encouragement, and enthusiasm to a new level. Many club women were almost giddy with excitement about the women's club movement and their participation in it. In seeking to evoke the same enthusiasm in other club women, they not only sought to strengthen the movement, they also hoped to share their joy with their club sisters.

Club leaders, at all levels of the club movement in Texas, sought to inspire their followers with confidence for the many great advances they hoped to cooperatively achieve. As the work agenda of the TFWC became larger and larger, with each TFWC committee writing to individual clubs to encourage work on a particular project, Texas club women sometimes felt overwhelmed with the responsibilities of clubdom. Clubs regularly received these hearty invitations to become involved in one line of work or another. At times like these, leaders counseled club women to take heart. At the 1906 TFWC meeting, which was held in El Paso, GFWC President Sarah Platt Decker spoke on two occasions. On the first evening of the convention she gave a rousing address that she concluded in this way:
At the dedication of the battlefield of Vicksburg, the governor of Massachusetts closed his address with these words: "Massachusetts and Mississippi, right about face, shoulder to shoulder, forward march!" In those words let me say to you all, men and women, right about face, shoulder to shoulder, forward march, not for El Paso, not for Texas, but, keeping step with the Federation, forward march for the good of womankind, for the good of the nation, for the good of the family, for the good of the home, for the decent, steady uplift of a great nation. 24

On the last day of the meeting, she gave a brief address in which she tempered the martial charge of her first speech.

She said:

To my mind the definition of a clubwoman is cheerfulness and steadfastness. Do not get discouraged. I know that it seems to many of you that a great many things have been determined on in this meeting and that the State Federation has set out to do a great many things. We don't want you to try and do all of these things. The object is to get some of the clubs to take up each one of these things. Each club cannot take up all of them, they cannot do it all, but some club will have a special interest in each of the things which has been suggested....And to you Texas women, what I have to say is this: Never frown, never sigh, keep step. 25

The annual TFWC meetings were inspiring in other ways. There were always prominent state or national speakers who addressed the club women on one issue or another and who never failed to appreciate the assistance of club women or to request the assistance of such a talented and earnest group of women. Club women often spoke of the edifying affect of music, and every convention included evenings of
musical entertainment or interludes of musical entertainment between work sessions. There were also rituals that evoked the passions of club women for the TFWC: the passing of the gavel, specially made and presented to TFWC President Rotan at the 1898 meeting by the women of the Quid Nunc Club of Tyler, from the retiring president to the newly elected president; the President's evening, the first evening during a convention, which featured addresses by present and past presidents; the tradition, established in 1915, to adjourn the convention with the hymn "Blest Be the Tie That Binds."26

Just as the Politics of Enthusiasm created loyalty among club women for the state and national federation, the enthusiasm of club women was felt in their home communities. Writing about the Dallas City Federation of Women's Clubs from the vantage point of the mid-1920s, a member wrote:

No group of intellectual women who have as their aim self-development along any chosen lines can fail to give out enthusiasm to their friends, thus causing them in turn to become interested in some form of culture. Doubtless it was just such inspiration which has caused Dallas to become the club center that it is. Women need something outside of the deadly monotony of the household duties in which to become interested; something to take home with them, something to pass on. 27

The enthusiasm club women had for their work outside of self-culture also enhanced their effectiveness in their home communities. Club women believed that educating, or
inspiring, the public about the need for a particular action or reform was the first and most important ingredient in successful social change. Olga Kohlberg, one of the leaders of the very active Woman's Club of El Paso, said in 1913:

The distinctive work of women's clubs lies in giving inspiration and enlightenment to those in a community that are organized for special work; civic, humanitarian, or whatever the branch. The club itself is not a relief organization, but its mission is to set up standards, spread information, and if possible, produce leaders. 28

One important cornerstone of the Politics of Enthusiasm was the pride that club women felt in their accomplishments. For most Texas club women, their work in clubs was their first activity outside of homemaking, caring for their families, and church work. It was surely their first activity in the public sphere whether their work was the supervision of a travelling library, the organization of a city clean-up campaign, or fund-raising to provide hygienic drinking fountains at the local schools. It is a small wonder, then, that club women were enthusiastic, for they had discovered new talents and abilities and new possibilities for service, accomplishment, and recognition.

The Politics of Harmony

Texas club women valued harmony and believed that it
was a true sign of a vibrant association and of a womanly sisterhood. To describe a club meeting or a TFWC convention as harmonious was high praise. When Kate Friend reported on the 1907 TFWC meeting, she wrote approvingly that "there was perfect harmony...the prevalent cordiality even to the election hour made harmony and good will the pass word."\textsuperscript{29} The harmony that Texas club women valued and strove for was, in part, a product of their appreciation for the importance of associationism. Mrs. Charles T. Bonner, cited above, spoke for many club women when she said in 1898,

Association is a prime factor in modern civilization...It is the clasp connecting ideas and linking them into chains of practical thought. Individual effort were vain indeed without association, and association is greatly handicapped without thorough organization. \textsuperscript{30}

The strength gained through association depended upon a shared vision regarding the purpose of association. And yet the TFWC and the GFWC recognized that there would be differences regarding particular goals and particular methods. Unity, if not unanimity, was essential to the TFWC and the GFWC, but both groups also hoped to allow for differences in opinion. This was demonstrated clearly in their respective mottoes: for the TFWC, "In small things liberty, in large things unity, in all things charity"; for the GFWC, "Unity in Diversity."\textsuperscript{31}

Minnesota club woman Mrs. J. L. Washburn addressed the
GFWC Biennial Convention in the early 1900s on the "sources of strength" of the women's club movement. One important source of strength was the "nature of the work attempted" by club women. At that time, the federation's work was encompassed by committees on Education, Art, Literature, Library Extension, Household Economics, Civics, Civil Service Reform, Forestry, Industrial and Child Labor, Legislative, and Pure Food. Washburn contended that all "enlightened, conscientious, public-spirited people" agreed on the importance of the issues identified by these committees. With astounding confidence she even proposed that of the subjects covered by these committees there were not "two legitimate sides" espoused by equally "thoughtful, conscientious, disinterested people." When "honest differences existed, there were differences regarding methods of achieving reform rather than differences regarding ultimate goals. If differences about reform goals did exist, opposition remained mute in deference to a greater harmony and purpose.

In fact, both the GFWC and the TFWC were careful not to risk schism by introducing issues that would be too controversial and by insisting from the first that the organizations be both non-sectarian and non-partisan. There was general accord regarding the promotion of libraries, the importance of art and literature, and the
need for pure food laws and civil service reform, for example. There was not, however, anything close to agreement on two of the most prominent issues of the day: temperance and woman suffrage. The TFWC never included either temperance or suffrage among its departments of work, although it eventually endorsed woman suffrage in 1915 and national prohibition in 1917.33 The much proclaimed harmony in the TFWC was in large part due to the careful avoidance of potentially divisive issues.

When there were differences, Texas club women exhorted one another to tolerance, charity, and open-mindedness. For example, when Adella Turner, long-standing president of the Dallas Woman’s Forum, addressed the group in 1915, she said:

We have determined this year to hold to the common ground upon which we can all work harmoniously, ignoring any minor differences that might arise. There is no surer proof of woman’s higher development than the fact that she can preserve a sweet spirit when her opinions are not received with favor, for is not that an evidence of the great love for which we are striving? To work together successfully we must have something of the divine element. We have to open our minds to all phases, to try to see the good and avoid the evil in every moment of the day...Then let us strive always to act nobly, in the spirit of universal justice and love. 34

Similarly, Ella Dibrell counseled Texas club women to "be broad enough to labor for a purpose with those who differ with us, and whom we do not lovingly regard." She went on to say:
Let us resolve to put aside personalities and live above the petty things of life, laboring for the benefit of our own communities and the world at large. This will be living up to the standard of the true club spirit and our Federation will...be a power which will grow and live in the land through the ages. 35

When differences threatened to disrupt harmony, a shared respect for federation goals and a mutual respect or esprit de corps among club women usually served to smooth the waters. In this, the Politics of Harmony drew upon not only the social mores of the South, which emphasized courtesy, but also upon the gender-sympathy that was inherited from the nineteenth century and fostered in the club movement. As Charlotte Perkins Gilman said in 1896, "Club women learn more than to improve the mind; they learn to love each other." 36

The esprit de corps, the enthusiasm, and the "female world of love and ritual" were sources of the Politics of Harmony even as they reinforced the Politics of Harmony. The anonymous writer, but probably a club woman, who reported on the 1901 TFWC meeting for The Dallas Morning News included a paragraph in her article which exemplified this spirit:

Not the least of the advantages of the club movement in our State is its tendency to strengthen and cement friendships among women. It has lifted the ordinary woman from the plane of the commonplace and brought her in touch with new sympathies and higher ideals. Individual effort appears paltry and ineffective; she finds herself in a body of
earnest women, joins her effort to theirs and begins to realize that she is a helpful factor in the working out of new ideas and needed reforms. It is in this mutual interchange of mistakes and successes that lasting friendships are formed which often become an impetus to higher and better living. 37

Club women believed that harmony was essential for the effectiveness of the club movement in Texas. Schism and discord would weaken the "ties that bind" and dilute enthusiasm. The Woman's Club of El Paso, involved in civic politics in the early years of the new century, decided in 1908 to add this clause to their by laws: "For the sake of harmony and unhampered service, the Woman's Club shall not enter into political discussions or affiliations." 38 After the state legislature granted Texas women partial suffrage in 1918, the El Paso club reaffirmed its commitment to avoid politics, especially partisan politics. 39

When differences of opinion arose, parliamentary procedure saved the day to offer a hearing to dissent in an orderly fashion. In this way, acrimony could be muffled and propriety maintained without squelching disagreement. On the other hand, parliamentary procedure could be used to quash dissent. Two examples from the 1901 TFWC meeting illustrate the uses of parliamentary procedure. A TFWC delegate made a motion to petition the state legislature regarding the destruction of Texas forests. Much discussion followed on the merits of the motion. One club woman who was recognized to speak expressed the opinion
that the federation was becoming involved in too many different issues; it should concentrate on one thing at a time. After a period of discussion, the motion was withdrawn. Later, Mrs. J.C. Roberts, a Dallas club woman, raised the issue of child labor and recommended that the federation should be concerned with this problem. Mrs. Roberts was summarily ruled out of order, thus ending the discussion for the time being.40

The Politics of Harmony had its application outside the club world as well. When pursuing a legislative objective, a change in public school policy, or a change in municipal procedures, Texas club women were rarely confrontational. They assumed a cooperative stance with those in authority, at whatever level. When a club determined that public schools needed domestic science laboratories or drinking fountains, the first step was always to consult with the school superintendent. Because, initially, the club women planned to make certain provisions themselves, school officials had little reason to be uncooperative. When club women desired a city clean-up campaign, their willingness to do, or pay to have done, a good part of the work went a long way toward gaining mayoral or council support. At the municipal level, club women found that it suited them to be agreeable, as far as possible. It served city authorities to be agreeable
because they recognized that club women could often be counted on to provide assistance in other areas.

There were advantages to this genteel politicking on the municipal level. City authorities were allowed to expand city services gradually. On the other hand, these tactics made for slow and often uneven progress. Dallas club women found city and school officials less than helpful on several occasions. The obstructions of city officials reinforced the club women's opinion that they were more concerned with civic improvement than the elected officials. But the Dallas clubs began their work with confidence and optimism. When Adella Turner addressed the newly organized Dallas Woman's Forum in 1907, she said:

In organizing the Forum, we have declared to Dallas that we would take our place with her best workers, to cooperate and never to conflict with the best and highest efforts of her churches, her schools, her legislators, and in everything that stands for right. Men's eyes will be on us, and if we do our duty their hearts will be with us. To work in harmony does not mean to compromise with anything little, mean or wrong, with any violation of trust; our work is not to compromise, but to harmonize.

At the state level, the Politics of Harmony were in evidence when the TFWC cooperated with other progressive organizations by sharing personnel and endorsing objectives. It was important to Texas club women, tactically and in terms of their self-perceptions, to be allied with groups or movements that shared goals similar
to those of the TFWC. As genteel women, or as women aspiring to a higher level of gentility, Texas club women preferred to pursue their desired reforms in ladylike, cooperative ways. When they were successful, it was often because the Politics of Harmony was buttressed by the Politics of Influence.

The Politics of Influence

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Texas club women were unable to determine public policy directly by voting and only rarely by holding public office. Whenever possible, club women effected changes by providing a service or the means for a service themselves. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, on the municipal level club women took matters into their own hands and provided the wherewithal for a kindergarten, a rest room for country women, or a public park. While this form of philanthropy could sometimes induce public policy changes in towns or cities, it could not always do so and it was powerless at the state level. Legislation or municipal ordinances were often required for the reforms that Texas club women sought. In order to achieve favorable legislation, club women depended upon the Politics of Influence.

In the speeches, committee reports, published articles, and club minutes, there is no one word more frequently used, excepting perhaps "earnest" or
"earnestness," than the word "influence." When Texas club women decided to "use all possible influence" in regard to a certain issue, project, or piece of legislation, they referred to several different types of activities: speaking or writing persuasively to legislators or other elected officials; speaking persuasively to friends or relatives; educating public opinion through public lectures, educational literature, or newspaper articles and editorials; and direct "lobbying" with legislators at the State Capitol.

In the early years of the federation, when Texas club women agreed to "eschew even the appearance of meddling in matters political" the TFWC established a procedure for "using influence" that remained an important political practice throughout the period under study. Club women were directed to speak with those friends or relatives who could affect legislation directly. For example, in 1901, the TFWC decided to use its influence toward the establishment of a women's dormitory at the University of Texas. Thus,

The president suggested that every clubwoman should interest her husband, brother, or gentleman friend who had a vote in this matter, so as to bring it prominently before the members of the Legislature. 43

At the same meeting, Professor J.S. Kendall, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, addressed the club women about their important role in the enhancement of the
public schools. He also told them that their influence had been felt in the last legislature regarding the establishment of the industrial school for women, the College of Industrial Arts.\textsuperscript{44} The next year, 1902, the TFWC passed a resolution to "heartily thank" the legislators of the Twenty-Ninth Legislature and Governor Joseph D. Sayers for their action in favor of the school and for appointing three women, all club women, to the school's board of regents. The resolution also included the TFWC's pledge to support the school by keeping the need for "ample appropriations" before the state legislature.\textsuperscript{45}

When Texas club women resolved to work for particular legislation, the TFWC president or the head of the relevant committee sent letters to all federated women's clubs in the state urging the clubs to "use all the influence possible" for the bill's passage. In 1902 the Austin American History Club decided to have each member ask three men to vote for the constitutional amendment (the poll tax amendment) that would increase school taxes. In January 1907 the Waco Woman's Club received a TFWC letter regarding the pending Blanton Pure Food Bill. The club decided to draft and sign a petition in favor of the bill and send it to the members of the McLennan County delegation of state representatives. In these ways, club women attempted, sometimes successfully, to influence the
passage of state legislation. 46

A number of club women did know or were related to members of the Texas legislature, but as the federation grew this group became a smaller minority. To be effective, club women had to reach a greater number of people. Marlene Wortman discussed the use of influence by women reformers at the municipal level. In her important article, she wrote:

The methods of female reformers were adaptations of the techniques used by mothers to manipulate the behavior of family members. The true woman commanded authority through her spiritual power, not her economic, physical, or political power. She gained her way through personal persuasion by stimulating in others feelings of guilt or gallantry. Female reformers used the expose and social survey in the same way. These approaches orchestrated statistics and well-selected human interest stories to arouse moral indignation and outrage among those in tune with the values of the cult of true womanhood and domesticity. The surveys focused not on political dishonesty, but on the corruption of women, children, and the family order. Thus, women sought to bypass partisan politics by working directly on the public conscience. 47

Club women believed that the public conscience was most effectively aroused through education. As mentioned so often in previous chapters, education was the starting point for club women in almost all of their endeavors. If the Texas public had the "facts" regarding a certain injustice or a certain needed institution, the public would share the club women's perspective on needed reforms. For club women, ignorance, as often as greed, was the root of
all evil, and they determined to be influential by replacing ignorance with enlightenment.

