ABSTRACT

SHERMAN, REBECCA THALER. The Young, the Aged, and the Poor: The King’s Daughters and the Growth of Social Benevolence in Durham, North Carolina, 1881-1915. (Under the direction of Dr. Blair Kelley.)

This thesis explores the role of gender and race in the creation of the public and private social welfare systems in Durham, North Carolina, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Local officials chose to make the poorhouse the centerpiece of the newly-founded county’s public welfare system in the early 1880s. However, as Durham expanded in the following decades from a small town to a booming industrial city, the number of economically vulnerable residents—African Americans, as well as white women and children—correspondingly grew. Patterns of both poverty and relief in Durham were gendered in nature and impacted by the system of white supremacy.

By the turn of the century, many middle- and upper-class Durhamites came to view the poorhouse model as flawed and inadequate. They responded by attempting to reform the public system, often influenced by national movements, and by offering alternative private services to those groups they deemed worthy of assistance. In 1903 a group of middle- and upper-class white women formed the Sheltering Home Circle of the King’s Daughters, a local chapter of an international women’s voluntary association. The group undertook various types of charitable projects directed towards Durham’s needy residents, ranging from giving monetary donations to providing social services; the Sheltering Home Circle’s largest endeavor was the building and maintenance of a home for “worthy” old ladies.
This study focuses on the public and private provisions made for needy women and children in Durham. During the nineteenth century, dependent children in Durham and other southern counties typically had been boarded in the poorhouse or apprenticed to local masters. The King’s Daughters, responding to a national child-saving movement and to the inadequacies of the local child welfare system in Durham, performed rescue work among the city’s orphaned and neglected white children. They utilized the legal system and their connections to the North Carolina Children’s Home Society to remove these children from the county and place them in new homes across the state. The organization also worked to rescue unmarried mothers by sending them to privately-run, evangelical maternity homes.

The intervention of benevolent societies helped to revolutionize some aspects of Durham’s welfare system. The King’s Daughters criticized the poorhouse model and, despite the county government’s resistance to change, the women successfully provided alternative services for subsets of the city’s needy population. In all of their projects the King’s Daughters aimed to assist those people with whom they most easily identified and empathized, white women and children. However, the women’s biases blinded them to the plight of other groups—blacks, those deemed unworthy of charity, and other “undesirables”—who consequently remained dependent on the poorhouse and the limited social services provided by the county. Despite reform movements and the rise of local charitable organizations advocating “modern” methods of social work, the transformation of Durham County’s welfare system remained incomplete until the late 1910s, when the state implemented new legislation.
The Young, the Aged, and the Poor: The King’s Daughters and the Growth of Social Benevolence in Durham, North Carolina, 1881-1915

by
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INTRODUCTION

In his 1884 history of Durham, North Carolina, published three years after the formation of the county, Hiram Paul declared that “Durham, to-day, is an asylum for the poor.”¹ In writing this, Paul expressed a type of boosterism embraced by politicians and the business elite in urban areas across the South in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These boosters sang the praises of the benevolent paternalism common in industrializing cities such as Durham; however, this paternalism was tempered by a capitalist mindset that measured progress in terms of industrial development and shaped by sweeping assumptions about the types of reform that would advance this goal. Many Durhamites—poor white mill workers, African Americans, and middle and upper-class white clubwomen—would have challenged the assertion by Paul and others that Durham was an asylum for the poor.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Durham underwent a population explosion as it grew from a sleepy railroad depot to a booming industrial city. The city’s unbridled growth, however, was accompanied by a range of social problems. The flood of unskilled laborers into the city from the surrounding countryside created a large working class that fought vehemently to prevent itself from sinking into abject poverty. Durham County had, of course, always had poor people. The swelling of Durham’s working class due to industrialization, however, overwhelmed the county’s limited public welfare system. This thesis tells the story of the evolution of the public

welfare system in Durham and, more importantly, the rise of social benevolence that resulted in the creation of a complex network of private charities. Newly available records from one women’s organization, the King’s Daughters, provide more than just a chronicle of the group’s charity projects and “rescue” work. These records offer a window onto the world of the destitute women and children living on the margins of Durham society and illuminate the options available to those in need of relief and social services, a story that could not be told using only the limited existing county records.

Historians have long been fascinated by questions related to social welfare history. The topic’s resonance with contemporary debates over welfare policies has prompted many historians to examine the nature of public welfare in various periods of American history. The field of social welfare history has produced a wealth of research, ranging from sweeping histories of public aid in the United States to individual case studies, that has addressed many historical questions. In general, however, these works have followed two broad trends which have prompted additional questions that remain inadequately answered.

Several scholars have produced sweeping histories of welfare in the twentieth centuries that describe the evolution of public policies relating to aid. For instance, Michael Katz, whose scholarship has helped to define the field, built on his earlier studies by painting a comprehensive picture of U.S. social policy in the late twentieth century in *The Price of Citizenship*. Other historians have focused specifically on Progressive era

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reforms, particularly on the rise of professional social work and the impact of government regulation and funding on reform efforts. Roy Lubove’s *The Professional Altruist* remains one of the classic texts on the advent of “scientific” charity in the late nineteenth century and the evolution of casework.³ Katz and Lubove, along with other historians, thus have generally focused on federal policies and on national trends in social work.

When examining the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, this tendency raises additional questions about regional distinctiveness. Throughout this time period, the North and Midwest remained at the forefront of national trends in social welfare; industrialization and urbanization forced cities and states in these regions to confront social problems related to poverty, immigration, education, and public health before many other areas of the country. These regions embraced professionalization first and became the academic center of sociology and social work. Thus histories of “national” trends during this period tend to be most reflective of policies in the urban North and Midwest, raising important questions about whether or not the South and rural areas followed these national patterns of development.

The field of southern social welfare history remains underdeveloped and relatively unexplored. Scholarship on southern Progressivism touches on some pertinent issues within the larger context of the transformation of social and political institutions in the region.⁴ Similarly, studies that focus more broadly on the poor and working classes in the South only tangentially address questions of social welfare. For example, in *Plain

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Folk in the New South, while I.A. Newby discusses the rich culture of textile workers and the paternalism inherent in mill villages, the author does not acknowledge that death, illness, and poverty may have forced these working-class people to turn to public aid or seek out private relief organizations.\(^5\) It is apparent that the legacy of slavery and the rise of white supremacy in the late nineteenth century impacted reform movements and institutions in the South. However, only recently have historians begun to address this question of regional distinctiveness and to tackle the issue of whether southern social welfare policy developed along patterns and timeframes similar to those in the rest of the nation.\(^6\) This study builds on the existing literature in this field by addressing the interplay between national and local movements in a southern community.

Secondly, historians have largely traced the evolution of social welfare through particular institutions and movements. In the 1970s, David Rothman offered a thorough analysis of the emergence of the asylum, in its many varied forms, as the primary means of rehabilitation and reform in nineteenth-century America.\(^7\) Other historians have focused on particular types of institutions and asylums; in his groundbreaking study, historian Michael Katz asserted that the poorhouse, which remained the cornerstone of welfare policy until the early twentieth century, “symbolized the spirit and intent of

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welfare practice.” Allen Davis, on the other hand, focused on settlement houses as the quintessential Progressive reform. Numerous other studies have examined institutional and organizational responses to the problem of providing for dependent children. Early works tended to focus exclusively on orphanages and child protection legislation as the outgrowth of a “child-saving” movement. More recent studies, on the other hand, have emphasized the transition away from child-caring institutions towards other forms of social services for children. Historians have also examined the problem of the delinquent child through the lens of reformatories, juvenile courts, and other similar institutions.

Through case studies of individual institutions or of a specific city’s response to a particular problem, these works provide a wealth of valuable information about the purpose and operation of these institutions. In addition, they bring to light unanswered questions about the interactions of different types of institutions and organizations, as well as reformers’ efforts to address a broader range of issues. This study, rather than

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focusing exclusively on public institutions or private associations, hopes to merge the two to present a more complete picture of relief and social services in Durham.

Historians first addressed these issues from the point of view of the reformers—the middle class, the social workers, and politicians. Hence much of this research focused on reformers’ motivations, as historians debated whether humanitarian impulses or concerns over social control spurred private charity and the implementation of public relief programs. For instance, in Spearheads for Reform Allen Davis examined the “settlement impulse” among young, educated Progressive reformers who founded settlement houses, concluding that they were motivated by both compassion and paternalism.\textsuperscript{13}

However, since the 1970s many scholars have used a social history lens to examine the same issues from the perspective of the clients, inmates, and “beneficiaries” of these charitable reform efforts. These studies have uncovered the complex methods in which race, class, and ethnicity have driven social welfare reform efforts.\textsuperscript{14} Significantly, attention to these issues has highlighted the ways in which poor and working class people

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were not merely passive recipients of charity and public aid; rather they challenged and resisted various forms of social control. This thesis seeks to combine elements of these trends in scholarship, both to examine reformers’ motivations and to find agency among Durham’s marginal and destitute populations.

The field of women’s history, which has at times overlapped with social welfare history, has also influenced this project. Historians have long recognized participation in voluntary associations and benevolent societies as crucial to redefining women’s roles in the late nineteenth century. These studies led some historians to examine the impact of women’s reform efforts and the vital role that women played in creating the modern welfare state. Other works have analyzed the ways in which voluntary associations enabled women to assert a different relationship to government and politics; municipal housekeeping allowed disfranchised women to operate in the political sphere. Some women’s historians have argued that women’s social service activities frequently targeted issues that were directly pertinent to women and children. For instance, a rich literature on social policy relating to unmarried mothers blends questions related to social welfare history and to women’s history. In this vein, this study uses the social service activities

of the King’s Daughters to illuminate the lives of poor women and children in Durham, concluding that gender impacted both poverty and relief efforts.

In order to address these questions, this thesis examines the city of Durham, North Carolina, from the formation of Durham County in 1881 through the mid-1910s. Although case studies of this type provide the advantage of delving extensively into local records, local case studies also force the historian to consider the question of typicality. I chose to focus on Durham for a number of reasons. First, as discussed above, social welfare historians have done almost no research on southern cities. The only major study of social welfare in a southern city is Elna Green’s *This Business of Relief*.\(^\text{19}\) Although Green’s work contributes greatly to the field, it focuses on Richmond, a large southern city with antebellum roots. Durham offers a different environment in which to examine many of the same types of questions.

In many regards Durham is the quintessential New South city; before the 1880s, Durham existed only as a small railroad depot in Orange County. The formation of the new county of Durham in 1881 offers the historian a unique opportunity to examine social welfare. At the time of its creation, it remained a largely rural county; the small town of Durham had a population of only 2,000.\(^\text{20}\) Thus the provisions put in place in the new county are more typical of the systems existing in rural counties than in urban areas; Durham politicians chose to ignore all of the trends that were transforming welfare

\(^{19}\) Elna Green, *This Business of Relief*.
systems in large northern cities and instead implemented the older poorhouse model. However, Durham’s population grew exponentially in the following decades as the town was transformed into an industrial city. This population growth brought urban social problems, and hence this case study of Durham also examines the transformation of the county’s social welfare system, largely through private organizations.

Lastly, Durham developed a rich array of private charities. The city’s industrialists and business entrepreneurs embraced the paternalistic notion that certain types of philanthropy would benefit industry. Both the black and white communities in Durham reaped the benefits of the elite’s philanthropic investments, in the form of segregated hospitals and schools as well as other charitable giving. The wives, sisters and daughters of these elite men joined with middle-class women in donating their time and fundraising efforts towards social work. Although private charity in Durham was minimal before 1900, the wealth and leisure time of Durham’s “better classes” allowed them to rapidly develop a diverse network of private charitable organizations in the first two decades of the twentieth centuries.

This inquiry focuses on the period through the mid-1910s, during which the state of North Carolina made few provisions for welfare and the state exercised only minimal oversight of county welfare systems. In 1917 the General Assembly greatly expanded the legal and fiscal powers of the State Board of Public Charities (renamed the State Board of Charities and Public Welfare) to regulate and administer social services. Two years later, the Child Welfare Act of 1919 overhauled the state’s system of providing for dependent and delinquent children. The combined effect of these two acts of legislation was to
rapidly revolutionize and “modernize” Durham County’s welfare system, and after 1919 the state assumed responsibility for many types of social work previously provided by private organizations such as the King’s Daughters. Thus the late 1910s represented a major turning point in the city’s history.

Although this study examines both public and private poor relief, it does not presume to provide a comprehensive picture of social welfare in Durham. White politicians, clubwomen, and reformers concentrated on providing services for “worthy” poor whites. Although upper- and middle-class African Americans developed their own organizations to aid the black community, this inquiry focuses on charity provided by and directed towards white Durhamites. However, questions of race do inform this work, particularly with regard to the county’s institutions, which served both blacks and whites. This study also does not focus on the overtly political aspects of implementing social welfare policies in Durham.

This thesis begins by examining the community of Durham in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although by many measures Durham was an economically prosperous city, not all residents benefited equally from the booming tobacco and textile industries. Women and children, particularly African Americans, remained some of the most economically vulnerable groups in the city. As Durham’s white “better classes” developed an awareness of the growing problems of poverty, vice, and crime in marginal areas of the city, they began forming private charitable organizations to provide relief to the poor. In this context, in 1903 a group of middle- and upper-class white women formed a chapter of the International Order of the King’s Daughters, which they named
the Sheltering Home Circle. The group provided a relatively small number of Durham residents with charity in the form of money and other donations; by far its largest endeavor was the building of a home for “worthy” old ladies in 1911.

The second chapter examines Durham County’s provisions for dependent children—orphans as well as abandoned and neglected children. Many of these children ended up, at least temporarily, in the Durham County poorhouse, which served as the lynchpin in the nineteenth-century public welfare system. In accordance with state law, the County Commissioners could also apprentice dependent children. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, the national “child-saving” movement began to impact North Carolina; reformers called for the removal of children from poorhouses and for the elimination of the out-dated system of apprenticeship. Instead these reformers advocated for the creation of special child-caring institutions, namely orphanages. Although the presence of a workhouse next to the Durham County poorhouse heightened the need to remove children from the premises, before 1900 Durham County’s child welfare system remained resistant to change.

The child-saving activities of the Sheltering Home Circle of the King’s Daughters can be viewed as the culmination of a national shift in attitudes towards the care of dependent and neglected children. The group’s “rescue work” was also a response to the inadequate and problem-ridden public welfare system in Durham. The King’s Daughters stepped in to fill a void as advocates for children they deemed

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21 The term “child-saving” was frequently used by reformers throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to refer to a variety of activities aimed at protecting children. This term, as well as “saved,” will henceforth be used without quotation marks, unless it is in the context of a direct quote.