Club women began by educating themselves. A significant portion of the annual TFWC meetings was devoted to lectures by noted experts, leaders of state or national reform movements, and by club women--from Texas or other states--who had studied a particular issue or social problem. The same pattern was repeated at the district meeting level and the city federation level, and representative TFWC committees encouraged individual clubs to become informed on special issues. Sometimes the initiative to learn about a certain social problem came from the federation, and sometimes other reform organizations would request a hearing at an annual meeting in order to enlist the interest and support of Texas club women.48

Once an issue had become a priority for the federation, club women were expected to become knowledgeable on the issue. For example, when the federation became interested in the legal status of women in Texas, the delegates at the 1907 annual meeting passed a resolution that clubs should study the issue, preferably by devoting one day's program to the topic. In 1914, Estelle Sharp--head of the Social Services Committee--asked clubs to set aside one month "for the study of social conditions--
-good or bad--with the distinct purpose of making this state as nearly perfect as possible as soon as possible."
Most reform-oriented study suggestions were more specific. After Governor James Ferguson and the state legislature established a special rural school fund in 1916, club women were encouraged to make a study of the school laws of Texas and to survey the rural schools in their own counties.⁴⁹

This self-education was essential if women were to present a persuasive case for change to the authorities. Once club women were educated on an issue and committed to the need for a particular law, they began the process of "educating public opinion" or "arousing public sentiment" in the direction of the desired change. This was one of the most important and most effective aspects of the Politics of Influence: influencing public opinion. The "education of public opinion" was perhaps the most characteristic political tactic of white American club women. It was a political tactic particularly suited to club women, and its potential effectiveness reinforced the club movement's commitment to seek change through organized womanhood. In 1905 a New Jersey club woman wrote in Harper's Bazar about the GFWC:

With a membership of over half a million women its influence is very far-reaching and its possibilities for moulding public sentiment almost unlimited. An enlightened public sentiment is the most powerful factor in bringing about any desired condition; even the political machine has to give way when public
sentiment is fairly aroused. Individually, one can do little, but an organization of several hundred thousand earnest, intelligent women can do much. 50

As Mary Wood said in the conclusion of her 1912 history of the GFWC, "One great purpose of the General Federation of Women's Clubs is education, the education of themselves first and the education of public opinion immediately after.51

The Texas federation worked to educate public opinion in the same way as other state federations. In her study of state federations in the southeastern states, Margaret Nell Price reached this conclusion, which applies to the Texas federation as well:

The federations are powerful agencies in educating public opinion and creating sentiment for measures, for by their organizational hierarchy they reach many women and can dramatize and publicize the needs of a state. Through the legislative chairmen, club interests are represented to governing bodies, and the federations act as pressure groups. Through the widespread organization, women become informed about new needs and talk them over with families and friends, thus helping to spread the information. 52

Texas club women often characterized their political strategy with this motto: "Educate, agitate, then legislate." They believed that aroused public sentiment could be stronger than the law, and was, in any case, the prerequisite to gaining new legislation. They educated and agitated in several ways. Chapter Five included examples of how this political formula worked. Once a legislative
goal was set, TFWC committees instructed women's clubs to begin the process of educating and arousing public opinion by sponsoring public lectures, suggesting sermon topics to local ministers, and writing articles or editorials in local newspapers.\textsuperscript{53}

Texas club women sought cordial relations with and the aid of Texas newspapers from an early date. In 1898 the TFWC agreed that news of the federation would reach a wider audience through the state's daily newspapers than through a TFWC publication. At that time, a club editor was appointed to collect news of Texas clubdom and send it to leading newspapers in the state. In 1900 each woman's club was encouraged to create a committee that would regularly send word of their work and accomplishments to the local newspaper. By 1904 the \textit{Dallas Morning News}, the \textit{Waco Times Herald}, and the \textit{San Antonio Express} had special columns for news of local clubs and of the state and district federations. The TFWC selected \textit{The Club Woman's Argosy} of Dallas as its official publication in 1909, but the use of leading dailies continued. In fact, the \textit{Dallas Morning News} and the \textit{Waco Times Herald} were referred to as "official organs" of the TFWC.\textsuperscript{54}

The prominence of the \textit{Dallas News} and the \textit{Waco Herald} was due to the influence of two leading club women: Isadore Callaway writing as Pauline Periwinkle for the Dallas paper
and Kate Friend who wrote for the Waco Paper. Both women wrote regular columns of club news and used their columns to arouse public sentiment on select federation issues. The two women had very different styles. Callaway was strident and acerbic in her writing. She wrote of the work and accomplishments of Texas clubdom, but her greater contribution was in highlighting particular social evils and advocating particular reforms. Friend was more the gentlewoman in her approach. She emphasized the accomplishments of the Texas club movement and waxed eloquent on the virtues of women's clubs and the TFWC. Ella Dibrell praised Friend for her work in a personal letter in 1909:

You have done more to advance club work through your newspaper columns than any one in the state, not excepting Pauline Periwinkle. She reaches the masses on vital subjects in a strong way, we must all admit. But you have given them the actual words, injected into the club body the spirit of progress and consolidated the scattered work of the individual clubs by bringing out the great strength of unity and the progress of the Federation. 55

When Anna Hertzberg was TFWC president, 1911-1913, she began a practice of writing weekly letters to Texas club women which were published in leading papers around the state. This practice was continued by her successor Mrs. Henry B. Fall. Fall's weekly letters were printed in nineteen different newspapers. In the meantime, the TFWC--through its presidents and heads of various committees--
encouraged individual women’s clubs to get space in their home town papers for weekly club news, and club women were encouraged to write special articles on timely subjects. Thus, Texas club women sought to influence the citizens of Texas.56

Texas club women first renounced "lobbying" in 1899. As late as 1913 and after the TFWC had endorsed numerous legislative proposals and had claimed a share of the credit in the passage of several new laws, Ella Dibrell, as chair of the Legislative Committee, still maintained that club women were working with state legislators in "womanly ways" and not as "female lobbyists." Despite the Texas club women’s disavowal of lobbying, there were others who thought that was exactly what the Texas club women were doing. In fact, the TFWC was identified as one of the groups that warranted a 1907 antilobbying law. Club women clearly sought to influence state legislators. What they wished to avoid was the appearance of self-interest which they associated with "lobbyists" and "lobbying." "Lobbying" was also too frank a term for this group of genteel, southern women who ventured into the male world of politics from the exalted sphere of the Politics of Righteousness. Moreover, southern women who departed from ladylike behavior risked ridicule and political ineffectiveness, from their more conservative club sisters
as well as from the public in general.\textsuperscript{57} Other federations did not feel similarly constrained. For example, in 1914 the Minnesota Federation of Women’s Clubs announced its intention to place a paid lobbyist at the state capitol.\textsuperscript{58}

The GFWC had overcome any squeamishness about lobbying, the practice or the term, at a much earlier date. GFWC representatives were lobbying in Washington, D.C. as early as 1905, and lobbying techniques were discussed at GFWC biennial conventions. In 1900 the GFWC recommended that state federations and large women’s clubs create Legislative Committee’s to keep clubs informed of pertinent pending legislation at the city, state, or national level.\textsuperscript{59} The TFWC created its Legislative Committee, initially called the Outlook Committee, in 1906. Its charge was to “investigate and determine exactly what legislation shall be supported and what opposed by the Federation at the coming session of the legislature.” The Committee’s first report in 1907 recommended that the federation support the Blanton Pure Food Bill and that the federation begin a study of married women’s property rights under Texas law.\textsuperscript{60}

As the function of the Legislative Committee evolved, it not only identified legislation to support, it also became the liason between the TFWC and the state legislature regarding the TFWC’s desired legislative objectives. When, at an annual meeting, the TFWC decided
upon the need for particular legislation—and it was a matter of TFWC policy to focus on one (at most two) legislative objective at a time—the Legislative Committee along with the heads of committees encouraging related legislation would convey the federation’s interests to key figures in the Texas Legislature.61

Ella Dibrell’s report of the Legislative Committee’s work for the 1913 Married Woman’s Property Act provides a good description of how the committee worked. The TFWC had been concerned about the legal rights of women in Texas since 1905. Texas club women were concerned about working conditions for women wage earners, wife desertion, support for female headed families of convicted felons, and the property rights of married women. Texas club women had been urged to study the laws regarding the legal status of women in Texas for several years. They even had special texts to study: The Legal Status of Woman in Texas by Lawrence W. Neff with an introduction by Joseph B. Dibrell and a pamphlet written by Hortense Ward, the first woman in Texas to pass the Texas Bar Association exam. Eleanor Brackenridge purchased a large quantity of the Neff books for distribution to women’s clubs and other interested groups, and Ward’s publication was handed out at the 1912 TFWC convention.62

In 1911 the Legislative Committee determined that it
was time to focus their efforts on achieving a married women's property law. The Thirty-second legislature revised the existing statute in 1911, but the new law applied only to women who owned businesses and was more of a "creditor's rights" law than a reform of Texas family law. In 1912 the TFWC made a married woman's property law a special legislative goal. Club women were urged to support the work of the Legislative Committee and the Committee on Laws Regarding Women and Children by informing state legislators of their views.

According to Dibrell, the Legislative Committee met with members of the state legislature before the 1913 legislative session was convened and "formulated a bill" to be sponsored in both the House and the Senate. Dibrell explained:

Realizing that men tire of being constantly besieged by any one body upon any and all subjects, your Committee worked diligently for this measure, but in a dignified and womanly way, refusing to become female lobbyists.

Thus, the committee "conferred" with the legislators. Several bills were presented in 1913 and referred to the Judiciary Committee. The TFWC Legislative Committee met with the Judiciary Committee and "plainly stated" their expectations. Before the bill reached the House and Senate floor, revisions were made and substitute bills were proposed. Dibrell reiterated the Legislative Committee's
activity and restraint:

Every effort was made by us and our friends to secure a perfected bill. As previously stated, your club representatives did not invade the legislative halls as lobbyists. Your President was active in sending messages to the clubs and members of the Legislature. We kept our fingers on the pulse of this legislative body, and relied upon our able advocates. 66

A Married Women's Property Act was enacted by the Thirty-third Legislature, but Governor O. B. Colquitt disapproved of several sections of the bill. Dibrell's husband, a state senator and an "ardent advocate of women's rights," and other legislators met with the governor and agreed to his demands to temper the bill. It was, in the words of legal historian Kathleen E. Lazarou who has studied the evolution of married women's property rights in Texas from 1840 to 1913, "a solid reform in the law of married women" that "introduced a new phase in the development of Texas family law." It was also, however, a "halfway solution" because it still required a husband's consent for the transfer of real estate, stocks, and bonds.67 Dibrell, speaking for the Legislative Committee, acknowledged that "our dream of perfection was not realized," but since the bill was a distinct improvement she saw reason for pride in the accomplishment. In her words,

...we can feel we have successfully educated and influenced the people to the demands which have resulted in the passage of the Property
Rights of Married Women’s Bill. 68

We only have Ella Dibrell’s testimony about the role of the TFWC Legislative Committee in the drafting and passage of the 1913 legislation. Lazarou found "no discernible origins" for either the 1911 reform or the 1913 law. Her work is a study of the formal law and, as such, does not explore the social history that accompanied the legislative changes she documents. It is exceedingly difficult to chart the relationship between formal law and social history. Lazarou does say, however, that the "force of the women’s rights movement undoubtedly provided impetus for the creation of the 1913 measure."69 While most Texas club women would not have identified themselves as the "women’s rights movement" in the state, they were—in 1913—the largest body of "organized womanhood" in Texas. In addition to size, Texas club women included among their number several very influential women and women married to very influential men. By 1913 they had gained considerable respect for their accomplishments and their "womanly ways." It is, therefore, entirely plausible that the TFWC and its Politics of Influence was significant, and perhaps instrumental, in the passage of the 1913 Married Woman’s Property Act.

There was another aspect to the Politics of Influence that Texas club women pursued: they wanted women appointed to the executive boards of all state institutions that
dealt with women and children. An early success in this goal was the appointment of three club women to the Board of Regents of the College of Industrial Rights. Other successes included the election of two Dallas club women to the city's school board and the appointment of two women to the board of the Gainesville State Training School for Girls. Like nineteenth century feminists who argued that woman's innate capacities for nurture would make them excellent physicians, club women believed that the superior female sensibilities—especially where children and other women were concerned—made women the logical candidates for the executive boards of eleemosynary institutions. When women were appointed to these boards, they would exert their sublime womanly influence for the enlightened care and treatment that the inmates of these institutions deserved. Where school boards were concerned, the superior concern that women had for their children, not to mention their practical experience with children, would promote quality public education. When women held influential positions, the future of civilization would be that much better secured. At the 1898 TFWC meeting, Mrs. George K. Meyer, TFWC Recording Secretary and Dallas club woman, responded to a toast to the TFWC made by Judge John M. Duncan. She said:

Who shall educate the children? Turn each infant prodigy towards that great white
house which every mother feels was built for her infant son. Who care for the weak, lift up the fallen, encourage the needy, build monuments and libraries, oil the domestic machine, smile serenely on the free born American citizen who can elect her husband to congress, sit on boards—missionary boards and charity boards and club boards—hard ones, all of them; develop her feeble intellect by a judicious mixture of literature, science, and art, all the ologies and isms, past and present and to come, who I say could do this but woman. 72

Texas club women drew upon the Politics of Righteousness, Enthusiasm, Harmony, and Influence as they sought to redeem the prospects for the twentieth century world. The Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs was a major vehicle for the entrance of Texas women into the public sphere. In becoming political, Texas club women were concerned that their strategies, as well as their goals, reflected their womanliness. These ways of being political, of seeking substantive change, were not unique to women; but they did express how club women felt about their movement, how club women believed that reform should be sought, and how club women perceived their options as southern women and as political activists. The editor of The Club Monthly anticipated the political activism of Texas club women in 1898 when she offered this hope and admonition:

While women are banding themselves together, ...they are rapidly, perhaps unconsciously, marshalling a young army of politicians, young in political tactics, but very precocious. Ambition is not the proclivity of man alone;
modest femininity is just as desirous of the "high seats in the synagogues," as is bold masculinity. All the tricks of smiling, hand-shaking, palaver, scheming, wire pulling and slating are evident, heightened by feminine suavity and blandishments. As yet woman's ambition has not the dual incentive as that of man's--glory glittering with spoils; glory alone gratifies her aspirations, as a rule.

May women never, as men sometimes do, let their eagerness for power or prestige lead them from the path of honor and strict honesty; but may they sedulously adhere to high womanliness and a true regard for the rights of others. 73
Endnotes for Chapter Six

1In her 1945 master's thesis on white women's voluntary associations in the southeastern United States, Margaret Nell Price listed four techniques that state federations of women's clubs used in their reform activities: 1. "Direct action and projects apart from legislation," e.g. scholarship loan funds, travelling libraries, education and safety surveys, conservation projects, and music and literary projects. 2. "Direct action in regard to legislation," e.g. prepare, introduce, and lobby for particular legislation. 3. "Cooperation with other agencies in regard to legislation," e.g. cooperation with groups for legislation regarding public education, public welfare, health, conservation, etc. 4. "Influencing public opinion to demand legislation, reforms, and action." The TFWC was like the federation's in Price's study in that it, too, used all four "techniques" for achieving certain goals. Margaret Nell Price, "The Development of Leadership by Southern Women Through Clubs and Organizations," M.A. Thesis University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill 1945, pp. 152-55.


3Mrs. Henry B. Fall, "From the State President," TFWC Yearbook, 1913-1914, p. 17.

4Mrs. Edward R. Rotan, "President's Address," The Club Monthly, 1, No. 8 (May 1898), 5.

5Kate S.M. Rotan, "Mrs. Rotan's Address at Twentieth Anniversary," in History of the TFWC, 1917-1931 by Decca Lamar West, TS, p. 26, TFWC Headquarters, Austin, Texas


7Unattributed article in the Galveston Daily News, 28 April 1899 cited by Stella Christian, The History of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs (Houston: Dealy-Adey-Elgin, 1919), p. 41. Mrs. J. C. Terrell made a similar observation about the 1897 meeting: "The wise selection of leaders and the impartial distribution of offices among clubs of various sections gave at once that prestige which attracted Texas women of heart, brain and social position." Terrell, "Succinct History."

Christian, pp. 122, 349. One example of politicking within the federation is found in the minutes of the Ariel Club of Denton. At the club's 4 Oct. 1909 meeting, the corresponding secretary read a letter received from Mrs. S.J. Wright of Paris, Texas announcing her candidacy for TFWC candidate. Mrs. Wright was within the bounds of the 1904 rule regarding intention to run for office. Mrs. Wright was elected president at the November 1909 TFWC meeting. Ariel Club Minutes, 4 Oct. 1909, MS, Ariel Club Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas. The Woman's Club of Waco provides an example of the frequent response to candidates requests for support. Prior to the 1904 meeting, the club minutes recorded that the delegate to the TFWC convention would "go uninstructed and vote according to her discretion." Woman's Club of Waco Minutes, 8 Nov. 1904, The Woman's Club of Waco Papers, MS, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

Meetings of Dallas Clubwomen; The Club Reports Show Very Interesting Programs by Several of the Wide-a-Wake Women's Clubs," The Dallas Clubwoman, 14 November 1908, p. 7.