22 As with the term “child-saving,” the terms “rescued” and “rescue work” will henceforth be used without quotation marks, unless in the context of a direct quote.
“worthy” of saving—those who were white and “normal”—because the women feared these children would become delinquents if left in “undesirable surroundings.” The organization utilized the legal system and its connection to the North Carolina Children’s Home Society to remove these children from the county and place them in new homes across the state. Those children who did not meet the women’s criteria, however, remained in the care of the county’s public welfare system.

The concluding chapter looks at the King’s Daughters’ rescue work among unmarried mothers. The organization viewed this work as the natural complement to its child-saving work, as they believed that a neglected girl could easily become a “ruined” young woman. The King’s Daughters viewed this rescue work as a moral intervention to save both the mother and her unborn child, and correspondingly sent unmarried mothers to privately-run, evangelical maternity homes across the state. Many of Durham’s poor unmarried mothers, however, resisted the King’s Daughters’ offer of assistance; instead they chose to navigate the city’s complex system of public and private services on their own.

A project of this type presented particular challenges in obtaining sources. The poor and dispossessed leave few written records of their own, and their lives can be difficult if not impossible to trace. With no records in existence for the Durham County superintendent of the poor, other sources needed to be utilized. The reports of the State Board of Public Charities provided invaluable and easily accessible records of most public and private institutions across the state. Although these reports allow generalizations to be made about the nature of social welfare reform movements in North
Carolina and the impact that these movements had on individual counties and institutions, they have their limitations. The State Board did not compile records between 1870 and 1889, leaving many unanswered questions about this time period. Existing reports also omit much information and sometimes tend to be propagandistic in nature. Nevertheless, the State Board of Public Charities reports provided vital information about the Durham County poorhouse and workhouse. The County Commissioners’ records also included valuable notes about expenditures on public aid and oversight of county institutions, as well as providing lists of poor people who received outdoor relief from the county.

A study of dependent children during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries presents historians with a unique set of obstacles to overcome. Even when records about such children exist, in many cases confidentiality laws prohibit public access to them. Correspondence between Durham officials and state government agencies and other records in the state archives that pertain to children are not publicly accessible. Other county records, however, yielded more useful material. Legal cases involving custody of children and adoption were heard during special proceedings of the Durham County Superior Court, and the court minutes reveal much about these cases. Similarly, records are available for legal matters under the jurisdiction of the county clerk. In particular, the apprenticeship bonds included invaluable information about every child apprenticed by the Durham County clerk from 1882-1912.

Private organizational records also aided this research. The original impetus for this project came from a vast collection of newly available material relating to the Sheltering Home Circle of the King’s Daughters that is archived in the North Carolina
Collection at the Durham County Public Library. The library acquired these materials in April 2007; this is the first study to make extensive use of these records. The circle’s minutes provide a detailed record of the organization’s activities after 1910. Although the circle was most active in child rescue work in the period before 1910, for which minutes do not exist, these records offered insight into the array of services performed by the group and the organization’s mode of operation. Publicly accessible publications from other institutions outside of Durham County also revealed much about the institutions’ purposes and methods, as well as the King’s Daughters’ perceptions of these institutions. Finally, this project could not have been completed without the assistance of the North Carolina Children’s Home Society, which agreed to furnish me with redacted copies of several case records pertaining to children rescued by the Sheltering Home Circle.

Building on questions of race, class, and gender that have been addressed by social welfare historians and women’s historians, this study will trace developments in Durham County’s provisions for destitute women and children. An analysis of the records of the King’s Daughters, in addition to county records and other sources, reveals the complex interplay between public and private relief networks. National trends in social work did percolate down to the local level in Durham. However, the county government and white benevolent societies also acted in response to the particular needs of the city and in accordance with southern mores, with the result that both poverty and relief in Durham were impacted by white supremacy and highly gendered in nature.
CHAPTER ONE

The Discovery of Poverty and the Formation of the King’s Daughters

In 1910, a passenger disembarking from a train in Durham, North Carolina, would have found himself on the edge of the bustling downtown business district. By the first decade of the twentieth century, Durham had grown from a small railroad depot into a bustling industrial city. Only thirty years earlier, when Durham County was carved out of neighboring Orange County, the city’s population had just topped 2,000, barely 20% of the total population of the county. By 1910, the city boasted over 18,000 residents, with another 17,000 people living outside of the city limits in the surrounding county.\(^{23}\)

A stroll through the central business district evidenced this growth and the accompanying economic prosperity. A short block north of Union Station, Main Street ran parallel to the railroad tracks and exhibited all of the signs of a thriving urban center. Within an area that was several blocks long, one could find a small business offering whatever sort of service was required—including five and dime stores, drug stores, banks, and two theatres. Several hotels dotted the street, including the Arcade Hotel; on the hotel’s grounds a palm room with a fountain and a lush outdoor garden beckoned from across the street as travelers exited the station.\(^{24}\) Even the luxury of the Arcade, however, was dwarfed in comparison to the decadence of the Hotel Carrolina, which until a few years earlier had stood across Main Street. The hotel’s massive edifice, graced with gables, pillars, and enormous verandahs, hinted at the luxury of the interior guest

\(^{23}\) Anderson, *Durham County*, 483.
rooms, which were decorated with Italian frescoes and antique French furniture.\textsuperscript{25} Although the Carrolina burned to the ground in 1907, Durham retained a reputation across the South for its first-class luxury accommodations.\textsuperscript{26}

Main Street also formed the center of civic and cultural life. The police station was located less than half a block away from Union Station, with the accompanying jail behind it. City planners had conveniently located the county courthouse right around the corner from the police station on Main Street. By 1910 county politicians had already determined that the existing building was too small to accommodate the vastly expanded structures of county government.\textsuperscript{27} Further west on Main Street, the Academy of Music stood behind the post office; here young ladies received musical instruction and the townspeople enjoyed concerts offered by the faculty.\textsuperscript{28} Trinity College, which had moved to Durham in 1892, was located on the far west end of Main Street along the city limits.

Although the Main Street business district formed the center of daily commercial and civic life in Durham, the real economic center, the tobacco district, stood several blocks further west. A visitor arriving on an eastbound train would have had a clear view of the impressive facades of the tobacco factories and warehouses stretching along both sides of the tracks; the decorative brick buildings, several stories high, occupied entire

\textsuperscript{26} Anderson, \textit{Durham County}, 277.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 278.
\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Insurance Maps of Durham, North Carolina} (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1913); Anderson, 203-204.
KEY

- Mills
- Tobacco District
- Central Business District
- Hay
- Upper/middle class white residential area

(A) Erwin Mills
(B) Pearl Mill
(C) Durlham Horry Mills
(D) Golden Belt Manufacturing
(E) Connerworth Cotton
(F) Durham Cotton Manufacturing Co
(G) Smokey Hollow / Edgemont
(H) Morehead Hill
(I) Bettman
(J) Monkey Bottom
(K) Old Lumber Home

Figure 1. Durham, N.C., 1913. ²⁹

city blocks. The acrid smell of tobacco being processed hung heavily in the air over the city. These tobacco factories, and indeed the railroad tracks themselves, had catalyzed the city’s enormous expansion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The exponential growth of the city directly resulted from the rise of industrial capitalism in the years following the Civil War. An increased demand for the brightleaf tobacco grown in the North Carolina Piedmont, along with the investments and entrepreneurship of several capitalists, spurred the development of the tobacco industry in Durham. Although Washington Duke and his sons remain the most famous of these industrialists, many other innovators tried their hand at manufacturing tobacco before the eventual domination of the American Tobacco Company. By the first decade of the twentieth century, tobacco dominated the city’s economy and several blocks of its landscape. The Commercial Club proclaimed that from Durham “34,000,000 pounds [of smoking tobacco] are shipped annually to practically all parts of the civilized world.”

The success of the tobacco industry created an insatiable demand for labor. The opening of each new factory, warehouse or mill drew migrants from the surrounding countryside. The draw of industrial jobs was coupled with the increased precariousness of the rural economy of sharecroppers and yeoman farmers. The crop lien system burdened many farmers with debt, and low crop prices meant that many of them could barely sustain themselves from year to year. Industrialists were keenly aware of this vast reservoir of cheap labor. As one booster of capitalism observed in the first published

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city directory, Durham’s entrepreneurs “know the value of undeveloped labor, and they know how to develop it so as to build the city.” Capitalists and city leaders actively promoted Durham as a bastion of New South industry, supported by a seemingly endless supply of unskilled labor.

The flood of laborers created an intense demand for housing in the city. The tobacco entrepreneur William T. Blackwell made an unprecedented move in the 1880s when he built a row of houses across the street from the Bull Durham factory, south of the railroad tracks and the central business district. The 1888 Sanborn maps identify this row of identical houses as “factory tenements / property of W.T. Blackwell,” the first such company-owned dwellings in Durham. At the height of his power and prestige, Blackwell owned over 300 houses in the city, charging only minimal rent to his employee tenants. Blackwell’s paternalism, and his solution to the housing shortage, established a precedent of factory-owned housing in Durham.

Spurred by the success of the tobacconists, other capitalists diversified into textiles. Following the railroad tracks east past the city limits, one arrived in East Durham, where textiles dominated. Julian S. Carr, a Confederate veteran and tobacco manufacturer, ventured to build Durham’s first cotton mill, the Durham Cotton Manufacturing Company in 1884. Under the auspices of Carr, who “prided himself on being an ideal ‘bossman’—benevolent, protective, and always accessible,” and industrialists W.A. and J. Harper Erwin, by 1910 East Durham had developed into a full

Rows of small tenement houses, built using one of three simple floor plans, lined the streets surrounding the mills.

Development in West Durham followed a similar pattern. The Erwin Mills buttressed the city on the west end, as Durham Cotton did in the east. The two mills located along the railroad tracks in West Durham employed about 1,600 employees in 1910. Company-owned mill housing spread in every direction along the streets surrounding the factories. The Merchants Association claimed that West Durham “mill villages are models of comfort, cleanliness, and convenience.” They extolled the virtues of company owner and city patriarch Mr. Erwin, who they claimed “was the first in the South to institute the eleven hour working day” and who “established the first night school and cooking school for the benefit of the employees and their families.” Ever the good paternalist, he had “always taken an intense interest in the education, morals and comfort of employees, and has done a great deal to improve the character and class of mill workers.” From its inception, Erwin equipped the mill village with a building for a Sunday school and a park right in front of the factory. However, this paternalism was accompanied by an extreme degree of control over life in the mill village.

Within Durham proper, several other textile mills dotted the landscape. Golden Belt manufacturing company, a subsidiary of the American Tobacco Company, initially

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38 Anderson, *Durham County*, 212-213.
produced cloth bags in which tobacco was sold, but diversified into clothing items. Durham Hosiery Mills, owned by the Carrs, was reportedly “the largest mill in the world, devoted exclusively to the manufacture of hosiery…and turns out daily over 54,000 hose.”40 Both Golden Belt and Durham Hosiery, along with Commonwealth Cotton, were located on the east end of the city. Pearl Cotton Mills, which employed only 150 workers in 1910, represented the only major industrial area in the northern part of the city, located along the spur of the Norfolk and Western Railroad rather than the main east-west artery of the Southern Railroad.41

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Durham’s economic prosperity was clearly evident to industrialists, city boosters, and visitors alike. However, fortress-like factory buildings and neat, tidy rows of mill houses belied the poverty of many Durham residents. Women and children remained some of the most economically vulnerable groups in the city. The prospect of employment for women drew many rural families to Durham in the first place. Historian Dolores Janiewski has demonstrated that females made up a disproportionately high percentage of the total population of the city. The city offered women more employment opportunities than the countryside, and female-headed families, families with daughters and young single women were particularly drawn to the city for this reason.42 Although a stark division of labor by race and sex prevailed, for white women in particular textile mills, and to a lesser extent tobacco manufacturing, offered relatively lucrative jobs. In 1900 over 40% of white women within Durham city

limits were employed for wages, a number that was well above the national average; in the surrounding industrial suburbs, the percentage was even higher, 53%.\textsuperscript{43} White women found work in tobacco factories as cigarette catchers, inspectors, and packers.\textsuperscript{44} Textile factories, which almost exclusively employed whites, hired women to do the supposedly “light” and less skilled work of spinning, weaving, and other similar tasks.\textsuperscript{45} However, these jobs almost always paid less than men’s work; in 1904 the average weekly wage for a (white) woman working at Golden Belt Manufacturing Company was $4.46, while (white) men on average made $2 more a week.\textsuperscript{46}

As demonstrated by the high percentage of women (including white women) who worked for wages, “the pooling of income became an economic imperative” for Durham families.\textsuperscript{47} Overall wage levels in Durham were exceedingly low and actually decreased during the last decade of the nineteenth century. For the tobacco industry, the availability of black workers, especially women, kept industry wages low; from its inception, the tobacco industry employed black workers in certain divisions, primarily in the leaf and stemming departments, as cleaners, and doing odd jobs.\textsuperscript{48} Textile jobs thus consistently remained the higher paying option for whites. In addition, the stream of migrants from the countryside impacted wage levels across the board. In a chain reaction, the agricultural depression of the 1890s, which caused the influx of farm families to Durham, resulted in depressed wage levels throughout the city. Between 1890 and 1900 average

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 109-110.  
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 103.  
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 99.  
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 11.  
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 111.  
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 99.
wages for men, women, and children actually fell due to the availability of cheap labor.\footnote{49} By historian Janiewski’s figuring, a family would need at least three members working in the mill in order to earn the amount designated by the North Carolina Commissioner of Labor as a “modest standard of living.”\footnote{50}

White households headed by women found it even more difficult to make ends meet. Without the income of an adult male worker, a woman and three children would have to work in order to achieve that same “modest standard of living.”\footnote{51} Even accounting for the fact that the household budget could be assuaged by subsidized mill housing, it was extremely difficult for a widow or single mother to be self-supporting in this urban industrial economy. Households that supported small children or elderly relatives, neither of whom financially contributed to the household, felt the burden of additional mouths to feed. The passage of a 1907 state law requiring compulsory school attendance for children for four months every year undoubtedly compounded the financial problems of many families.\footnote{52}

If the situation of white families living in mill housing was more precarious than the tidy exteriors of the buildings indicated, circumstances were far worse for black families and others living on the margins. As in most cities, topography directed early city planning efforts and later growth patterns. Engineers constructed the railroad along a fairly level ridge that ran northwest to southeast through the site of the later city. A series

\footnote{49} Ibid., 110.  
\footnote{50} Ibid., 111, 219-220.  
\footnote{51} Ibid., 111.  
\footnote{52} Anderson, \textit{Durham County}, 283. However, Janiewski noted that many parents resisted compulsory education for children, and the number of children in the labor force continued to be very high (\textit{Sisterhood Denied}, 116).
of other ridges crisscross the city, and industrialists chose areas of high elevation along
the railroad tracks to build the tobacco factories. The first white residential areas
developed along the ridge lines, as high ground was the most desirable real estate, and
primarily north of the railroad tracks, in close proximity to the factories and Main Street.
As is visible in the drawing “A Bird’s Eye View of Durham,” low-lying areas along creek
beds remained sparsely occupied in 1891 [see Figure 2]. The population grew by 13,000
people over the next two decades. A certain class of the poor, who one white Erwin
Mills employee described as the “unsettled element” who were “moving into our cities
and crowding our factories,” took up residence in those previously empty hollows.53
Durham repeated a pattern common to cities across the South, with “wealth taking to the
high grounds and poverty to the low.”54