Elizabeth Patterson Kiest, "Club Ethics," The Club Monthly, 1, No. 8 (May 1898), 35-37.

Christian, pp. 61, 320. Here are two other indications of the emphasis of white club women on earnestness or highmindedness. When Anna Pennybacker spoke at the 1901 TFWC meeting, the meeting which concluded with her election as TFWC president, she included this digression in her remarks: "Our social life if 'out of tune;' we are growing to be one-sided. The afternoon reception, the morning and afternoon card parties and ladies' luncheons monopolize the greater part of society...The club woman's home should represent the best social ideals: It should be a rallying point for the highest thought in the town. Her friends should meet without formality to hear a new book discussed, a new scientific theory unfolded, an invention explained, the gossip of people of affairs given, the best music enjoyed, a work of philanthropy started. Think what a power for good such a home would be! What an educational center!" Anna Pennybacker cited in "They Vote Today," Dallas Morning News, 3 May 1901.

In a "History of the Club Movement" which accompanied the GFWC press release, of 1911, regarding the crusade for the GFWC endowment fund, the author—whose name was not
given—contrasted leisure class women who were excessive in "personal adornment" or the "beautification of their homes" with the "earnest" women of leisure who became club women and who were aware of the responsibilities that attended their class privileges. "History of the Club Movement," GFWC Press Release, comp. by Mrs. Philip N. Noore and Mrs. Percy V. Pennybacker, 1911, TS, Mrs. Percy V. Pennybacker Papers, Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas.

13 "Echoes From the Biennial," The Dallas Clubwoman, 1, No. 2 (19 July 1908), p. 6.

14 "Echoes From the Biennial."

A literary example of one club woman's near obsession with a righteous and earnest countenance is found in Robert Grant's Unleavened Bread (1900; rpt. Ridgewood, N.J.: Gregg Press, 1968).

15 Terrell, "Succinct History."

16 Terrell, "Succinct History."

Mrs. Cone Johnson, annual address, 19 Nov. 1907, as cited by Christian, p. 140. Mrs. Johnson, of Tyler, was a member of the Quid Nunc Club, one of the oldest in the state. In addition to her term as TFWC president, she served on the TFWC Executive Board in 1907-08. She was also quite active in Democratic Party politics. In 1916 she was appointed vice president of the Woman's National Wilson and Marshall Democratic League. In 1920 she was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention and was elected as the state's national Democratic committee woman. Also in 1920 she was co-director of the State Women for Neff organization regarding the 1920 gubernatorial election. Her husband, Cone Johnson, was also in politics and ran for governor in 1910. Re Mr. Johnson, see note number 33. Information regarding Mrs. Johnson is taken from Quid Nunc Club of Tyler, Yearbook, 1904-05, Smith County Historical Society, Tyler Texas; Emma L. M. Jackson, "Petticoat Politics: Political Activism Among Texas Women in the 1920's," Diss. University of Texas at Austin 1980, pp. 26, 34, 39; and Christian, p. 196.


19 Margaret A. Mooar, "Report of Federation Meeting at Fort Worth," MS, Mrs. John W. Mooar Papers, Southwest
Collection, Texas Technological University, Lubbock, Texas.


23 Anna Hertzberg, "From the State President," TFWC Yearbook, 1911-1912, p. 11.


26 Regarding the gavel see Christian, p. 27 and Fannie C. Potter, History of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs, 1918-1938 (Denton: TFWC, 1941), pp. 37-8. The President's Evening was first noted as such at the 1900 meeting and this practice continued through the first twenty years; see Christian, p. 49. "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" was first sung as the TFWC adjourned in 1915 in memory of the recently deceased Sarah Platt Decker; see Christian, p. 329.

27 Mabel Cranfill, "Reading Circle, Formed in 1880, Beginnings of Club Life Here," unattributed newspaper clipping, n.d., n.p., Miller Scrapbook, vol. IV, Texas and Dallas History Collection, Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas. Judging from the period of time that this particular volume of the Miller Scrapbook covers, this article was written after the time period explored in this dissertation; I estimated the article at circa 1925.


30 Bonner, p. 1.

31 Mildred W. Wells, Unity in Diversity: The History of the General Federation of Women's Clubs (Washington, D.C.: GFWC, 1953). The TFWC chose its motto by creating the Committee on Selection of State Motto. The committee solicited entries from Texas club women and announced the winner at the 1913 TFWC meeting. The delegates at that
meeting unanimously accepted the committee's choice. See Christian, p. 291.


33 Christian, pp. 324, 368; Wood, p. 401. In his Master's Thesis on Progressivism in Texas, Maurice Sochia lists the TFWC as an ally of the Anti-Saloon League in the 1910 effort to induce the state legislature to send a constitutional amendment on prohibition to the people of Texas. Judging from the commitment of white Texas club women to "righteous" causes, including movie censorship and "social hygiene," it is highly likely that many club women favored prohibition. The husband of the fifth TFWC president, Mr. Cone Johnson of Tyler, was a candidate in the 1910 Democratic gubernatorial primary and, as such, was a staunch prohibitionist although he did not favor the constitutional amendment route. When Mrs. Johnson addressed the 1907 TFWC convention, she spoke of the "great number of beneficent laws enacted [by the Thirtieth Legislature of 1907] in which the women of Texas are directly interested" and this list included a law "providing for the teaching of ... the evil effects of alcoholic drinks" in the Texas schools. If the TFWC made a formal commitment to work for such legislation, its major chronicler, Stella Christian, was mute on the subject. There is no other mention of prohibition and the TFWC until the TFWC passed a resolution in support of national prohibition in 1917. Other evidence that the TFWC was not significantly involved in the prohibition movement is the fact that the group is not mentioned at all in Lewis Gould's book on the subject. Gould does not note the TFWC in any connection with progressive politics, which is major oversight, but his focus on the role of prohibition in Texas Progressivism would have probably required attention to the TFWC had they been at all prominently involved. See Maurice Sochia, "The Progressive Movement in Texas, 1900-1914," Master's Thesis Southwest Texas State Teachers College 1959, pp. 62-4, 67-8; Christian, p. 187; Lewis L. Gould, Progressives and Prohibitionists: Texas Democrats in the Wilson Era (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973).


37"They Vote Today, Dallas Morning News.

38Woman's Club of El Paso, "By-Laws," 1908, as cited by Cunningham, p. 102.


"Whereas the women of Texas have been granted partial suffrage by the legislature;

Whereas political questions are likely to be presented for our consideration;

Therefore, be it resolved that in the interest of harmony and with a desire to preserve the inherent purpose of the Woman's Club, discussions and actions involving political affiliations shall not be permitted at any club meeting."

This resolution was published on page 7 of the 4 April 1918 issue of the El Paso Morning Times and is cited by Cunningham in her history of the club, p. 177.

40"They Vote Today," Dallas Morning News.

41Past President's Association of the Dallas Federation of Women's Clubs, eds., History of the Dallas Federation of Women's Clubs, 1898–1936 (Dallas: Clyde C. Cockrell and Son, 1936). Mrs. A. O Granger, in her 1906 article about club work in the South, wrote: "Their [club women or women's clubs] assistance is sought for every movement which may be helpful to the state or country and they no longer shrink from expressing themselves upon the subjects vital to society...There is a constant increase in the demands made upon the women's clubs by those most interested in civic progress, and the help given to the clubs by the authorities of the towns is an equal proof of the appreciation of their work. Granger, "Effect of Club Work in the South," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, 28, No. 2 (Sept. 1906), pp. 57–58.

42Adella Turner, "Inaugural Address," 1906, as cited by Hunter, p. 6.
"They Vote Today," *Dallas Morning News.*

"They Vote Today," *Dallas Morning News.*

Christian, pp. 86-87.

Marybelle Granger, "The American History Club, 1893-1969," Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas; Woman’s Club of Waco Minutes, MS, 29 Jan. 1907 and 12 Feb. 1907, Woman’s Club of Waco Papers, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.


A list of speakers and the titles of their addresses presented at the Thirteenth Annual TFWC meeting in 1910 exemplifies the educational (and inspirational) aspect of TFWC meetings: Mrs. O. L. Clarke of Galveston, "The Meaning of Civil Service Reform as Applied to Club Efforts;" Mrs. B. Wynne of Wills Point, "Laws Affecting Women and Children;" Mrs. J.A. Jackson of Austin and member of the Board of Regents of the Gatesville Industrial School for Boys, "The State and the Boy;" Mr. Benjamin Wyche, "Management of Small Libraries;" Mr. R. R. Smith, "Library Legislation;" Mr. E. W. Winkler, "State Library Commission;" Miss Lida Dougherty, Supt. of Bee County Public Schools, "Rural Conditions;" Mrs. Maggie Barry on the reorganization of the school system of Texas; Dr. C. E. Evans, secretary of the Texas Conference of Education on the work of the Conference [Dr. Evans served as superintendnet of two different public school districts from 1895 to 1908 and was the president of Southwest Texas State Teachers College from 1911 to 1942. In addition to his work with the Texas Conference of Education, he served on several state committees having to do with education. See "About the Author," in C. E. Evans, *The Story of Texas Schools* (Austin: The Steck Co., 1955).]; Miss Kate Friend of Waco and on humane education; Miss Breedlove on industrial education; Mrs. Henry B. Fall on waterways and forest conservation; state senator Hon. J. G. Willacy on prison reform; Dr. Henry S. Curtis of Massachusetts, "Child Welfare Movements;" Dr. George Gilmour, "The Public School as a Social Center;" Chas. W. Holman, "Tangible Results of the Social Center Movement in Texas;" Dr. Malone Duggan, "What You Can Do for the Purity of Home and the Conservation of Human Life;" Mrs. J. F. DeMar, "The Child Who is Misunderstood;" Mrs. Arthur N. McCallum of Austin, "The New Movement for Conservation of Child Life;" and Mrs. J. B. Pondrom of Pilot Point, "The Value of a Concerted
Action Among Clubwomen to Secure a Cleaner Press." This information is taken from Christian, pp. 258-60.

49Christian, pp. 194, 311, 346. Regarding Governor Ferguson's action for rural schools, see Evans, pp. 121-22. An example of the exhortation to self-education is found in the 1904 TFWC Civics Committee Report: "For good to result from our efforts better citizenship is necessary; and for women to accomplish the good they so much desire, it is necessary that they, too, familiarize themselves with the laws, particularly those pertaining to sanitation, and then enlist the interest and secure the assistance of those in authority to enforce the laws as well as to add such other laws as may be found essential." Nora B. Combs, Chairman, "Civics," TFWC Yearbook, 1904-1905, p. 14.


52Price, "The Development of Leadership by Southern Women Through Clubs and Organizations," p. 156. May Alden Ward made a similar observation in 1906: "...man and women the country over, who are trying to obtain practical results, as creators of public opinion, have come to look upon a federation meeting as a golden opportunity. They have come to regard the meetings of these organizations as probably the shortest and quickest of all the avenues by which the public conscience may be reached and public questions influenced." Ward, "Influence of Women's Clubs in New England and in the Middle-Eastern States," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 28, No. 2 (Sept. 1906), pp. 18-9.

53Mrs. S. J. Wright referred to "Educate, agitate, then legislate" as the federation "policy" in her "Message from Retiring President," TFWC Yearbook, 1911-1912, p. 14.


55Ella Dancy Dibrell, Letter to Kate Friend, 21 June 1909, Kate Harrison Friend Papers, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas. For biographical information on
these two women see Megan Seaholm, "Isadore Callaway" and "Kate Harrison Friend," The Handbook of Texas (Austin: Texas State Historical Association), forthcoming.


57 Regarding the 1899 renunciation of "lobbying" see Mrs. J. C. Terrell's article, quoted on page 9 of this chapter and cited in notes 14 and 15, this chapter. Ella Dibrell's comments about "womanly ways" and "female lobbyists" are taken from her "Report of Legislative Committee," TFWC Yearbook, 1913-1914, p. 58. Maurice Sochia cited the Journal of the House of Representatives, Regular Session, Thirtieth Legislature (p. 118) and the General Laws of the State of Texas, Regular Session, Thirtieth Legislature (p. 162) in his discussion of the anti-lobby act of 1907. He wrote: "There were many lobbyists in Austin during the Thirtieth Legislature's regular session. Among them were the Federation of Women's Clubs, the State Teachers' Association, the Federated Commercial Clubs of Texas, Anti-Saloon League, the Texas Local Option Association, the Retail Liquor Dealers' Association, the Texas Brewers' Association, and the Texas Council of the American Federation of Labor. These lobbyist groups became at times obstructive to the legislative process and obnoxious to individual members of the legislature and, indeed, to the entire chamber activity in both houses of the legislature. An anti-lobby was the result." Sochia's own study as well as other works on Progressivism in Texas indicate that the anti-lobby law was totally ineffective as vigorous lobbying on several issues continued at the state capital throughout the era. See Sochia, "The Progressive Movement in Texas, 1900-1914," pp. 45-6. Other works on state politics in the early twentieth century include James Aubrey Tinsley, "The Progressive Movement in Texas," Diss. University of Wisconsin 1953 and Lewis Gould's book Progressives and Prohibitionists: Texas Democrats in the Wilson Era, cited above.


59 Breckinridge, p. 258.

Christian, pp. 135, 177, 187, 194, 203, 207, 215, 226, 229-30, 234, 244, 249, 259, 261, 265, 268, 275, 279, 281, 284-5, 290, 317, 352, 353. Speakers at TFWC state or district meetings included, in addition to many club women, Dr. Anna Howard Shaw several Texas jurists.

Lawrence W. Neff, The Legal Status of Woman in Texas, introd. J. B. Dibrell (Dallas: Toole Printing and Publishing Co., 1895), Barker Center for Texas History, Austin, Texas. The title page of the Neff book also reads: "Published for the Benefit of the Dallas Free Kindergarten and Industrial Association." This group was one of the early women's clubs in Dallas. Also regarding the use of the Neff book, see Ella Dibrell, "Report of Legislative Committee," TFWC Yearbook, 1913-1914, p. 60.


At the Fifteenth Annual TFWC meeting in 1912, "Mr. William Hard of New York, who is doing such valiant work along these lines, addressed the assembly, giving a clear insight into what is needed in laws affecting the property rights of married women." Mr. Hard distributed pamphlets by Texas jurist Hortense Ward on Texas laws concerning married women. Christian, pp. 279-80. The 25 February 1913 minutes of the Waco Woman's Club state that a letter was received asking club members to write their state senators to express their support for the proposed Woman's Property Rights Bill. The group agreed that a letter would be written and sent by the Woman's Club of Waco with each members' name included in the signature. Woman's Club of Waco, Club Minutes, 25 February 1913, Woman's Club of Waco Papers, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.


Lazarou, pp. 172-77.

69 Lazarou, p. 177. Ralph W. Steen attributed the 1911 law to the agitation of the TFWC and the Texas Women's Christian Temperance Union. Steen, pp. 112, 255. Maurice Sochia contends that the lobbying and statewide agitation of the TFWC, the WCTU, the Texas Women's Press Association, and the Texas Woman Suffrage Association influenced the Thirty-third Legislature to pass the Married Women's Property Act. Sochia, p. 73.


71 Christian, pp. 87, 243, 350. Also see Past President's Association of the Dallas Federation of Women's Clubs, eds., History of the Dallas Federation of Women's Clubs, 1898-1936 (Dallas: Clyde C. Cockrell and Son, 1936), pp. 159-62, and page 29 and note number 76 in Chapter Four.


73 Mrs. R. H. Brown, "Editor's Column," The Club Monthly, 1, No. 7 (April 1898), pp. 39-40.
Chapter Seven

The Woman's Club Movement and Changing Concepts of Womanhood

They talk about a woman's sphere
As though it had a limit.
There's not a place in earth or heaven,
There's not a task to mankind given;
There's not a blessing or a woe,
There's not a whispered yes or no;
There's not a life, there's not a birth,
There's not a feather's weight of worth,
Without a woman in it. 1

Several historians have argued that the foundations for the nineteenth-century ethos of "true womanhood" were buttressed by the social needs of nineteenth-century middle- and upper-class women. In voluntary associations like the American Female Moral Reform Society, the New York Female Moral Reform Society, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union, women completed the architecture of American Victorian culture that, early in the century, had been built in response to shifting material changes in economic and social life. 2 "True womanhood"—the credo, the ideal, which claimed a special moral superiority for an otherwise subordinate group—was what made nineteenth-century gender ideology unique. That men and women inhabited separate spheres, psychically and socially, if not geographically, was not new. 3 The elaboration and romanticization of the female sphere was new. Its influence was enormous: it survived the westward migrations and
became well established in all parts of the expanding nation. Its influence is easily detected well into the twentieth century. It was, in part, the creation of nineteenth-century women.

In a similar way, the woman's club movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries fashioned a new ideal, a new model for womanhood in the twentieth century. The turn-of-the-century "club woman"—more than the much discussed "new woman" or the "Gibson Girl" or the "flapper" of the Twenties—was the role model for middle- and even upper-class women in the new century. The woman's club movement created an acceptable role for white middle- and upper-class women in the public sphere. It made woman's participation in altruistic and voluntary work—as opposed to commercial or paid professional—normative in a way that women's work outside the home had not been before.

This influence, its intended and unintended consequences, continued long past the zenith of the women's club movement whose fortunes were in decline by the end of the 1920s. Club women created a new social space and a new social expectation for succeeding generations of middle and upper class women. Of course, it was not created de novo. The development of a new role for women had everything to do with concurrent economic and social developments. But, the individual and collective needs of club women gave rise to particular concepts of virtuous and
responsible womanhood that superceded nineteenth-century ideology. These concepts were proclaimed articulately and repeatedly and the activities of club women reflected their confidence in their vision.

Whether club women achieved their social reform goals and whether their concept of womanhood truly empowered women as they believed it would are questions of a different order. The former question was addressed in chapters four and five, and the latter will be addressed in this chapter. But first, this chapter will describe the club movement's view of "womanhood," how this view of womanhood compared with nineteenth century notions, and how this particular understanding was manifest in the activities of club women. As white club women in Texas were keen participants in this development, their words and actions can provide the lens through which one can view a national phenomenon. With the club movement's view of "womanhood" clearly in focus, the ramifications of this view for twentieth-century women can be discerned and extrapolated.

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In 1881 Henry James wrote that American women "did with themselves nothing at all; they waited, in attitudes more or less gracefully passive, for a man to come that way
and furnish their destiny." By 1900 it was still largely true that middle and upper class American women remained economically dependent upon men and marriage, but while these women may have waited for men to supply their personal destiny, they also believed that women had never before been so free and that the world's destiny waited upon, depended upon, their willingness to serve.

Earlier chapters have described the development in the nineteenth century of the exalted perception of women as "the sacred vessels that held the ancient sanctities of life." Charlotte Perkins Gilman stated the claim succinctly and unequivocally when she described women as "the highest human type" who would "draw men up to them." By the turn of the century this belief was joined to the exaggerated claim that woman's emancipation had been achieved. A 1900 Harper's Bazar article described the new woman as totally emancipated, with no restraints upon her regarding profession or whatever she wanted to do. Now liberated, women would deliver the world from vice and corruption and would create a peaceable kingdom on earth.

The optimism of this vision and the intense desire to serve were reinforcing. The optimism regarding woman's possibilities and capabilities went hand in glove with an almost messianic belief that the salvation of the world was at hand, thanks to organized womanhood. One notion logically entailed the other. If women were, in fact, "the
highest human type" and if women were, in fact, now emancipated, it was up to women to save the world. Who else but the pillars of civilization could accomplish so much for civilization. Conversely, if women were those who most truly sought the world's salvation, they would have to be "the highest human type" in order to achieve it.

The club movement of white women was, in one sense, a continual celebration of womanhood and of the many new possibilities for service. As early as 1902 Michigan club woman and author Winnifred Harper Cooley expressed this buoyancy when she wrote,

...we naturally speculate upon the destination of this mighty new current [the women's club movement] that has swept aside all former conservative estimates of feminine possibilities,--enlarging woman's sphere until it is coexistent with the globe that limits the activities of mankind,--and we venture to prophesy optimistically of the work of women in the twentieth century. 10

Texas club women joined this national celebration of womanhood with equal enthusiasm. When Margaret Mooar of Colorado City, Texas, reported on the 1900 TFWC convention to her home club, she concluded her remarks by extolling the virtues of women and of womanhood:

Woman is the best of God's handiwork. She makes man better, she makes the world better, she makes brighter the sunshine and gives comfort in the darkness. She makes man considerate of his fellow man; she brings the world to a realization of the beauties of nature, and her very presence changes the
atmosphere when she comes. The club women of Texas represent the best there is in woman and woman represents the best there is in all the world. 11

Such florid declarations make one wonder if club women were, to borrow from Shakespeare, protesting too much. Indeed, that may have been the case. The point has been made that this class of women were experiencing a sort of "status anxiety" compounded by profound cognitive dissonance. Women were placed upon a pedestal because of their unworldly goodness, but a pedestal was a small and limited space. It also may have been the case that one of the splendors of club life was that it provided a place where women could speak about their gender in such affirming terms.

Another Texas club woman, Mrs. John L. Lovejoy of McKinney, wrote of woman’s emancipation and went on to say that while women were clearly the intellectual equals of men, they had the added advantage of "woman’s perceptions." She then interpreted the Garden of Eden story by explaining that when woman desired wisdom, it took no less that Satan to tempt her to break holy laws.12

The anonymous author of a brief article that appeared in the TFWC’s The Club Monthly championed female ability and progress and hinted at the source of much of the movement’s optimism:

A clever novelist once said, "Woman’s strength is in her heart." This was declared
back in the days when trembling woman was so circumscribed by the narrow limits of custom that she knew not the possibilities hidden within the recesses of her own immortal being: the height, depth, latitude or longitude of her native capabilities, when she feared to cast a shadow, lengthened beyond that of a male escort or protector. Now the necessity no longer exists for such an attache, if she chooses otherwise. Woman has awakened to the fact that it is sometimes more pleasant and profitable to construct her own little sloop and launch into the battle of life on her own prowess; or lightly step into her own pleasure boat, and by her own will and muscle, weild the oars as fancy may dictate, untrammeled by prescribed conventionalities. 13

It is significant that this anonymous writer refers to past impediments to woman's autonomy as mere "custom." Further, she suggests that women's breakthrough to independent action had as much to do with their "awakening" to life's possibilities as the new existence of such possibilities. This view, declared more than twenty years before women gained suffrage and at a time when women's legal and economic rights were still far from parity with those of men, requires explication. First, compared to their forebears of antebellum days, customs and opportunities had broadened. Second, progress notwithstanding, this optimism revealed a perspective on the status of women that radical feminists of the day would have found naive. Third, and most germane for present purposes, it exemplified a view shared by club women: club women did not see themselves as victims; they saw themselves as actors and activists working on behalf of
victims. Other women, particularly women of the lower classes, were victims of social and economic inequities, but they were also women who had not awakened to the possibilities of their womanly potential and responsibility. These were women who club women could assist through charity and through the sisterhood and self-improvement borne of the woman's club.

By the turn of the century, club women were supremely confident. They were confident as women--the "highest human type"--and they were confident as club women because of the skills and knowledge they gained in their respective clubs and because of the strength in numbers they amassed as organized womanhood. Most could also attribute some degree of confidence to their position in the social and economic hierarchy of society; most were women of "modest prosperity," and some were from quite wealthy families. Other club women were self-supporting professionals, mostly teachers and a few professional journalists, who had gained some measure of economic independence by virtue of their education and their work.14

There were other reasons for their confidence of which the club women may not have been aware. As described in chapter four, club women usually took up work that others were not doing or what others did not want to do. Also, their work was justified as within the range of womanly
concern and was usually pursued in "womanly ways." Thus, they were more often welcomed than castigated, for their communities benefitted from the work and the benevolence of local club women. For the most part, when club women suggested that certain services or facilities become public responsibilities, they had educated public opinion to accept those responsibilities. To be sure, there were detractors, but, in the main, many would have agreed with Texas publicist Sinclair Moreland when he wrote:

When one stops to consider the immense field open to rightly directed efforts of club women, one realizes as never before, that it is the day of woman’s opportunity, and women have stretched forth their hands to every good work, for the world is her workshop.

Club women often exhorted each other to behold the new possibilities, as Anna Hertzberg did when she addressed the TFWC convention as its new president in 1910:

Opportunity is constantly knocking at your door; listen to her call, and remember that, having accepted responsibility in the spirit of true service, you are turning the common dust of servile opportunity to gold.

Note Hertzberg’s choice of words: "Opportunity" is portrayed as female; and opportunity, quite simply and naturally, entailed "responsibility." The last line is especially ripe for exegesis. That "common dust" and "servile opportunity" may be turned to gold is a classic description of women’s work: that which others deign not to do, that which rarely receives recognition and almost
never receives financial remuneration, but which, in reality—in the reality of feminine values—is bright and pure as gold.

One way of discerning the women's club view of "womanhood" is to note the continuities and discontinuities of that view with the nineteenth-century "cult of true womanhood" or "cult of domesticity." To be sure, there was diversity among club women regarding their views on womanhood—what was essentially female and what was woman's proper role in society. As the motto of the GFWC said, there was "Unity in Diversity," and as the TFWC motto proclaimed, "In small things liberty, in large things unity, in all things charity." Despite the diversity within the ranks, club women were, on the whole, homogeneous enough to allow for certain generalizations. The important caveat to any concept of "womanhood" held by white American club women is to recognize the racial and class boundaries. When club women spoke of "woman" or "womanhood," their paradigm was surely white and middle or upper class.

The words of Moocar and Hertzberg, cited earlier in this chapter, establish some of the continuities between the ideal of "true womanhood" and the early-twentieth-century women's club movement ideal of womanhood. In sum, both ideals praised "woman" as quintessentially imbued with virtue and noble sensibilities. Virtue implied
earnestness, a sense of duty, an almost limitless capacity for caring, and a sublime selflessness. Club women would have agreed with Harriet Beecher Stowe when she wrote in *Pink and White Tyranny*, "Love, my dear ladies, is self-sacrifice;...Love is giving, not receiving." 20

This kind of virtue required a degree of self-abnegation that seemed at odds with the club woman's passion for self culture. The continuity with the ideal of selflessness was preserved, quite guilelessly, by the club woman's avowed dedication to altruism and by the conviction that improved womankind would better serve her family and the world. Kate Rotan was the preeminent spokeswoman for "true womanhood" among white Texas club women. She espoused the relation between the advancement of woman and the fate of "mankind" and often spoke of the "good they [club women] may do in womanly ways" (emphasis added). 21

One club woman commended Rotan and her message in this way:

> If the club women of Texas will take as their guide and rule of action the principles enunciated by this charming, magnetic leader—this genuine woman, it is yet to be conceived the height, depth, length and breadth of achievement for the advancement and betterment of womankind. The altruist will be fully developed, while the egoist will sink into a puny dwarfling. 22

It is as if the seed of essential goodness lay within womankind, and its proper cultivation would yield perfection.
The importance of motherhood and domesticity in the women's club movement is another indication that club women still cherished much in the ideal of "true womanhood." This, of course, had as much to do with private choices—or circumstances—as ideology, for it was estimated in 1908 that 90 percent of all white club women in the United States were homemakers.\textsuperscript{23} The GFWC Household Economics Committee reported in 1909 that,

The great majority of the members of the Clubs and Federations are homemakers, the thoughtful, earnest mothers and wives, who are giving their best efforts to the solutions of the problem of their own and their children's lives. They are the "Grand Army," the majority, the ninety percent who make the splendid sturdy Americanism, which must be the hope of the future. \textsuperscript{24}

While the publications of Texas club women were eager to note, and praise, women who were successful in business, politics or the professions, there were many more references to "home" as woman's proper place. This quote was inserted as a filler between articles in a 1908 issue of The Dallas Clubwoman: "Of all the professions open to women that of homemaking is the greatest."\textsuperscript{25} Another issue of the same journal included an article on the evils of child labor that made the point that both child labor and female labor lowered wages for men. The article concluded that a "living wage" should be provided to male workers because women were properly homemakers, and a woman could not be employed \textit{and} be a homemaker.\textsuperscript{26}
The TFWC was an early supporter of mothers' clubs, of home economics study in local clubs, and of domestic science education in the public schools and at the college level. With its constituency of literary and study clubs that pursued the study of opera and history with the same vigor as child development, the TFWC supported female education for a variety of mature endeavors. 27 Still, it is clear that more time, energy, money, and enthusiasm went into supporting domestic science education at all levels than any other type of professional education for women, and domestic science education was considered professional education. Mrs. Cree T. Work, Denton club woman and wife of the first president of the College of Industrial Arts, addressed the TFWC convention in 1905 on "Rational Education for Future Home Makers,"28 and the federation's work on behalf of the College of Industrial Arts is the foremost example of the club women's emphasis on training for career domesticity. 29 One of many resolutions to support the C.I.A. included this statement in its preamble:

...realizing the great necessity of improving and extending the usefulness of the College of Industrial Arts as one of the most important factors in moulding true womanhood and in fitting our girls for home life, [we] do hereby endorse and pledge ourselves... 30

The domestic virtues, and, in particular, motherhood were invoked as the inspiration for many local and state club endeavors from work for parks and playgrounds to
campaigns for protective legislation for children. The public work and the public rhetoric of Texas club women echoed the words of New England club woman Julia Ward Howe when she said:

Every true woman has the mother in her and this grand spiritual motherhood, exerting its desired influence and watchfulness in all walks of life will give every woman a noble part to perform in the great drama of the world. 31

That motherhood was spiritually immanent in all women, in all "true" women, was part of the belief that "true women" were essentially virtuous and such virtue could bring salvation. As Howe said on another occasion, "...the very intensity of our feeling for home, husband, and children gives us a power of loving and working outside of our homes, to redeem the world as only love and work can."32

It is by now clear that club women in general, and southern club women in particular, were not the "new women" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries whom Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has described as college educated, professionally trained, usually unmarried women who repudiated the conventions of "true womanhood" and claimed the "rights and privileges customarily accorded bourgeois men." A second generation of "new women" who reached maturity around the time of the First World War was, according to Smith-Rosenberg, more interested in self-fulfillment and "the flamboyant presentation of the self"
and somewhat less interested in social service than the previous generation of "new women." This second generation also "fused their challenge of gender conventions with a repudiation of bourgeois sexual norms."^{33}

While there were club women who would have fit Smith-Rosenberg's characterization of the first generation of "new women"—and perhaps a few of the second generation—the majority of club women were of a different ilk. Most club women were married homemakers and were far from repudiating either "true womanhood" or bourgeois sexual norms. Most club women would have agreed with Olga Kohlberg of El Paso when she addressed her club in 1901 and stated "that the spirit of the 'new woman' had not entered the halls of the club and expressed her hope that it would never do so."^{34}

The heart of the ideology of "true womanhood" was the belief in female distinctiveness; the qualities of that distinctiveness were those discussed above and in previous chapters. In this, club women were in full agreement. That women were different from men in essential and important ways was the basis for the club movement's celebration of womanhood and the movement's determination to have an impact on the public sphere. As such, club women had no desire to dilute the significance of female distinctiveness.
Yet, even as club women championed the ideal of "true womanhood," they were reshaping that ideal; while the historical ramifications of their innovations may have escaped the club women, they were entirely earnest and self-conscious as they recast the ideal. Aware that social norms were changing, club women were eager to establish their own view of ideal womanhood—a view that preserved the core of the reigning ideology but extended the parameters. As Mrs. J.C. Terrell said at the 1898 TFWC meeting after an ode of filiopiety to the men, women, and customs of the "Old South,"

Different conditions are ours today. The world is coming to see the intimate relations between home and national life. Women are reaching out to help their generation. 35

It would be easy to assume that the similarities between the ideal of "true womanhood" and the club movement's ideal of womanhood were strongest early in the club movement and that the discontinuities became more predominant over time. This, however, was not strictly the case. It is true that the discontinuities first became most apparent when the club movement enlarged its scope to include "outside" work in the public sphere in addition to self-culture. For Northeastern club women, this change can be attached to the date when the General Federation of Women's Clubs was organized in 1890. In Texas, this interest in expanding the club woman's sphere was, more or
less, simultaneous with the founding of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs in 1897. The organization of these federations was both an indication of club women's desire to become more active in the public sphere and a vehicle that made such activism more plausible--practically and ideologically. Federation was a signal that it was time to broaden women's sphere, and thus organization was required. It was also a signal that woman's sphere could be enlarged if women would join together.