Sisterhood Denied, 63.
Race also heavily impacted residential patterns in Durham. In 1900 blacks made up about one third of the total population, and by 1910 this ratio had increased to around 45%. Blacks were drawn to the city by the employment opportunities in the tobacco factories, which hired both black men and women from the onset. However, white supremacy placed serious limitations on other job opportunities available to blacks. The jobs to which factory owners consigned blacks paid significantly less than jobs designated for whites only; this was especially true for lowest paying jobs of bag stringer and stemmer for which industrialists hired black women. Initially textile mills in Durham only hired whites; in the first few years of the twentieth century the Carrs

Figure 2. “Bird’s Eye View of the City of Durham,” 1891.55

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55 Bird’s Eye View of the City of Durham, 1891, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.
56 Janiewski, Sisterhood Denied, 56.
57 Ibid., 113.
experimented with hiring black workers to operate the machinery in the Durham Hosiery Mill. Although the venture proved profitable for the Carrs, no other textile mills followed suit, and tobacco work remained the only other industrial jobs available to blacks. The majority of African American women found employment as laundresses and domestic servants. Despite these limited options, blacks continued to migrate to the city in search of employment.

The railroad tracks, the city’s main transportation artery, also served as the primary delineator of residential areas by race. Durham never passed residential segregation laws, but distinct patterns emerged. With some exceptions, whites within city limits generally lived on the north side of the tracks or in close proximity to the tracks on the south side; black residential and business areas, on the other hand, were concentrated in the southern half of the city. By the 1890s, an area of southeast Durham known as Hayti had emerged as the largest black neighborhood in the city. Hayti formed the commercial and civic center of black life in Durham, with small businesses, churches and other institutions creating a vibrant community center that thrived despite the context of white supremacy. The “better classes” of blacks, including entrepreneurs and professionals, built their homes in Hayti. One white Durhamite recalled “several impressively large residences of black business and civic leaders” in Hayti; “the

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60 Ibid., 45. Brown also provides an extensive discussion of community life in Hayti.
architecture of their houses was Victorian, with spacious porches and with houses set in large lawns.”

Most blacks in Durham, however, teetered on the edge of poverty.

Durham residents who remained at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale, both black and white, often occupied the geographic lowlands. The names of several low-lying areas in particular became synonymous with extreme poverty. In West Durham, the streets that ran south from the railroad tracks and the mill descended into a hollow commonly referred to as Monkey Bottom. There the truly marginal people of mill society congregated in the hollow. Erwin and the mill managers kept tight control over the village and ruthlessly cast out those employees who did uphold the mill’s strict regulations and moral code. Those exiled from the protected world of the mill retreated to Monkey Bottom, and those who were unfortunate enough to end up there found themselves both unemployed and homeless.

Residents of the mill village prided themselves on the fact that they lived on higher ground and distanced themselves from the Bottoms as much as possible. One observer later wrote that, “it is that part of the mill village of which other villagers say, ‘A person don’t ever know what they’ll be brought to in this life, but I sure hope I’ll never have to move to Monkey Bottoms.”

East of Monkey Bottom, across Maplewood Cemetery and the ridge along Chapel Hill Street, lay a similar area that was also referred to as the Bottoms. Civil Rights advocate and lawyer Pauli Murray later wrote that her grandfather, an African American brickmaker, had built his home along the hillside east of Maplewood Cemetery in the

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62 Janiewski, Sisterhood Denied, 117, 121, 140; Anderson, Durham County, 315.
1890s. She recalled that her family “would never admit that we lived in the Bottoms. They always said that we lived ‘behind Maplewood Cemetery.’” Murray described how these low-lying areas in southwest Durham evolved as the city grew:

Shacks for factory workers mushroomed in the lowlands between graded streets. These little communities, which clung precariously to the banks of streams or sat crazily on washed-out gullies and were held together by cowpaths or rutted wagon tracks, were called the Bottoms. It was if the town had swallowed more than it could hold and had regurgitated, for the Bottoms was an odorous conglomeration of trash piles, garbage dumps, cow stalls, pigpens and crowded humanity.

Although the residents of Monkey Bottom were primarily white, by virtue of the area’s proximity to Erwin Mills, Pauli Murray’s neighbors in the Bottoms further east were most likely African Americans.

Poverty-stricken blacks occupied land in other low-lying areas as well. In the town’s early years black enclaves emerged in the alleys behind white residential areas, where domestic workers lived in close proximity to the white households that employed them. By 1910, some of these areas had developed into more substantial “pocket ghettos” scattered across the city. Black washerwomen congregated in the southern part of town in the hollows alongside streams. Author and Durham resident Ernest Seeman alluded to just such an area in his writing; he sarcastically described a neighborhood in the fictional town he based on Durham, located “to the southeast (and also at all the

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65 Ibid., 26-27.
undesirable and disreputable edges, dumping brinks, and smelly sewage brooklets)" where the black washerwomen “who kept their white betters in clean linen” lived.\textsuperscript{68}

The view from Durham’s railroad tracks—the factories and mills, the downtown business district, even the mill villages—conveyed the sense that the city had achieved urbanity and prosperity. However, from high ground the view of some areas of the city was obstructed. Lurking in the hollows, mostly below the line of vision, lay evidence that a significant portion of the city’s population had not benefited from the industrial boom.

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The changes wrought by the population explosion presented new challenges for the government and citizens of Durham. In the mid-1890s, politicians and the white “better classes” became increasingly aware of the poverty and vice in these hollows on the city’s edge. City leaders confronted their first major social welfare challenge in Smoky Hollow.

In 1893, as the tobacco industry boomed and the city’s population ballooned, Durham suddenly felt the effects of a nationwide depression. This economic crisis exposed the social problems that had been festering mainly out of sight of the city’s elite, on the margins of the city and in the hollows. The newspapers frequently identified Smoky Hollow, a low-lying area on the east end of town, as the site of the worst of these social ills. During the winter of 1893, when the depression and cold weather exacerbated

\textsuperscript{68} Ernest Seeman, \textit{American Gold} (New York: Dial Press, 1978), 7.
existing conditions, a series of sensationalist newspaper articles exposed the extent of crime and poverty in Smoky Hollow. One week the *Globe* reported that a dead baby had been found in a trash heap; other tragedies and crimes were reported in the following weeks, including a brutal murder.  

Spurred on by these horrific descriptions, the city’s elite took action. Churches began sending committees to the area in search of those in need of relief from the cold and from poverty. General Julian Carr, who had made his fortune in tobacco and textiles and by that time had become a town patriarch, directed his own relief effort by sending a group to the neighborhood to hand out alms. Later that spring a group of elite white women called the Smoky Hollow landlords together and exhorted them to clean up their tenements. The city health officer also ordered one of the most notorious landlords to clean up his building.

The city’s first large-scale relief effort in the winter of 1893 culminated in the formation of the first women’s benevolent society in the city. The Provident Club, a group of young society women including General Carr’s daughter, focused on providing charity to those beyond the reach of the many churches in the city. They operated out of a small office which had been provided for them by General Carr, keeping the office open a few hours every day for the needy in Smoky Hollow and areas beyond to come in and apply for aid. The Provident Club performed this service for several years, but ultimately disbanded in 1899. Margaret Bridgers, a sociologist from the University of

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69 Anderson, *Durham County*, 206.
70 Ibid., 206.
71 Ibid., 207.
North Carolina, later surmised that the club disbanded because the work “involved contacts outside the experience of the young girls of that day” and because of the huge increase in requests for relief after the blizzard of 1899.\textsuperscript{72} Regardless, the Provident Club became an important predecessor for later women’s clubs such as the King’s Daughters.

In the short term politicians and the upper classes believed that the solution to the crisis in Smoky Hollow was the benevolence of individuals, including city patrons, church members, and upper class women. However, Durham leaders ultimately came to believe that more industrialization was the long-term solution to the vice and poverty in this marginal area. In 1900 when the Carrs decided to build an addition to the Durham Hosiery Mill, they were convinced by city leaders to locate the building in Smoky Hollow. The Durham \textit{Daily Sun} predicted that “Smoky Hollow will soon be a thing of the past, and in place of this dark hole of iniquity and infamy, there will be a busy, bustling manufacturing community.”\textsuperscript{73} A few weeks later the newspaper announced that the neighborhood would be renamed Edgemont, and rejoiced in the hope that “all things are to become new, and Edgemont will be the beautiful industrial silkworm that will come from the Smoky Hollow cocoon.”\textsuperscript{74} The streets around the newly constructed mill, which Carr rechristened with flowery names such as Hollyhock and Sunflower, were transformed into mill housing.\textsuperscript{75}

Civic leaders learned several lessons from this first social welfare challenge that they faced in Smoky Hollow. Industrialists confirmed their belief that the social

\textsuperscript{73} Durham \textit{Daily Sun}, 2 Feb., 1900.
\textsuperscript{74} Durham \textit{Daily Sun}, 3 Mar., 1900.
\textsuperscript{75} Webb, \textit{Jule Carr}, 181.
problems that were a byproduct of city growth could be solved through more industrialization. A small number of society women also gained newfound experience as municipal housekeepers and social workers. Despite their efforts, however, Edgemont struggled to shake its reputation for vice, and poverty and crime continued to cling to its edges.

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In his early history of Durham, Hiram Paul asserted that “here all classes of honest and industrious mechanics and laborers find profitable employment, kind friends, and are surrounded by the most refined, educational, moral, and religious influences and advantages. Durham, to-day, is an asylum for the poor.”76 County leaders, politicians, and the better classes would have supported Paul’s statement. However, as sociologist Margaret Bridgers observed in her 1926 study of social work in Durham, “the individualism of the [industrial] pioneer was emphasized by that of the profit seeker.” Developments in private charity often were tempered by the capitalist ethos that pervaded the city, which held that industrialization was the only form of progress that truly mattered. Bridgers concluded that “it is small wonder, then, that organized social work came slowly” to Durham.77 A complicated system of public and private relief developed during these years.

From the county’s inception, politicians recognized the need to provide for the less fortunate. Hence they responded to the social welfare dilemma by creating the

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poorhouse, commonly known as the county home, in 1881. However, the county home never provided housing for more than a minute percentage of the city’s population, and the urban poor came to rely heavily on other forms of charity.

Throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, the other major form of public welfare was outdoor relief. During this era politicians and social welfare proponents generally agreed that institutionalized care of the indigent in poorhouses was expensive and contributed to lifelong pauperism. The alternative was outdoor relief, which provided needy families and individuals with monthly dole payments from the county’s coffers with the goal of helping them to be support themselves outside of the poorhouse. Although national social welfare reformers also criticized this practice in the late nineteenth century, Durham continued to rely on outdoor relief through this entire time period.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, outdoor relief in Durham continued to be administered in the same way that counties had done so since the antebellum period. Under state law, each county in North Carolina appointed a warden of the poor, later known as a superintendent of public welfare, who was responsible for providing for the county’s poor by overseeing the county home and assisting the county commissioners with distributing outdoor relief. In Durham County, the county commissioners maintained a roll of the “outside poor.” Every month when the commissioners met, the commissioners would approve additions to the roll and the list

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78 Minutes of Durham County Commissioners, Sept. 1881.
79 For a detailed discussion of the debate over outdoor relief, see Michael B. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*, 36-57.
would be updated. Through the 1910s neither the commissioners nor the superintendent of public welfare maintained any regular system for monitoring those listed on the rolls.

The commissioners did, however, exercise judgment in determining who should be enrolled on the list of outside poor in the first place. Durham County’s outdoor poor rolls indicate who the commissioners deemed worthy of receiving public aid. Upon learning of an applicant for aid, the commissioners would sometimes appoint a county official to investigate the case. The majority of those receiving aid in Durham were women, which was consistent with national trends; as historian Michael Katz has argued, most of the people helped by outdoor relief were widows (especially those with children), the old, and the sick. In Durham able-bodied men were more likely to receive assistance in the form of work; the county employed men to haul rock and cut wood, and the wages paid to them were listed in the minutes alongside the outdoor relief payments. During the period under consideration, the number of people receiving aid increased substantially as the population grew.

Despite the prevalence of outdoor relief, the benefits provided by this form of public aid were minimal. In 1909, outdoor relief payments ranged from one dollar to three dollars per month, with the average payment being two dollars per month. During this same time period the insufficiently low wages of a female worker in a tobacco

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80 Minutes of Durham County Commissioners.
81 Ibid., March 1911.
82 Katz, In the Shadow of the Poorhouse, 41.
83 Minutes of Durham County Commissioners, Oct. 1909.
84 Ibid., Oct. 1909.
85 Ibid., Nov. 1909.
factory were about $13.00 a month. According to the North Carolina Commissioner of Labor, a family needed an income of around $46.00 a month to achieve a “modest standard of living.” Thus the two dollar pittance that the outdoor poor received from the county was no where near enough to sustain a widow and her children for a month. Furthermore, it is likely that county funds would have been almost exclusively reserved for whites, so that needy black families would have received very few dole payments from the county.

In the absence of substantial publicly funded poor relief, a complex network of private charities developed in Durham. Although the primary concern of churches remained the spiritual well-being of its members, Durham churches had a long history of doing charity work as well. The churches were at the forefront of private charity work in Durham and remained the backbone of the private poor relief system through the early 1900s. Historian William Boyd observed in his early history of Durham that “before the dawn of institutional charity and relief work, care of the poor and the destitute was almost exclusively a function of the churches.”

Wealthy white Durham citizens took to missionary work among the city’s poor with particular zeal. By 1900, every major Protestant denomination had a well-established church in the city, most of which were located near downtown. These major churches remained dominated by the upper and middle classes; William Boyd observed that “their members were mainly property owners, business and professional men, and

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87 Ibid., 219.
permanent residents.” They conducted “organized religious work” and initially looked after the “religion of the more stable groups in the community.” However, by the 1880s these churches adopted “a distinct policy of church expansion” so as “to meet the needs of the factory districts.”

The missions to urban workers established by churches were intertwined with the paternalism of the industrialists. The Methodists, under the auspices of the Dukes, led the way by establishing a mission to tobacco factory workers, first by offering Sunday school classes and then by constructing a new church for the burgeoning congregation. A similar pattern followed in East Durham, West Durham, and other mill areas as several denominations expanded through mission work. The industrialists paid for the new churches, which were frequently named in their honor, as part of their paternalistic duties and often contributed their time to missionizing. Julian Carr, for instance, not only established Sunday schools and churches near his hosiery mills in East Durham, but he also taught a Sunday school class for many years. Carr articulated his philosophy about religion and labor when he observed that “my experience is that we need to educate, elevate, and stimulate our factory labor,” as well as “encourage church-building and church-going.” Churches in Durham were therefore divided along lines of race and class.