As federation was effected, at the national and state levels, one can note the many references to a new kind of womanhood where woman was characterized as a "tower of strength." But even as the "tower of strength" metaphors continued through the first decades of the twentieth century, so too did the references to the club woman's "true womanliness." Club women upheld both the old and the new. For the most part, club women believed that their commitment to retain the "true womanhood" ideal while refracting that ideal for modern times, was a major source of their strength. It did, in fact, make the club movement and many of the movement's accomplishments possible. Historian Karen Blair explained this phenomenon in her introduction to Mary Cunningham's 1978 book about the Woman's Club of El Paso:

Culture clubs enjoyed extraordinary appeal because they allowed women to embrace both a traditional and progressive sense of
themselves. In a world that defined the home as woman’s sphere and reserved all the rest for men, culture clubs incorporated elements of both spheres and forged a compatibility between them. Clubs often tapped those aspects of self-sacrifice and assistance for others which the proper nineteenth century lady supposedly embodied. Yet at the same time, the clubs reflected the notion that ladies had no role to play in the male-dominated public sphere. ...These clubs, then, defended the special moral sensitivity and superiority of women, the bedrock of traditional woman’s sphere. Simultaneously, they channeled that self-conception into effort to wrest from the men some of the prerogatives of their activity in the public sphere. 37

The club movement’s alchemy of concepts of womanhood that were at once both reinforcing and incompatible was, at the time, empowering. It also yielded a divided legacy, a subject to be explored after the following discussion of discontinuities between the ideal of "true womanhood" and the emerging club movement’s ideal.

The strongest indication that the re-creation of the ideal of womanhood was a fundamental project for club women is the enormous amount of time that club women spent discussing and debating the subject. As explained in Chapter Three, women’s study clubs often pursued the "woman" angle of whatever they were reading, whether literature, history, or the arts. Likewise, the annual meetings of the TFWC or of TFWC districts were a forum for consideration of the meaning of modern womanhood, as the titles of speeches made during the federation’s first
twenty years make clear: "The Evolution of Women Through Women's Clubs," "Woman's Sphere," "Why are our Young Women so ignorant of duties of motherhood?," "Unrest of Women and to What Leading," "The Significance of the Woman's Movement," and "The Ideal Woman." In 1914 the assembled women of the First District listened to this debate: "Resolved, That New Conditions Demand a New Type of Woman." Club women were eager to debate "the woman question." From these debates, discussions, and speeches club women would come to terms with where they stood on the issue, for they were determined to play a leading role in the reformulation of the ideal of womanhood.

One of the new aspects of the evolving club women's ideal of womanhood was the notion that women themselves must take action to gain certain rights for women. Strictly speaking, the "true woman," ever passive and subservient, had not sought rights for herself. In 1900 the president of the National Council of Women, Fannie Humphreys Gaffney, seemed to predict a growing interest among club women in the status of women when she queried:

Are the club women of to-day weakening those walls of silence about women, so that some day the walls will fall down, and women may speak for themselves and their sex with respect and deference? Club women explained their interest in gaining more favorable state legislation for women, such as married women's property rights, as protective legislation for all
women and children. As Mrs. S.J. Wright, the seventh president of the TFWC, said in 1911,

The local area of applied Christianity has extended its borders until it has been discovered that women and children and the home constitute our assets of national strength, and that the protection of all women is a just and natural demand. 41

The issue of the "Status of Women Under Laws of Texas" was first raised in the TFWC in 1905 when a lecture by a Dallas club woman aroused such interest that a movement within the federation was begun to study relevant Texas laws and to seek certain changes.42 At virtually every annual meeting of the TFWC or of the TFWC Districts from 1905 to 1920, some aspect of woman's legal status was considered. Speakers included club women, local judges, Hortense Ward (the first woman to pass the Texas Bar exam), and well known luminaries such as Dr. Anna Howard Shaw. Club women applauded statutory revisions and new legislation that regarded married women's property rights, abandonment of wives and children, convict pay for dependent families, the working conditions of women and children, women as jurors, mother's pensions, and of course, suffrage.43

The woman suffrage issue was a thorny one for club women because it was often viewed, in their day and by many late-twentieth-century historians, as the dividing line between the traditional "true woman" and the modern "new
woman." Club women did not want to relinquish their ties to "true womanhood," but they did want to make significant changes. Neither did they want to be caricatured as unwomanly, "mannish," or overly concerned with their own aggrandizement or empowerment. As the fundamental expression of an individual's political power in a democracy, the "vote" was a direct use of influence whereas women had long depended on indirect means to exert individual or collective influence. Club women did not doubt that they wished to exert a strong influence in their communities, in the state, and even at the national level. They did not doubt that their's was the mantle of moral leadership. But some club women doubted the utility of suffrage as a means to meet their goals. A North Carolina club woman probably spoke for many when she wrote in 1910,

...the women of the South, those who belong to clubs and those who do not, are alike agreed that they do not need and do not wish the right to suffrage, realizing that they stand on higher ground and occupy a more commanding position without it. 45

They may also have feared the individualism of universal suffrage— that the political empowerment of the individual by virtue of the vote would dissipate the collective energies of organized womanhood.

In any case, the white women's club movement in the United States has often been evaluated as conservative because it was so late in endorsing suffrage, 1914 for the
GFWC and 1915 for the TFWC. The main reason that suffrage was not endorsed earlier was not because all or even most club women were against suffrage, but because the club world was split on the issue and and wished to preserve harmony and avoid schism as much as possible. In fact, as suggested in chapter two, many club women were ardent suffragists, for example: Julia Ward Howe, mentioned above, first president of the New England Woman Suffrage Association; Charlotte Perkins Gilman; Caroline M. Severance; Isabella Beecher Hooker; and Mary Ashton Rice Livermore.

In Texas, leaders of the suffrage movement included many club women: Eleanor Brackenridge, Minnie Fischer Cunningham, Jessie Daniel Ames, and Isadore Callaway to name only a few. In 1908, seven years before the TFWC formally endorsed suffrage, Texas women’s clubs sponsored a state-wide speaking tour by Anna Howard Shaw who was campaigning strongly for woman suffrage and an end to institutionalized sexual discrimination. It is likely that many of the Texas club women not initially disposed to favor woman suffrage were converted to the cause as they associated with sister club women who were suffragists. For others, involvement in "outside" work may have assuaged their reservations regarding the unwomanliness of suffrage. Some Texas club women may have become interested in
suffrage when they found their indirect influence insufficient to implement the reforms they sought. But, however one evaluates Texas club women or the national movement on the issue of suffrage, it is indisputable that the respectability of these groups helped prepare the way for public acceptance of woman suffrage. 50

In considering the discontinuities between the club movement's ideal of womanhood and the ideal of "true womanhood," the most obvious distinction had to do with the geography of woman's proper sphere. Whereas the "true woman's" sphere was the home, clearly private and separate from the public sphere, the club woman's sphere was both public and private. Club women tried to collapse the distinction between the two spheres. They found that to be effective in their calling as responsible mothers and as guarantors of the physical and moral health of their families, they had to enter the public sphere. As Alice Ames Winter, GFWC president from 1920 to 1924, said of the typical club woman,

...A home woman who has found that she cannot isolate her home from her community. Government and social and health conditions invade its sanctuary, and in order to protect her brood she must go out from its walls for part of her time and do her best to make government and social order and physical conditions as fine as possible, that they may upbuild and not destroy. 51

The environmentalism of the day also influenced club women to perfect the urban or community environment just as they
were to perfect the home environment. Club women also recognized, although this was rarely articulated, that they must enter the public sphere in order to reclaim their status as moral leaders—the position that had been tacitly accorded to nineteenth century middle- and upper-class women. Club women sought to imbue public life with the domestic virtues.

Club women entered the public sphere in several different ways. First, they created their own woman's public sphere: the club world of meetings, conventions, club ritual, and club business. In this woman's public sphere, club women began acting as participants in the public sphere. Waco club woman Kate Friend attested to this when she reported on a 1901 meeting of the TFWC Executive Committee:

These formed an assembly of 30 women, the brightest and most progressive in all the vast state of Texas. But more; their deliberations proved that they were women of hearts as well as of minds; women who gave not one thought to self-aggrandizement, but rather to the betterment of humanity. This spirit of altruism was the guardian thought of all deliberations, yet the ideas exchanged and the deference paid each other was leavened by a business-like conduct, altogether to the high credit of the Texas woman. 52

Of course, these business-like deliberations on the work of the TFWC were for a higher purpose than the commercial enterprises of the public sphere, but it was activity beyond the private home for purposes larger than the
private home. As Sophonisba Rreckinridge—professional social worker, educator, and the first woman anywhere to receive a Ph.D. in the field of political science—perceptively wrote in 1933, women’s clubs were a "middle ground between the family life on the one hand the world of gainful employment on the other."53

The second way that club women involved themselves in the public sphere was by creating or innovating public institutions. Chapters four and five describe the community-building works of women’s clubs such as the establishment of public libraries, public parks, lecture series, and musical or cultural events. These two chapters also describe the ways in which club women changed existing institutions by, for example, introducing kindergartens, domestic science, and industrial education into the public schools. Club women entered the public sphere in a third way when they initiated or supported campaigns for certain reforms. They challenged the status quo in business and politics when they lobbied for local and state pure food laws, the juvenile justice system, higher school taxes, compulsory education laws, protective labor legislation, and even civil service reform. And, finally, that club women entered the public sphere through secular channels rather than through religious associations represented a fourth new way that women recharted the geography of
woman's sphere.

When club women decided to extend woman's sphere to include the public realm, they departed from the nineteenth-century model of "true womanhood" in another significant way: they claimed a role of public leadership for women. In the canons of "true womanhood," women deferred to men and to the institutions of patriarchal authority. The much vaunted moral leadership of the "true woman" was the leadership of the quiet exemplar of virtue.

There were certainly nineteenth-century women who were "leaders" in certain groups or of certain causes--for example, Emma Willard, Sarah and Angelina Grimke, and Catherine Beecher. But these were exceptional individuals, and their leadership was often a source of controversy. As for leaders in the nineteenth-century women's rights movement, such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, they were not only exceptional and controversial, but their constituency was never more than a small minority of women. This is not to diminish the immense historical significance of these individual women or the movements they represented. In fact, these nineteenth-century pioneers made the way clear for the later social feminists, the role that radicals often play for subsequent reformers.

The nineteenth-century woman's movement that most resembled the women's club movement in terms of claiming
public leadership for women was the women's temperance movement. Some of the similarities between the two movements, and the two organizations—the WCTU and the GFWC—have been discussed in earlier chapters. A major difference, however, was that the club movement involved a far greater number of women and its impact in the early twentieth century was more far reaching.

The women's club movement claimed a role of public leadership for women in several ways. First of all, many club women served as leaders within the club movement. The intricate and multi-tiered structure of the club movement—with local clubs, city and district federations, state federations, the national federation, and numerous committees at all these levels—gave many women the opportunity for leadership.

Second, club women as a whole assumed a role of leadership, or at least co-leadership, in many community-building projects and in many social welfare reform campaigns. In Texas, club women may have played a decisive role in the passage of library and pure food legislation and in the establishment of the juvenile justice system. They were also co-leaders with several active progressive reform groups in Texas such as the Texas Conference on Education and the Texas Conference on Social Welfare.

The crucial point here is not whether the most
significant or influential leaders of Progressive Era social welfare reforms were club women. Who properly deserves credit for what is always a difficult tangle in legislative or social history. The crucial point in this study is that club women saw themselves as leaders of a great social movement. Club women believed that they were showing the way, providing the direction, which their communities, and even their nation, should develop. This was the third, and the most important way that club women claimed a role of public leadership: club women assumed ideological leadership. As Texas club woman Mrs. J.C. Weaver wrote in 1906,

...she stands on the watchtower and sees before her the needs of humanity and is not only a worker but has become the way-shower, for the men who have the power to make and amend the laws, and her efforts are appreciated and commended by them. 55

This was a time when many were disturbed by the swift and turbulent changes in American social, political, and economic life. There were many different analyses of the problems and many proposed solutions.56 Club women believed that civilization had progressed unevenly, according to masculine values, and without a comparable development of altruism. Their proposed solution was that women, with their finer sensibilities, must lead society in the development of its feminine side.

When club women criticized the "hard materialism of
our commercial age," they were of two minds. On the one hand, they deplored the "ends justify the means" mentality of American capitalism and the political strength of business interests. Isadore Callaway, the Dallas club woman and columnist who wrote under the pseudonym "Pauline Periwinkle," was especially strident on this subject. In a 1907 column she observed that legislation on social issues required a protracted struggle compared to legislation that furthered commercial interests. She cited the expeditious passage of legislation to protect and assist farmers when the boll weevil threatened cotton crops. In contrast, she noted that thousands of babies died each year because of adulterated foods and milk, and she delivered this stinging rebuke:

Men have shut one eye and squinted so hard at commercial interests with the other that they see little else. It wouldn't have taken a Congress of Mothers seventeen years to pass pure food laws... The wonder is that doctors and undertakers and tombstone manufacturers don't join with the grocers in defeating measures to injure their trade. 58

On the other hand, club women were not radicals or socialists. They were not purely anticapitalism in their critique. They often praised the accomplishments of industry or of the political economy. In fact, they viewed industrial organization as a model of efficiency. When the chair of the TFWC Club Extension committee addressed Texas club women in the Yearbook for 1904-1905, she referred to
the "economic world" in just that way:

The wonderful advancement in all lines of industry stands as an expression of what has been accomplished in the economic world by means of concentration and organization. Why should not the same principle apply in the social world? Only by a combination of forces and a feeling of "community of interests" can women put to best use the aesthetic and ethical activities they possess, come to a clearer understanding of how to dispense wisely and well that love and hope and cheer and comfort and wise counsel which is to make the world good and happy. 59

It was the asymmetry of the current situation that troubled club women. These women, many of whom were wives or daughters of successful businessmen or professionals, agreed that the economic success of the United States was reason for pride in achievement. But things had gone too far without the tempering influence of womankind. When Stella Christian, the official historian of the TFWC's first twenty years, wrote of the federation's accomplishments in 1919, she added, "They [Texas club women] have taught the business man to play--have brought him shorter hours of toil, and taught him to cease being merely a cog in a machine ceaselessly grinding out money." 60

Club women were leaders in the perfection of domesticity and the domestic virtues. They, quite literally, sought to perfect their own domestic skills through their study groups. They sought to perfect future generations of women in domesticity through their support
for domestic science education. And, they sought to perfect the urban environment along domestic lines. They reminded their communities that the inhabitants of the towns and cities were women, men, and children with needs beyond economic subsistence: the need for healthy food and water, the need for education and recreation, the need for a clean and uplifting environment. They reminded their communities that the means for economic subsistence must be humane. They reminded their communities that commercial success could not be a community’s single goal any more than it could be a family’s single goal. A town or city--like a family--needed a breadwinner, a father, but it also--like a family--needed a mother. They reminded their communities, their states, and the nation, that women were important for the future of the civilization.

Thus, club women held an immanent view of womanhood. Womanliness inhered, naturally, in every woman. When club women took up self-culture or self-improvement, they were engaged in the process of burnishing the unused silver. They did not conduct classes on how to be virtuous. The essentials of virtue were already there. Their self-culture was a cultivation of the self that already existed, an exercise in the perfection of that which can be perfected.