Missionaries in factory districts also attended to the physical needs of their followers. One contemporary described the relief work done by Rev. Thaddeus Troy:

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89 Ibid., 197.
91 Janiewski, Sisterhood Denied, 87.
92 Julian Carr, 1912, quoted in Janiewski, Sisterhood Denied, 87.
“When I came to Durham in 1902 Reverend Mr. Troy, who was a superannuated Methodist minister, I think, was city missionary and one of his duties was to look after the poor. The winter of 1902 had been a very hard one, and charitably inclined people had made donations of funds for food, clothing, and fuel, which Mr. Troy distributed to needy families. After Mr. Troy gave up the work, there was a great deal of street begging and begging from house to house.”

The relief work done by churches and city missionaries provided the bulk of assistance to the poor until around 1900.

Those residents who lived in mill villages often turned to the mill for social welfare assistance. In addition to providing schools and churches for workers, Mills also provided various types of assistance to their employees, especially in the second decade of the twentieth century, and with varying degrees of success. The Carrs in particular were among the first in the South to focus on social work for millworkers. In 1911 they hired a trained nurse to attend to the health of mill families and to generally supervise sanitation conditions, and a few years later they established a fund to provide health and life insurance for old employees. In 1900 workers at the Erwin Mills in West Durham began unionizing and agitating for assistance for sick workers; although Erwin ultimately fired the striking workers, he indicated that he would “relieve all cases of hardship” that striking workers and their families were experiencing.

Social welfare work conducted

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94 Anderson, Durham County, 244-246.
by mill owners always served the economic interests of the mill, and those outside of the mill system were disregarded.\textsuperscript{95}

Thus prior to 1900, public welfare was minimal and private welfare, often directed by paternalistic wealthy patriarchs, lacked coordination and was sporadic at best. William Boyd summed up the situation this way:

\begin{quote}
The expansion from a small town into the proportions of a city brought problems of public health, charity, and social welfare. For a quarter of a century little progress was made toward their solution… Individualism, which knew not the meaning of social cooperation prevailed. There was also sheet negligence.\textsuperscript{96}
\end{quote}

Around 1900, the social welfare work in Durham began to improve as private organizations began to proliferate and established more long-lasting relief efforts to address the needs of various groups within the city.

Another particularly harsh winter in 1900, during which a blizzard struck the city, spurred the citizens of Durham into action again. A group of upper and middle class citizens saw the need for a more extensive organization to carry on the work of Rev. Thaddeus Troy, who had served as the city missionary. They formed the Associated Charities, under the leadership of Rev. W.L. Cunningham, pastor of one of the Methodist mission churches, and Thomas B. Fuller, superintendent of Golden Belt Manufacturing Co.\textsuperscript{97} During this era Associated Charities organizations sprouted up in cities across the nation as the most visible manifestation of the charity organization movement.\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{95} For an in-depth discussion of social welfare work in mill villages, see Harriet L. Herring, \textit{Welfare Work in Mill Villages: The Story of Extra-Mill Activities in North Carolina} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1929) and Jacquelyn Dowd Hall et al., \textit{Like A Family}.

\textsuperscript{96} Boyd, \textit{The Story of Durham}, 209.

\textsuperscript{97} Anderson, \textit{Durham County}, 249. There is some dispute over whether or not the organization was formed in 1900 or in 1902.

\textsuperscript{98} Green, \textit{This Business of Relief}, 109-117.
In Durham, however, it is unclear whether or not the Associated Charities aspired to achieve all of these goals because no documentation of the organization exists. One contemporary claimed that the organization was formed “for the protection of all of the people from professional beggars, and to help those who were really in need.”

Regardless of its actual purpose, the Associated Charities failed to achieve much success in providing for the city’s poor. Bridgers went so far as to say that “the Associated Charities was for many years comparatively unimportant.” The organization was funded by individuals who made yearly subscriptions to it, a few of whom had near complete control over it; thus it served primarily as “a medium for their philanthropy.” In addition the office was difficult to find and had limited hours, staying open only two hours every day. Most significantly, the charity organization principle failed to catch on in Durham at this point, and several other charitable organizations continued to operate independently.

The work done by the Associated Charities had the biggest overlap with the Salvation Army, which briefly had a post in Durham in 1887 before support waned the following year. In 1900 the Salvation Army reestablished its Durham post. Whereas churches focused primarily on attending to their own congregations, the Salvation Army concentrated on the “constantly shifting element of the population and the attendant immorality and poverty.” The organization provided religious services for the lowest classes of the city, but it also offered services, including monetary assistance, to “needy

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101 Ibid., 19.
102 Anderson, Durham County, 193.
families, indigent transients, and unmarried mothers.” By the mid-1910s, the Salvation Army had so eclipsed the work being done by the Associated Charities that Captain W.M. Bouterse served as the head of both organizations. The monetary aid and other services provided by the Salvation Army filled a gap left by both private and public welfare organizations in the city.

Thus Durham’s social welfare system had been vastly improved since the city’s early days. However, it remained incomplete and piecemeal at best. Needy residents were forced to cobble together monetary donations and other services from whichever independent source would help them.

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In the context of both enormous wealth and incredible poverty, and the early efforts of Durham’s citizens to provide poor relief, the local circle of the International Order of the King’s Daughters and Sons emerged. Following in the footsteps of the Provident Club of the 1890s, a group of upper and middle class women met in 1903 and formed the Sheltering Home Circle of the King’s Daughters.

The catalyst for the group’s formation remains somewhat unclear. In her discussion of the circle, Bridgers traces the group’s origins to the realization by the “women of Durham” that relief was needed in Smoky Hollow, which continued to have a “reputation as a vice center.” As a result, they “felt that something must be done to

104 Anderson, Durham County, 250.
remove the cause of the trouble; so they planned to rescue the women and girls who were the victims of the section.”

Although Bridgers’s explanation clarifies why the women wanted to form a club or benevolent society of some sort, it does not explain why the women chose to join the King’s Daughters. When the Durham chapter was formed in 1903, the organization had already been well-established on the national level for seventeen years. The International Order of the King’s Daughters was founded in 1886 by a group of women in New York City, its stated aims were “to develop spiritual life and to stimulate Christian activities” among its members. The Order accepted “the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man” as one of its central principles, and proclaimed that they would minister under to others “In His Name,” which became the group’s watchword, without taking heed “of any differences of opinions about our Lord.” Although the King’s Daughters officially admitted men the following year, it remained an organization dominated by women and was commonly referred to as a “sisterhood of service.”

The organization grew and rapidly spread across the country, both through word of mouth and through the group’s publications. In 1888 the King’s Daughters began publishing its own journal, *The Silver Cross.* Margaret Bottome, one of the charter members of the original New York City circle and the organization’s president for many

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105 Bridgers, “A History of Social Work in Durham County,” 43. Bridgers cites the “President of the King’s Daughters” as her source. In 1926 when Bridgers compiled her study, Mrs. J.R. Patton had been president since 1910; however, Mrs. Patton was not one of the founding members of the group—see Bertha Lakey Rochelle, *History of the Sheltering Home Circle of the King’s Daughters and Sons, Durham, N.C., 1903-1945* (Durham: n.p., 1946), 15, 17. In her official history of the Sheltering Home Circle, Rochelle does not specifically mention rescue work as the group’s raison d’etre. Instead, she vaguely categorizes the work done in the early years as “primarily Social Service” (15).