Club women also held an instrumental view of
womanhood. That is, the perfection of one's "true womanhood" involved using one's talents. Chapters One and Two described the growing impulse of white middle and upper class women to be of use. This impulse reached a new peak during and after the Civil War. Uneasy with the idleness that had become part of the late nineteenth century's stereotype of non-wage earning women, women sought a "new functionalism of woman's domestic role." By the end of the century, women sought "still newer patterns for women's social guardianship." The women's club movement represented a crescendo in women's desire to use their talents and to be constructive in the public sphere. As Sophonisba Breckinridge said of many women in the early twentieth century, they wanted

...to share the life of the community directly and yet completely, not partially on the one hand as celibates nor vicariously on the other as shut off by marriage from full participation in the productive work of the community. 62

And, as one club woman wrote in 1907, "The heart of the [club] movement is opportunity for greater usefulness and unselfish service." 63

Historian Temma Kaplan's concept of "female consciousness" aptly describes white American club women, during the period under study, in their immanent and instrumental concept of womanhood. In her article, "Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of
Barcelona, 1910-1918," Kaplan looked at three separate collective actions in Barcelona, Spain, among the popular classes. She concluded that the motivation of these actions should be understood in terms of "female consciousness," to wit:

Female consciousness, recognition of what a particular class, culture, and historical period expect from women, creates a sense of rights and obligations that provides motive force for actions different from those Marxist and feminist theory generally try to explain. Female consciousness centers upon the rights of gender, on social concerns, on survival. Those with female consciousness accept the gender system of their society; indeed, such consciousness emerges from the division of labor by sex, which assigns women the responsibility of preserving life. But accepting this task, women with female consciousness demand the rights that their obligations entail. The collective drive to secure those rights that result from the division of labor sometimes has revolutionary consequences insofar as it politicizes the networks of everyday life. 65

Having accepted to a large degree the prevailing gender system of their society, club women claimed their right to involvement in the public sphere in order to assert their responsibilities as women--beginning with their responsibilities for their children and a healthy and uplifting social environment for their families and extending to their responsibilities for "social guardianship." As Kaplan wrote:

The events that occurred there [Barcelona] show that women's defense of the rights accorded them by the sexual division of labor, although fundamentally conservative, had revolutionary
consequences. Conscious that their government was not aiding them to fulfill their role as nurturers, women in Barcelona and elsewhere confronted the state to demand their rights as mothers and potential mothers. 66

Whether or not the consequences of the women's club movement were "revolutionary" will be discussed in the final sections of this chapter. Nonetheless, it is clear that club women in Texas, and club women nationally, challenged their communities and the state to accept certain reforms. The individual woman, the individual mother or homemaker, could no longer fulfill her womanly obligations without the cooperation of the state. It was the goal of the club movement to convince the state that it must listen to the needs and interests of women.

* * *

Club women were determined to be useful, and they were determined that their usefulness be accorded the stature it deserved. They had been trained for service, first, because they were women, and second, because they were club women. Their clubs had trained them to be community builders and way-showers. With talent, training, and ambitious goals, club women were encouraged to think of themselves as professionals. In 1908, Sarah Platt Decker--then GFWC president--sent this message to Texas club women:

I ask you to look upon it [club work] in a new light, to regard it as a real profession,
which has come to the women of this generation. President Faunce of Brown University, thus defines trade and profession: "Trade is occupation for livelihood, profession is occupation for service of the world." 67

Decker then outlined the eleven standing committees of the GFWC--Art, Civics, Civil Service Reform, Education, Forestry, Household Economics, Industrial and Child Labor, Legislative, Library Extension, Literature, and Pure Food--as the "branches of our new profession...The profession of club women." Known for her stirring oratory, Decker concluded her message by saying:

May it ["the profession of club women"] come to be a title so proud that it shall outrank royalty, or pride, or birth. May it be an inheritance to our children more precious than land or gold. May it mean to the world that a mighty company of earnest women are adding a profession to their lives--a real profession--"occupation for service to the world." 68

When the TFWC met in 1908, Anna Pennybacker--then TFWC Executive Board member--addressed the convention on "A New Vocation for Texas Women." This new vocation was to be one of social service, either as a paid professional or a volunteer. Women were especially suited for social service, and the need for women's involvement was great. She said:

Women are needed on the board of directors of every state institution that deals with women and children; women are needed as trained matrons and administrators in institutional work; women as assistant probation officers; women on boards of health; women as foresters, women in social settlement work, women in free
kindergartens, and women as art commissioners are all in demand. Schools of philanthropy are, therefore, need to train professional and voluntary workers. 69

Decker and Pennybacker, as many of the movement's leaders, often sought to inspire club women to higher goals and increased esteem of their activities. But Decker's invocation of a "profession of club women" was descriptive as much as prescriptive. By 1908 the movement was in full swing. The complex machinery of the organization was in place. Judging by the activities of Texas club women from 1897 to 1920, it is clear that many club women were pursuing their club work as ardently as any profession. For others, those for whom civic involvement always took second place to cultural studies, club work was an interesting avocation. The standard, the new norm, however, was something much greater.

The words of the leadership, the accomplishments of the individual clubs and state federations, and the work of individual club women are all evidence that club women viewed "woman's work" in new ways. The club woman was the paradigm of the professional volunteer in service to humanity.

Volunteer work was not new for women. The voluntary association was a staple of nineteenth-century American culture, and women had long invested time and energy in various religious and secular volunteer efforts. 70
desire to identify women's work as "professional" was also not new. As early as 1864, Catherine Beecher was writing about woman's "distinctive profession" of domesticity. By the end of the century, Beecher's pioneer efforts had become a movement to professionalize homemaking through "domestic science" and "household economics."

The women's club movement--committed as it was to "domestic science"--went a step further. It was the club movement that raised the volunteer work of women outside the home to the new status of "professional." According to the gender ideology of the nineteenth century, woman's self-fulfillment lay in self-sacrifice, in selfless service to others and to her family in particular. The club movement's assertion that women should serve humanity, in addition to their families, by becoming professional volunteers created a "career" for women that preserved the essentials of "true womanhood," and--it was believed--achieved a parity of status or importance with men of the same social class.

Thus, the club movement, which in 1908 included 800,000 women, created a new norm for non-working-class women. When club women entered the public sphere, extending the geography of woman's sphere, they created a new role for middle and upper class women in the twentieth century. Volunteer work outside the home became more than acceptable, it became the primary way in which non-wage-
earning women could be involved in community and public affairs and the way in which these women should be involved. Volunteer service to one's community (or state or nation) became the core of the new ideal of womanhood just as piety or domesticity had been at the core of the nineteenth century ideal.

Thus, the significance of the new ideal created by early-twentieth-century club women is not only that women could rightfully claim a role in public affairs, it is also that woman's "social guardianship" would take the form of freely given—that is volunteer—altruistic or cultural work. It is also true that club women, and other contemporary reformers, helped lay the way for the development and feminization of new paid professions, in particular, social work. But the legacy that had an impact on a far larger number of women was the new ideal of the professional volunteer.

The impact of this new ideal was widespread because of the influence of the white American club movement vis a vis the population of white American non-wage-earning women in general. By the end of the period under consideration, the club movement was the largest organization of white women. Furthermore, the social class and public visibility of white club women substantially increased the force of their cultural influence with other white American women.
The implications of this legacy, this new role for non-wage earning women, are profound. As volunteers, women were heartily welcomed into the public sphere and have contributed millions of woman-hours to numerous social service projects. Statistics and estimates of the numbers of women involved in volunteer work vary greatly. There is wide agreement, however, that women—married, college-educated, and upper-middle-class—have comprised the majority of volunteer workers in the United States. By mid-century, volunteerism had become a tradition for middle and upper class women. Robin M. Williams, Jr., wrote in *American Society*, published in 1952:

Their [women’s] search for an equivalent for the male’s occupational role has led to a striking participation in "culture," in philanthropic and community service work, and in many other broadly humane activities. The extraordinary development of women’s clubs... provides a good illustration of this attempt at "deflected achievement."  

The meaning of this new role in the lives of middle and upper class women and for the status of women in general has been fiercely debated in the last two decades. There is a large literature on the advantages of volunteerism for women. It is often reminiscent of the way club women spoke of the value of the woman’s club for its members: volunteering augments education, increases a variety of skills, provides a "sense of participation and power in [one’s] community," broadens one’s experience and
awareness of the world and of worldly issues, and offers "friendships and contacts...that everyone needs to be a fully-functioning, complex, knowledgable voter and human being." In addition, volunteer work was--for early twentieth century club women and for many of today's female volunteers--compatible with homemaking and child-rearing responsibilities in a way that paid employment outside the home was not. Volunteers are able to schedule their volunteer work and adjust the amount of volunteer work around the needs of their families.\textsuperscript{79}

The other side of the debate raises the issue of "deflected achievement" and whether or not women's volunteerism is in the best interests of women. For example, in 1971 the National Organization of Women passed a resolution that distinguished between two types of volunteer activity: service-oriented volunteering and political or change-oriented volunteering. NOW condemned the former and recommended the latter. The problem with service-oriented volunteering, the NOW Task Force on Volunteerism stated, was

\begin{itemize}
\item That such volunteering is an extension of unpaid housework and of women's traditional roles in the home...which have been extended to encompass the community.
\item That such volunteering reinforces a woman's low self-image by offering work which, because it is unpaid, confers little status.
\item That volunteerism has been society's solution for those, including but not limited
\end{itemize}
to women, for which there is little real employment choice. 80

The task force also stated that service-oriented volunteerism was a "band-aid" approach to social problems and, as such, obstructed needed social change by diverting political energies. 81

The numbers of female volunteers has declined since the NOW statement, and this has evoked comment and concern. 82 The professional female volunteer of the 1970s and 1980s has sometimes felt the need to defend her choice to do service-oriented volunteer work. 83 It is unlikely, however, that there is a causal relationship between the NOW statement and the decline in numbers of female volunteers. For one thing, women have continued to enter the paid work force in unprecedented numbers, thus reducing the the size of the major volunteer pool—women who are not employed outside the home. Second, the women’s liberation movement has been a volunteer movement itself that has involved millions of women in political or change-oriented volunteering and service-oriented volunteering, e.g. the women who staff rape crisis centers and shelters for battered women.

Early-twentieth-century club women would have been utterly confounded by this debate. They were involved in both political change-oriented volunteering and service-oriented volunteering. Moreover, they did not distinguish
between the two. Lobbying for a public-supported community library as well as volunteering time at the club-supported community library were both services to the community. Club women believed that exemplifying the spirit of altruism through their good works was one way to produce substantive change. The major difference between the club woman's approach to volunteer work and that espoused over fifty years later by the National Organization of Women is that although both groups were interested in woman's status, club women believed that woman's status would be best improved by not, publicly, making it too much of an issue. Club women wished to gain new recognition and appreciation for women, but they wanted to be recognized in a particular way—as earnest and unselfish and committed to the service of humanity. Distinctiveness was more important than equality.

There is, however, a subtle similarity between the two seemingly divergent views of volunteerism. The NOW Task Force on Volunteering asserted that unpaid work "confer[ed] little status," i.e. the cash nexus establishes status. Committed to improving the status of women, NOW recognized not only the advantages of economic independence (though this is by no means guaranteed by working for money) but also the fact that, in twentieth-century America, the marketplace determines to a large degree who is, and who is not, accorded status. Thus, while NOW encouraged women to
change society through politically-oriented volunteering, it also appeared to encourage women to enhance their individual situation through paid employment.

Mainstream late-twentieth century feminism, sometimes called "liberal feminism" and frequently cited as represented by the National Organization of Women, has been faulted for an emphasis on individualist careerism that uncritically accepts the economic system of the status quo. To the extent that this is true, mainstream feminism has too often adopted a male-model of success as its strategy for female emancipation. In other words, the condemnation of service-oriented volunteering as unpaid work indirectly promotes the stereotypically masculine values of the marketplace as the measure of status.

Early-twentieth-century white club women also recognized that woman's unpaid work in the home was no longer, if it ever had been, accorded the respect that it deserved. Value, recognition, and status were conferred upon those whose work lay in the public sphere. Thus, one of the motives for the club movement's entrance into the public sphere was a desire to improve their status. Like the latter day liberal feminists, club women could not escape the gnawing awareness that "man"--here symbolized by the public sphere--was the measure of things. Nonetheless, club women were far from wanting to "become like men." For
better or worse, they chose to emphasize their distinctive femininity but they chose to do so in the public, once exclusively male sphere where achievement would, hopefully, be recognized and status conferred accordingly.

* * *

In concluding this chapter, the club movement's ideal of womanhood can be further elucidated by noting how other historians have evaluated contemporaneous social feminists. Furthermore, because the "woman question" was a prominent social issue in the turn-of-the-century decades and because recent women's history emerged from the women's liberation movement of the late twentieth century, a consideration of the "feminism" of the women's club movement is unavoidable. Finally, as female volunteerism has been critiqued and criticized by the late twentieth century women's liberation movement, the legacy of the female professional volunteer must be considered.

Several twentieth-century historians of American women have observed that activist women often sought to justify nonfamilial activity by denying its nonfamilial nature. That is to say, work outside the home was often justified as necessary for the protection of the home. This was the case with white American club women.

In general, historians have been of two minds when evaluating social feminists, and even suffragists, and
their motives for expanding woman's sphere or trespassing into the public sphere. Marlene Wortman and Nancy Schrom Dye, for example, evaluate the social feminists about whom they write positively. They argue that these women took up work for certain reforms because, quite simply, they cared that certain improvements be made for the sake of their own families and for the sake of society. They take the social feminists at their word. Karen Blair, in writing specifically about club women, goes a step further when she refers to the club movement as "Domestic Feminism"—"the extension of woman's domestically nurtured traits into the public sphere"—and claims that "Domestic Feminism" became "a significant part of the women's rights campaign."^88

On the other hand, others, for example Jean Bethke Elshtain and William O'Neill, criticize social feminists and suffragists because their denial of the nonfamilial nature of their work represented their failure to achieve a radical analysis of sexual politics. That is, by holding on to the nineteenth-century ideology of "true womanhood" and the separate spheres, these women failed to challenge the patriarchal system that assigned women a subordinate place in the social, political, and economic hierarchy. Thus, their impact was sabotaged by their conservatism.^89

There are merits to both arguments, and both arguments
are partially applicable to white American club women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The more sanguine view of social feminists, like that espoused by Wortman and Dye, positively assesses the reformers' motives and acknowledges their contributions. Dye explicitly invokes Temma Kaplan's notion of "female consciousness" in order to "move beyond earlier dichotomies of feminist versus reformer." Dye writes:

That dichotomy behind us, we can begin to explore the vast amount of activity—much of which is at the level of individual communities—that women initiated in their attempts to articulate a language of public engagement and to create a politics that integrated private and public concerns. 90

This perspective evaluates social feminists more accurately in their own historical context and focuses on their accomplishments. The present study of white Texas club women shares this perspective to a large degree. Chapters Four and Five establish the actual contributions of Texas club women and mentions the achievements of the club movement at the national level. In addition, however, to noting the club movement's achievements and the movement's heretofore unchronicled participation in Progressive Era reform, it is important to consider the significance of the club women's movement for the women themselves and the implications for succeeding generations of twentieth-century middle- and upper-class women.

Whether or not club women furthered the cause of
women's rights, as Blair argues, is a much more difficult claim to evaluate. There are several pitfalls to evaluating club women on a feminist/anti-feminist continuum, the most obvious being one's definition of feminism. There has been a rather whiggish tendency in much of women's history to see whatever previous generations of women did in terms of an on-going progressive struggle towards feminist ideology. The impulse to judge all our female forebears as "feminist" has led to considerable confusion and imprecision in the meaning of feminism. And, then, of course, feminism is not--nor was it in the nineteenth century--a monolithic ideology. 91

Further, one of the most spirited debates within women's history has concerned the political utility of studying women's culture as separate from, and sometimes in contradistinction to, the study of movements for women's rights. That is, in the search for a "usable past," a past that can inform and strengthen feminist goals of the late twentieth century, there has been disagreement over what feminist historians of women should be studying, i.e. in the pursuit of women's history, should feminist historians of women have a particular topical agenda? 92

The history of white American club women raises these issues sharply. Club women were interested in women, and
sometimes in women's rights, and many feminists of whatever stripe were club women. In general, however, club women did not consider themselves, nor were they considered by their contemporaries, feminists. The club movement certainly intersected "women's culture"; it, in fact, constituted a woman's culture—the culture of the women's club world. It was both political and apolitical—urging political reforms while debating the appropriate ways for women to pursue these reforms.

There are at least two difficulties to labeling the club movement as "feminist." As suggested above, most club women would have eschewed this label even given the contemporary mainstream definition of feminism which is far different from the mainstream concept of late-twentieth-century feminism. So, there is the difficulty of attaching a label the club women did not choose for themselves.\(^{93}\)

The second problem is even more thorny: did club women advance the interests of women? This question presupposes that "advancing the interests of women" is, at least, the irreducible common denominator for any definition of feminism. At this point the above mentioned criticisms of social feminists become applicable.

It is quite true that club women did not radically redefine womanhood in the sense of "reaching to the center or ultimate source."\(^{94}\) Club women had no desire to relinquish the notion of woman's essential distinctiveness
from man. For example, club women would not have welcomed the revolutionary work of early-twentieth-century social scientists like Helen Thompson and Jesse Taft who concluded that the social and psychological differences between men and women were more attributable to environment than to biology. To believe that there was no such thing as a distinctly female soul would have been, for white American club women, a dreadful—even regressive—conclusion. It was their essential femininity that they found empowering. It was the basis of their insistence that they become involved in public matters. It was the basis of their claim that women were important and necessary for the public good as well as the private home.

Club women had no desire to alter their role in the family. Club women were not, ultimately, interested in entering the male domain of business or the professions as competitors, or as equals. They were tolerant, and even supportive, of women who did so as long as these women were also committed homemakers, were unmarried, or in some other way demonstrated their allegiance to the precepts and goals of the club movement. Their interest in business or the professions—including, for the most part the political professions—was to modify the prosecution of these male endeavors to make them more humane and to make them more attentive to, in the phrase of the late twentieth century,
"quality of life" issues.

That club women did not fundamentally alter the culture's sexual division of labor should not be surprising. Few are able to achieve such a dramatic "paradigm shift." Jill Conway observed of several turn of the century female reformers such as Jane Addams and Lillian Wald, that while they were wielding national power, neither they nor their contemporaries thought about adjusting the image of the female to this position of command. This failure to see women's activism for what it was, a real departure from women's traditional domesticity, indicates the controlling power of the stereotype of the female temperament which continued unaltered from the 1870s to the 1930s. 98

"The power of the stereotype" may have been "controlling" in the way that patterns of socialization that are reinforced by clusters of other social norms and necessities are, but the ideal was actively embraced by club women as well. Club women embraced the core of "true womanhood" because they believed it and because it was useful for them to believe it. The extent to which club women were or were not determined by historical contingency to believe as they did, is not---for this study---the point. The point is that white American club women maintained the view that women were distinct and were, even, "the highest human type" because they believed this to be true. Female sensibility and female virtue were, according to club
women, superior.

Nonetheless, club women surely hoped to advance the interests of women. This study demonstrates the desire to improve woman's status through participation in the public sphere. Club women wanted recognition that women were needed in the public sphere, and they wanted recognition for their accomplishments for the public good. There is, in fact, a wealth of evidence that many did acknowledge the work of club women and that many stereotypes of the decorative, idle, and even puny middle or upper class woman were, thus, strongly challenged. Texas journalist Peter Molyneaux was so impressed with the club movement that he wrote a long letter of praise in support of the GFWC's 1911 endowment campaign:

The woman's club movement, it seems to me, is doing three things that will make it significant to future historians of our period. (1) It is developing a new type of womanhood, of which the past has furnished us only isolated examples; (2) it is raising the level of culture in America, one might say, nurturing it during a period of crass commercialism; and (3) it is playing an important part in the larger movement toward social justice, which is now at work in our country and elsewhere. 99

Also, to the extent that woman suffrage was an advance of women's interest--and the point has been debated--the recognition accorded social feminists, including club women, helped make woman suffrage acceptable.

Club women also advanced the interests of women in
several particular instances when, for example, they supported women’s rights legislation such as married women’s property acts. They advanced women’s interests when they sought positions of public responsibility for women. They advanced women’s interests by encouraging the development of organizational skills and a new level of political sophistication. They advanced women’s interests through their support of women’s education. Most important, from the club movement’s perspective, they advanced women’s interests by expanding the club movement to every corner of the nation, for membership in a woman’s club was considered the most helpful thing a woman could do for herself and for her sex.  

But, to respond to the critics, did these advances constitute three steps forward and then two steps back when they championed domesticity as the alpha and omega—if not everything in between—of femininity? In their attempt to place women, and female values, in the center of public life, did they instead create an accommodation that, while promising and satisfying at the time, kept women at the margins and therefore unable to significantly affect public policy regarding women or, even, regarding many of their other social welfare concerns? Although club women significantly altered the geography of woman’s traditional sphere, did their new role for women—that of professional volunteer—simply create a different, if public, ghetto for
women?

Yes. The club movement modernized the rationale for domesticity and "true womanhood" even as it created a public role for middle- and upper-class white women. Obviously, it did not accomplish, nor did it intend to accomplish, the transformation of woman's sphere that many feminists of the late twentieth century would seek. But such expectations would hardly be fair.

The signal achievement of the women's club movement was that it introduced millions of women to a variety of public sphere activities and concerns. Neither the banner nor the substance of the movement was "women's rights," and it may have—as William O'Neill said of early-twentieth-century social feminists—led women straight to "the feminine mystique" of the 1950s. But it also created a new sense of pride, self-confidence, and accomplishment for many, many women. That the coherence and social relevance of the club movement was on the wane by the late 1920s can hardly be blamed on a lack of radical feminist consciousness.

Finally, "female consciousness" is not necessarily antithetical to "feminist consciousness." Feminists and female activists of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries often tried to define feminism in terms of female consciousness. This uneasy synthesis may have been part of
their undoing. "Second wave" feminists of the late twentieth century have struggled to move beyond the limitations of a biological determinism that rigidly bifurcates humankind into male and female, overemphasizing gender differences and minimizing similarities. Aided by achievements in the biological and social sciences, "second wave" feminists have focused on the social construction of gender.103

Even so, recent feminists have still had to evaluate the relationship between "female consciousness" and "feminist consciousness," for there are many aspects of "female consciousness" that are crucial to the radical feminist vision. In other words, late-twentieth-century feminists have had the difficult task of separating the wheat from the chaff. Aspects of female socialization that restrain women from recognizing the extent of their talents and abilities or that prevent women from identifying and challenging obstacles to their autonomy are maladaptive and oppressive. On the other hand, there are aspects of female socialization--for example, an emphasis on concern for others--that feminism must be careful to preserve and that feminists, rightly, hold as exemplary.

As "second wave" feminists have labored toward a feminist ideology that avoids the uncritical adoption of male-identified or status quo values, the issue of "female distinctiveness" and, even, female moral superiority has
The fusion of "female consciousness" with "feminist consciousness" has tempted late-twentieth-century feminists as well as their predecessors.

This is not to suggest that there are not significant differences between the woman's movement of the nineteenth century and the women's movement of the twentieth century. Nor should this analysis be understood as disdainful of recent feminist theory. On the contrary, it is a salute to the profound challenge that feminists face in constructing a revolutionary ideology. Rather, the point of this analysis is to appreciate the situation of previous generations of female activists who were concerned with the "woman question" and the reformulation of society, and this includes the white American club woman of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Feminist historians need not require their subjects to be feminist heroines. Ordinary women, as well as the extraordinary, can teach us just as much.
Endnotes for Chapter Seven

1 "To Woman," Yearbook, 1936-1937, Maids and Matrons Club, Brownfield, Texas Reference Files, Southwest Collection, Texas Technological University, Lubbock, Texas.


American club women: "In turning to gender-related 'necessity' to explain the choices they had made, they not only acknowledge the strictures that limited them, they enshrined them. Thus, they could act as few women had done, but they could see best, comprehend most fully, and think most freely in a style that was compatible with the mental proclivities that their society though of as uniquely and specially female. Education helped Grace Dodge, Maud Nathan, Lillian Wald, Leonora O'Reilly, and Rose Schneiderman do great things, but it did not enable them to transcend the categories of debate that had surrounded questions concerning women's roles and responsibilities throughout the nineteenth century." Lagemann, A Generation of Women: Education in the Lives of Progressive Reformers (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 164.


The Texas Federation of Women's Clubs, like the GFWC, has continued to endorse legislation for social welfare and the cultural arts. Recent projects include support for aid to battered women, assistance to M.D. Anderson Tumor Institute patients and their families, and support for Girls' Town U.S.A. Its activist period, however, did not survive the financial depression of the 1930s. By that time, much of the group's energies and finances were committed to the establishment of a lavish headquarters' building in Austin. Membership appears to have peaked in 1941 and has declined since that time. See Emma L. M. Jackson, "Petticoat Politics: Political Activism Among Texas Women in the 1920s," Diss. University of Texas at Austin 1980; and Megan Seaholm, "The Texas Federation of Women's Clubs," forthcoming in The Handbook of Texas (Austin: Texas State Historical Association).


Margaret Mooar, "Report of the Third Annual Meeting of the Federated Clubs of Texas, held at San Antonio, April 18-19-20," *Up-To-Date Club, Colorado City, Texas*, 1 May 1900, MS, Papers of Mrs. John W. Mooar, Southwest Collection, Texas Technological University, Lubbock, Texas.

Mrs. John L. Lovejoy, "Woman's Sphere From a Woman's Standpoint," *The Club Monthly*, 1, No. 7 (April 1898), 6-9.

"Woman's Strength," *The Club Monthly*, 1, No. 2 (Nov. 1897), 1.

The position of club women in "the social and economic hierarchy" is inferred in two ways. First, club women described themselves as mostly "leisure class" (see Chapter Two). Anna Pennybacker described white American club women as women of "modest prosperity," but added that their numbers also included women of "limited means" and that wealthy members were careful to avoid "ostentation." Mrs. Percy V. Pennybacker, "The Eighth Biennial Convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 28, No. 2 (Sept. 1906), p. 277.

Second, marital status and social position has been determined for a significant proportion of white Texas club women from a study of club records and city directories. The club records of nine different Texas women's clubs (Woman's Club of Houston, History Club of San Antonio, Cum Concilio Club of Nacogdoches, Sorosis Club of Sweetwater, Waco Current Events Club, Austin American History Club, Woman's Club of Anson, Austin Pathfinders Club, and the Lubbock Twentieth Century Club) indicates that the majority were married women (including widows). In the early years of the club movement, the percentage of single members was generally higher than in the late nineteen-teens.

As to social class, the experience of the Dallas
Woman's Forum and the Austin American History Club were suggestive. Based on occupations listed in city directories, spouses of club women were involved in a wide range of middle or upper class enterprises. Spouses of the members of the Austin American History Club were lawyers; judges; physicians; real estate brokers; retail or wholesale owners, co-owners, or even bookkeepers. Since Austin was the state capitol and the home of the state university, several spouses were elected or appointed city or state government officials. A significant number were one the faculty of the University of Texas. There was an occasional minister or rabbi and two of the physicians were medical directors of state eleemosynary institutions. Several of the club members themselves had occupations outside the home, e.g. Mary E. Gearing, UT faculty in Home Economics; Anna Pennybacker, authoress; Gertrude Whitis, assistant principal of a local public school in 1914; Emma and Minnie Dill, sisters, taught in the Austin public schools for decades.

Spouses of members of the Dallas Woman's Forum form a similar occupational profile excepting the academics and government officials. Instead, there were several traveling salesmen, one police captain, a few clerks and bookkeepers, an architect, and several insurance agents or adjusters. There were also several lawyers and a few physicians. A.H. Belo, publisher of the Dallas Morning News, was a club husband as were several employees of the Morning News. The group also included at least one bank president and at least one bank teller. A few club women were teachers, journalists, and one listed her occupation as stenographer.

Morrison and Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Austin, 1893-1894 (Galveston: Morrison and Fourmy, 1893); same source for 1900-1901, 1905-1906, 1910-1911; Polk's Morrison and Fourmy Austin City Directory, 1920 (Houston: Morrison and Fourmy Directory Co., Inc., 1920). Available at the Barker Center for Texas History, Austin, Texas.

John F. Worley and Company's Dallas Directory for 1900 (Dallas: John F. Worley Press, 1900); same source for 1906, 1910, 1914, 1917, 1920. Available at the Texas and Dallas History Collection, Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas.

15See notes 21 and 22, below. Also refer to the discussion of tactics in Chapters Four and Five.

16This can be inferred from the fact that every TFWC convention featured a local mayor, state official, or noted expert welcoming and praising the work of Texas club women. Some of these men were married to Texas club women. In 1905, Mrs. S.W.T. Lanham hosted the TFWC delegates at a

17Detractors usually condemned the club movement for diverting women from their proper sphere or from appropriate womanly modesty. For example, a late nineteenth-century issue of the Baptist Standard characterized the loathsome "new woman" as "Miss Bessie Society queen" seeking pleasure at dances or devoting "all her energy to club work." See Patricia Martin, "Hidden Work........" Diss. Rice University 1983, p. 232.

Another example is found in 1909 funeral oration at the funeral of J.G. Swofford of Granbury, Texas. Swofford committed suicide after a ruinous adulterous affair. The Rev. E.V. Cox made the funeral sermon the occasion for admonitions about the proper spheres for man and woman. When woman strays from her true calling, Cox said, "This leads quickly to 'High Society' where all kinds of indulgences are consented to and women will hire their carriages and go through rain and snow to 'Club Meetings' and 'Cards' and games of 'Forty-two' and allow their husbands to go home and do the cooking and dish washing only to find that their children are left for negro servants, to their neighbors or turned loose in the streets to grow up with the wild bunch."


19Anna Hertzberg, Address at Thirteenth Annual TFWC Convention, 29 November 1910, as cited by Christian, p. 270.


22Brown.


25 The Dallas Clubwoman, 1 (19 August 1908), 7.


27 See Chapter 5 regarding TFWC scholarships for women and TFWC support for women’s dormitory at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. Also, The Dallas Clubwoman frequently included brief articles on women’s achievements in business, the professions, or politics.

28 Christian, p. 133.

29 The work of Texas club women on behalf of the College of Industrial Arts, later called Texas Woman’s University, is described in Chapter Five.

30 Resolution, Ninth Annual TFWC Convention, 23 Nov. 1906, as cited by Christian, p. 167.


Ann Uhry Abrams article on the image of woman in paintings popular in turn-of-the-century America calls attention to the disparity between art which idealized woman as "a remote goddess" and what many middle and upper class white women were really doing. She states: "From differing perspectives [Abbott Handerson] Thayer and
[Thomas Wilmer] Dewing painted remote goddesses to satisfy personal and public concepts of morality and aesthetics. Thayer turned his female models into angels and madonnas, elevating them above the problems of everyday life. Dewing, on the other hand, removed his women from earthly contact by isolating them in empty rooms and distant landscapes. These women were the antithesis of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucy Stone Blackwell. Instead of signifying the newly independent female, these delicate maidens represented a nostalgic ideal. Abrams, "Frozen Goddesses: The Image of Woman in Turn-of-the-Century American Art," in Woman's Being, Woman's Place, ed. Kelley, pp. 93-108.

From Abrams' description of the Thayer and Dewing paintings, a different interpretation is also possible. The submissive and decorative women depicted did signify part of the cultural package that club women were working to unwrap. Club work was an escape from isolation and a sense of uselessness. At the same time, however, some of the themes suggested by Thayer and Dewing, according to Abrams, are consistent with clubdom rhetoric, i.e. the near-divinity of womanhood, woman as bearer of a higher and more spiritual culture.


35 Mrs. J. C. Terrell, "Response to Toast by Dr. A.P. Baldwin" (at First Annual TFWC Convention, April 1898), The Club Monthly, 1, No. 8 (May 1898), 51.

36 "Woman's Strength," The Club Monthly, p. 2.


Christian, p. 304.


Mrs. S.J. Wright, address delivered in Houston, 25 November 1911 as cited by Christian, p. 248.

"...Mrs. J. C. Roberts of Dallas told of the Status of Women Under the Laws of Texas. This address revealed such a state of affairs concerning woman's legal position in Texas that then and there a movement started which persevered for years, until some glaring injustices were removed from the statutes of Texas." Christian, pp. 135-6 reporting on the Eighth Annual Convention of the TFWC.


Mrs. Al Fairbrother as cited by Sims, "Sisterhoods of Service," p. 209. Another southern voice on the superfluity of suffrage was Mrs. L.J. Haley who, as president of the Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs in 1915, indicated that club women were not so much interested in women's rights "as in woman's place in man's civilization." Cited by Margaret Nell Price, "The Development of Leadership by Southern Women Through Clubs and Organizations," Diss. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1945, p. 157.

On the other hand, Anne Firor Scott cautions historians that suffrage sentiment alone cannot adequately reflect the views of Southern women on "the woman question." She has written: "The concrete manifestation of the growth of feminism cannot be wholly measured by the minority of southern women who openly espoused suffrage. There were all degrees of latent discontent, and the close reader of letters, diaries, even of stories and poems
written by women during these years will pick up a great deal of evidence of it." Scott, "Are We the Women Our Grandmothers Were?" in Making the Invisible Woman Visible (Urbana: Chicago University Press, 1984), p. 263.


It should also be noted that while the GFWC was late to endorse suffrage, it recommended as early as 1896 that start using their own (and not their husband's) names. Sophonisba Breckinridge, Women in the Twentieth Century (1933; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1972), pp. 30-2, 39-40.


50 "Club members preferred to work as much as possible within the existing pattern of culture which gave control of government to men. Not until they had had experience in the slowness and ineffectiveness of 'indirect influence' on men did any sizeable group of club women advocate woman suffrage, and not until the suffrage movement lost much of its newness and objectionableness to the region did federations officially endorse the movement. Since women's clubs were relatively conservative as to woman's place and activities, they helped to prepare public opinion for acceptance of the participation of women in public

William O’Neill also saw the GFWC endorsement of suffrage as significant: "By 1914, when the General Federation of Women’s Clubs endorsed woman suffrage, it was clear that the cause enjoyed the support of masses of ordinary middle-class women. Thereafter the problem was no longer one of making woman suffrage respectable and of educating women to desire it. Instead, it was a matter of finding ways to translate womanly enthusiasm into political pressure." O’Neill, Everyone Was Brave, p. 167.


52 Kate Friend, "Texas" (Report), The Club Woman, 9 (Jan. 1902), 160.


54 Club women, and perhaps especially club women of the South, often spoke deferentially and respectfully of men and when addressing men, particularly men in positions of authority. But, they sometimes spoke ironically like the Waco club women when they referred to the "lords of authority" who had allowed the neglect and destruction of the vines planted on public buildings. See Chapter Four, pp. 38-9.

55 Mrs. J.C. Weaver, "Criticizing the Club Movement; Mrs. J.C. Weaver Says Those Who Oppose Should Study Subject," Dallas Morning News, 15 Jan. 1906.


57 The quotation from which the phrase is drawn is: "Lecturers and impersonators bring new thought to the literary club, whose members gain strength and moral force to give out again in the planting of the ideal in the hard materialism of our commercial age, and thus secure a ceaseless inspiration to club effort." Mrs. E.P. Turner,


60 Christian, p. 4.

61 The phrases quoted are from Gordon and Buhle, "Sex and Class in Colonial and Nineteenth-Century America." The entire quotation, from p. 287 of that article, is: "Most Americans in the relatively leisured middle classes rejected the feminist implications in the moral-guardian theory which would extend their traditional domain to social controversy. While these women shared with the feminists an uneasiness with the ideals of gentility and idleness, they responded to a new functionalism of woman's domestic role. The growth of 'domestic science' for the home, the spread of teachers' schools for women, and the rationalization of new modes of child-rearing all provided reassertions in new forms of woman's distinct contribution to society. However, the attempt to shore up family life and wifeliness through further training inevitably undercut the very aim of domestication, for some women exposed to outside influences were bound to create, as did Jane Addams and other reformers, still newer patterns for women's social guardianship."

62 Sophonisba Breckinridge, p. 4.


65 Kaplan, p. 55.

66 Kaplan, p. 61.


Anna Pennybacker, "A New Vocation for the Women of Texas," Eleventh Annual TFWC Convention, 10 Mar. 1908, as cited by Christian, p. 216


72Chapters Two and Four discuss the "domestic science movement" in America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Reference has been made to the article by William D. Jenkins in which he argues that the achievement of woman suffrage had little impact on woman’s roles as housewife and mother because of the prior movement to professionalize and rationalize those roles. See Jenkins, "Housewifery and Motherhood: The Question of Role Change in the Progressive Era," in Woman's Being, Woman's Place, ed. Kelley, pp. 142-153.

73Mary Belle Kingman Sherman, "To Club Members of the State Federation of Texas," TFWC Yearbook, 1908-1909, p. 7.

74Roy Lubove, The Professional Altruist: The Emergence of Social Work as a Career, 1880-1930 (Cambridge, 1965); Janice Wood Wetzel, "...feminism and social work..."

75Gordon and Buhle comment on the influence which urban middle- and upper-class women had over the American female population as a whole in the nineteenth century: "As late as 1890, nearly half of all American women lived and worked in [the] immediate social environment of a farm family, providing many necessities for the home through daily hard work. Yet the farm wife lost her cultural standing to a new sector of women: the wives and daughters of the rising entrepreneurs and merchant capitalists of the
urban Northeast. This new sector remained a numerical minority, while its ethos became central to American women's self-definition. Because of their class position, these women gained an hegemony over female cultural patterns never attained by the eighteenth-century elites. Taste, customs, religious and political principles, and above all, morality were reshaped in the nineteenth century through the cultural equivalent of the economic power that capitalists themselves wielded. Thus for all women in the society, this new ideal of femininity became the model, however unrealizable in their own lives.\(^\text{76}\) Gordon and Buhle, "Sex and Class," p. 284.

White club women of the early twentieth century exerted a similar influence, for similar reasons.


Gold cites a U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Manpower Research 1965 survey of U.S. volunteers (published as American Volunteer, April 1969). Excluding political, religious, and fraternal organizations, the survey found that "six of every ten American volunteers were women; in all, twenty-two million women served as volunteers. Three-quarters of the women were married; half were between twenty-five and forty-four; three-quarters served in youth and education programs." Gold, p. 552.

See, for example, Wendy Kaminer, *Women Volunteering:*

Quoted phrases are from Mary Durey Poole, "Advice to a Prospective Volunteer...From One Who's Been There," *The Key,* (Winter 1975), pp. 9-10.

Martha Swain of Texas Woman's University has recently written about the public and political work of southern women in the twentieth century. She has noted both the help and the hindrance of women's clubs for increasing women's public role. For example: "Almost all of the women leaders entered public service from club work or church organizations...", and "Club life for large numbers of southern women has not extended beyond the women's programs of the Farm Bureau and the home demonstration work of university agricultural extension divisions, neither of which has been politicized for other than a stance against 'excessive' government regulation. The preoccupation of millions of rural and small-town women of both races with domestic life to the exclusion of other interests accounts immeasurably for the widespread disinterest of women in the South in public affairs and feminist issues. Swain, "The Public Role of Southern Women," in *Sex, Race, and the Role of Women in the South,* ed. Joanne V. Hawks and Sheila L. Skemp (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1983), pp. 38, 53.


Doris Gold makes an observation similar to that made by the NOW Taskforce regarding the way service-oriented volunteering can blunt action for structural or institutional social change. She also cites a 1965 Department of Labor study which raised the same issue: "What inadequacies in our social order is volunteerism attempting to overcome? Could they be attacked more suitably by other means? How does the work of the volunteer stack up with that of the job-holder? Should the volunteer attempt to find self-satisfaction, extent the program, or act as a catalytic agent for societal change? Can he [sic] do all three?" American Volunteer, April 1969, p. 1 as cited by Gold, p. 537.

82 Benjamin DeMott, "The Day the Volunteers Didn't."

83 See, in particular, Kaminer, Women Volunteering, and Loeser, Women, Work, and Volunteering.


Regarding the critique of individualist careerism as the denouement of "liberal feminism" see Suzanne Gordon, "The New Corporate Feminism," The Nation, 3 Feb. 1983, pp. 129, 143-7. This quotation from Gordon summarizes her point: "A reading of the literature on corporate feminism and an examination of corporate feminist values lead to one inescapable conclusion: women exercising their entrepreneurial skills, wielding power and flexing their financial muscles are joining the system, not changing it." (p. 147) Also see Sarah J. Stage, "Women," American Quarterly, 35, Nos. 1/2 (1983), pp. 169-190.

Betty Friedan, author of The Feminine Mystique and co-founder of the National Organization of Women, has labeled male-model careerism as the new "feminist mystique" in her most recent book, The Second Stage (New York: Summit Books, 1981). The irony of her criticism is that Friedan has been perhaps the major exponent of "liberal feminism." For an analysis of her views, which Stage calls "a wholesale distortion of the contemporary feminist movement written by a woman who knows better," see Stage, "Women," and Judith Stacey, "The New Conservative Feminism," Feminist Studies, 9, (Fall, 1983), 559-583.


Blair, Clubwoman as Feminist, p. 117.

See O'Neill, Elshtain, Kraditor, and Eisenstein as cited in note number 86, above.


92See, for example, Ellen DuBois, Mari Jo Buhle, Temma Kaplan, Gerda Lerner, and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Politics and Culture in Women's History: A Symposium," Feminist Studies, 6, No. 1 (Spring 1980), 26-64.

93Anastatia Sims wrote this of North Carolinian club women: "Mrs. Cotten [Sallie Southall Cotten] and her colleagues in the NCFWC [North Carolina Federation of Women’s Clubs] were not feminists. They did not view their public activities as milestones along the road to female emancipation. Instead, they saw their involvement in politics and community affairs as part of their maternal function and domestic duties. However, through their extension of the traditional feminine sphere to include areas outside the home, they unintentionally contributed to the gradual expansion of the Southern definition of woman's role."


96Once again, Anastatia Sims' work on North Carolina club women elucidates a similar point: "All women's groups...shared certain assumptions about the world and about woman's place within it. Women believed that through their clubs, they could oversee the moral and physical welfare of their communities just as they looked after the moral and physical well-being of their families. The notion of inherent feminine virtue and domesticity that lay at the heart of the ideal of southern womanhood became the basis for women's organized efforts to extend their influence beyond their homes. They argued that the exigencies of life in modern America demanded that women apply their uniquely feminine skills to problems of the public, as well as of the private spheres. Sims, "Sisterhoods of Service," p. 196.

97Isadore Callaway, Kate Friend, and Annie Webb
Blanton are three examples of club women who, though not homemakers, were devoted club women, and who were revered by Texas club women. Isadore Callaway (1863-1916) established her career in journalism as a young woman and continued as a journalist, club woman, and activist after her marriage, at age 37, in 1900. She and her husband raised two orphaned nieces, but had no children of their own. See Megan Seaholm, "Isadore Callaway," forthcoming in The Handbook of Texas.

Kate Friend (1856-1949) never married. She operated a private school for girls in Waco with her mother and later taught and served as principal in the Waco School District. She also wrote for several local newspapers, briefly edited her own local society paper, and was the society editor for the Waco Times Herald. She held office in local women's clubs and in the state federation. See Megan Seaholm, "Kate Harrison Friend," forthcoming in The Handbook of Texas.

Annie Webb Blanton held the BA and the MA degrees from the University of Texas and the PhD degree from Cornell University. She never married or had children. She was associate professor of English at North Texas State College from 1901-1918 and professor of educational administration at the University of Texas from 1923 to 1946. She served as state superintendent of public instruction in Texas for two terms, 1919-23. She was an active member of the TFWC as well as the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, the Eastern Star, and the Daughters of the American Revolution. See C.E. Evans, The Story of Texas Schools (Austin: Steck Co., 1955), pp. 124-7; Who's Who of the Womanhood of Texas, 1923-4 (Austin: TFWC, 1924).


And as Sims has written: "Yet the myth of the Southern lady continued to pervade Southern feminine consciousness well into the twentieth century. Female activists in the South clung to the basis tenets of the antebellum code of feminine behavior but interpreted the dogma of domesticity in such a way as to permit women to assume leadership roles in public affairs. They broadened, but did not fundamentally alter, the old definition of woman’s place." Sims, "North Carolina Federation of Women’s Clubs," Thesis, p. 3.

99Peter Molyneaux, Letter to Mrs. Percy V. Pennybacker included in GFWC Press Release, compiled by Mrs. Philip N. Moore and Mrs. Percy V. Pennybacker, Feb. 1911, Mrs. Percy C. Pennybacker Papers, Barker Center for Texas History,
Austin, Texas. Also see Peter Molyneaux, "What About These Club Women?", Bunker's Monthly, 1, No. 5 (May 1928), 725-726. For information on Molyneaux, see Rupert N. Richardson, Texas: The Lone Star State, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1943), p. 542.

Chapters Two and Three consider the many advantages that club membership offered to women. Sims found that North Carolinian club leader Sallie Cotten held the same view: "Her [Cotten's] feminism was rooted in the cult of true womanhood's assertion of the moral superiority of the female sex. The feminine monopoly on virtue, Sallie believed, obligated women to seek to extend their influence outside the domestic sphere. In her view the best vehicle for fulfillment of feminine social responsibilities was the woman's club." Sims, "North Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs," Thesis, p. 20.

O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave, pp. 295-348.

More credible theories regarding the decline of the club movement and of feminism and social feminism in general can be found in Stanley Lemon, The Woman Citizen and in Carl Degler, At Odds.

The term, "the Second Wave," is usually attributed to Shulamith Firestone, the feminist theoretician who wrote The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution (New York: Morrow Quill Paperbacks, 1970).

Rosalind Rosenberg has documented the early twentieth work in the social scientists that first challenged the biological reductionism of the ideology of the separate spheres. See Rosenberg, Beyond Separate Spheres. Further enlightenment has come, often at the prodding of feminist scholars. See, for example, Elizabeth Langland and Walter Gove, A Feminist Perspective in the Academy: The Difference it Makes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

One of the earliest examples of a text which posited female superiority was Elizabeth Gould Davis, The First Sex (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1971). In her introduction, Davis wrote: "It seems evident that the time has come to put woman back into the history books, and, as Mary Wollstonecraft suggested two hundred years ago, to readmit her to the human race. Her [woman's] contribution to civilization has been greater than man's, and man has overlooked her long enough" (p. 18).

More recently, Carol Gilligan's book In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982) has presented
new challenges for feminist theory. Associate Professor of Education in the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University, Gilligan exposes the sexist bias in the psychological theories of human development which derive paradigms of life cycle stages and of moral maturity from exclusively male models of experience. She goes on to present the results of her research in the meaning of morality for women and how that contrasts with stereotypically male notions of morality. In sum, she posits "the centrality of the concepts of responsibility and care in women's constructions of the moral domain, the close tie in women's thinking between conceptions of the self and of morality, and ultimately the need for an expanded developmental theory that includes, rather than rules out from consideration, the differences in the feminine voice" (p. 105). She contrasts a "morality of rights" (identified as male) with the "ethic of responsibility" (identified as female), and concludes that the complementarity of these two constructions of morality "is the discovery of maturity."

In general, Gilligan's theories have received a warm welcome in the American feminist community. In 1984, Gilligan was Ms. Magazine's "Woman of the Year," and scores of other feminist publications have applauded Gilligan for recognizing a heretofore unappreciated feminine sensibility. Jean Bethke Elshtain concluded an important article with a reference to Gilligan: "...if, as Carol Gilligan has argued, it is the case that women have a distinct moral language, one that emphasized concern for others, responsibility, care, and obligation, hence a moral language profoundly at odds with formal, abstract models of morality defined in terms of absolute principles, then we must take care to preserve the sphere that makes such a morality of responsibility possible and must extend its imperatives to men as well." Elshtain, "Feminist Discourse and Its Discontents: Language, Power, and Meaning," in Feminist Theory: A Critique of Ideology, ed. Keohane, et. al., pp. 127-145.

There have been, however, critics and those who wish to add a gentle admonition to the "celebration of female moral characteristics." Some critics fear that Gilligan's theories, can be all too easily used to perpetuate a gender hierarchy under the guise of "separate but equal." It may be significant that Gilligan has, according to one critic, found a large audience among antifeminists, including Phyllis Schlafly. There is other evidence of "guilt by association" when schools of business management use Gilligan's work to emphasize the importance of "relational capacities and contextual orientation." The question is then asked--by Judy Auerbach, Linda Blum, Vicki Smith, and Christine Williams, in particular--will women's
participation in the corporate world "ensures that capitalism has a friendly face."
See Auerbach, et. al., "Commentary On Gilligans In a Different Voice," Feminist Studies, 11 (Spring 1985), 149-161.

The essential point in reading Gilligan is not to confuse what she sets out as descriptive and what she identifies as prescriptive. As a social scientist (though there are also critics of her methodology), she describes a female moral sensibility that is the construction of the particular ways in which women are socialized and the ways in which women's experience typically differs from men's. This need not be seen as a regression to an invocation of a "woman's separate sphere." On the contrary, it is more properly understood as additional evidence of the social construction of gender as distinct from the biological or physiological construction of gender. Gilligan's prescription, her blueprint for moral maturity, is a synthesis of the morality of rights and the ethic of care. 

My own gentle admonition is that Gilligan does not seem to recognize how thoroughly radical her prescription is. If men and women arrive at different constructions of morality because of the dissimilarity of their experiences, the synthesis can be gained only when men and women share more of the wide realm of human experience: when both men and women nurture small children, when both girls and boys play sports and with dolls, and so on.

My second admonition is that Gilligan does not give enough weight to real obstacles that may prevent women from arriving at female moral maturity. Gilligan states: "...changes in women's rights change women's moral judgements, seasoning mercy with justice by enabling women to consider it moral to care not only for others but for themselves" (p. 149). Even when, or as, women are able to consider themselves as well as others, the path is not always made clear.
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