107 Gugle, *History of the King’s Daughters,* 30.
years, also began writing a column for *The Ladies Home Journal* in 1890, titled simply “The King’s Daughters.” Through these publications the organization disseminated its mission of Christian service and encouraged other women to form circles in their own cities. Following a model established by other women’s clubs, the organization became a forum in which middle and upper class white women could utilize their supposedly innate feminine qualities to improve their communities. In order to best achieve this goal, the King’s Daughters became a type of umbrella organization; according to its constitution, any group of (white) women whose “purpose and aims are in accord with its [the organization’s] objects” could join and “choose its own work” to pursue “In His Name.” The central committee encouraged women to assess the needs of their own communities and to adopt that benevolent work for which they saw the greatest need.

The organization spread to North Carolina quickly, with the first circle established in Wilmington in 1886, and the first statewide convention was held in Greensboro in 1890. The historian of the North Carolina branch proclaimed that “for a long period these [early] circles did almost the entire uplift and charitable work of the communities in which they were located.” In 1902, the state organization decided that in addition to the work of individual circles, “all the circles should unite, and by their combined efforts

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110 First Constitution of the International Order of the King’s Daughters, 1887, in Gugle, *History of the King’s Daughters*, 49, 52.
111 Easdale Shaw, *The History of the North Carolina Branch of The International Order of the King’s Daughters and Sons* (Raleigh: Capital Printing Company, 1929), 4-5. According to Shaw, the first circle in North Carolina was organized in Wilmington by Mrs. Emma G. Williams, who was in New York when the Order was founded.
112 Ibid., 5.
render some definite service to the State.” While this convention convened in Raleigh, the newspapers published an article about two juvenile boys who had been sent to the state prison. These articles “so aroused the sympathies of the women” that the state chapter quickly decided “to make the establishment of a Boys’ Reform School the united work of the State Branch.”

Undoubtedly this work done by the organization on the state level garnered publicity, and the Sheltering Home Circle was formed in Durham a few months later.

Although the organization also proclaimed that it recognized “no dividing lines, whether of race, creed or social conditions among the children of God,” the members of the Durham circle were a relatively homogeneous group. In contrast to the national organization’s stated principles, southern circles were strictly segregated, and the vast majority of circles, including the Sheltering Home Circle, admitted white women only. The rolls of the Durham group also indicate that no “King’s Sons” ever joined in the years under consideration. Unlike some of the early circles in North Carolina, the Sheltering Home Circle never maintained an affiliation with a particular church. The sixteen women who formed the charter members represented most of the city’s well-established churches, with “two from each of eight churches.” The King’s Daughters in Durham, although a Christian service organization, was truly a nonsectarian club.

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113 Ibid., 6.
114 The Sheltering Home Circle was actually the second circle of the King’s Daughters formed in Durham. A short-lived circle was formed in 1890 (Durham Globe, 31 Oct. 1890), but it is unknown what became of this circle.
116 Historian Anastatia Sims indicates in The Power of Femininity in the New South that African American newspapers in North Carolina ran announcements of meetings for local black circles (212).
Despite this denominational diversity, the circle’s members were exclusively white, Protestant women.

The members of the King’s Daughters, however, did not represent a true cross-section of even this segment of Durham’s population. The organization had a distinct class identity; its members, the wives and daughters of Durham’s industrialists, entrepreneurs, ministers, and professionals, represented the city’s upper and middle classes. Class identity formed a vital component of these women’s worldview and motivated the charity work performed by the group.

The women identified themselves by the neighborhoods in which they lived, a strong indicator of class. As with other areas in the city, the development of upper and middle class white residential areas followed distinctive patterns. The majority of the women lived in the area north and east of downtown, in close proximity to both the central business district and the factories and mills in the area. Following Main Street east from downtown, one entered this earliest fashionable neighborhood for whites. On the corner of Main Street and Dillard, General Carr built his first estate in 1881, which he later replaced with the palatial Somerset Villa. Carr’s ornate home became a showplace and a symbol of luxury, and members of the Carr clan and other wealthy families built homes along the surrounding streets. Although none of these homes rivaled the splendor of Somerset Villa, the upper class homes in this neighborhood were generally large Victorian houses on spacious lots along the tree-lined streets.

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118 Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle of the King’s Daughters, 1910, Sheltering Home Circle Papers, North Carolina Collection, Durham County Public Library, Durham, N.C. [Hereafter cited as SHC Papers.]
Although most of the members of the King’s Daughters in the early years were middle class, many of them also lived in close proximity to the Dillard Street area and along Cleveland and Mangum Streets. For instance, Mrs. Caleb B. Green, one of the group’s founding members, lived on Dillard Street. Caleb Green, whose brother was an early tobacconist, had been a prominent citizen and politician of Durham since before the county’s inception. In the 1870s he founded a weekly newspaper, *The Tobacco Plant*, and served as a state legislator representing Orange County. From this position, he actively promoted the creation of the new county, then became Durham’s first representative in the General Assembly. He remained the leader of the county’s conservative Democratic Party through the 1880s. Following a hotly contested election, in which a radical third party supported by labor unionists and prominent blacks was defeated, the Green house on Dillard Street was set on fire. For almost twenty-one years during the last decade of the nineteenth century and first two decades of the twentieth century, Caleb Green served as the clerk to the Superior Court, with an interruption due to his service as county commissioner.\(^{120}\) Caleb Green represented Durham’s middle class—the relative and close associate of wealthy industrialists, he served Durham for many years as a respected politician and public servant, but he himself was not wealthy. The Green family lived literally in the shadow of wealth, cast from E.J. Parrish’s mansion next door.

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\(^{120}\) Anderson, *Durham County*, 150, 165, 169, 190, 482-488.
In the midst of her husband’s long career as a public servant, Mrs. Green became a founding member of the King’s Daughters in 1903. She was in her mid-fifties when she joined, but little else is known about her life. Undoubtedly her experience with the arson cemented her ideas about politics and the dangerous threat posed by blacks and lower-class whites. These ideas about the necessity of social control likely influenced her decision to join the King’s Daughters. However, her husband’s work as court clerk also exposed her to some of the more sympathetic aspects of life for the Durham underclass. As clerk, Caleb Green would have been responsible for dealing with orphaned and deserted children, which became one of the King’s Daughters’ main lines of work. In the

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\[\text{Figure 3. Homes of E.J. Parrish (right) and Caleb B. Green, at the corner of Dillard St. and Main St.}^\text{121}\]

\[^\text{121} \text{Homes of E.J. Parrish and Caleb B. Green, E.J. Parrish Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, N.C.}\]
1910s Mrs. Green served on the Board of Directors for the Old Ladies’ Home that the King’s Daughters built and maintained.\footnote{Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, 1913.}

Outside of the city limits near West Durham another such enclave of wealthy white residences developed. Following the lead of a member of the Duke clan, other wealthy industrialists built homes along the ridge that ran south under the railroad tracks across from Trinity College. Several members of the Erwin family, owners of the mills in West Durham, also built their homes here.\footnote{Roberts et al., \textit{Durham Architectural and Historic Inventory}, 148-149.} In this area also lived Mrs. J.W. Allen, whose husband served as a county commissioner for most of the first decade of the twentieth century.\footnote{Anderson, \textit{Durham County}, 483.} Mrs. Allen was a founding member of the King’s Daughters in 1903 and remained one of the most active members for years. She served as chairman of the building committee for the Old Ladies’ Home and chaired the rescue committee for many years. In 1924 Mrs. Allen herself became a resident of the Old Ladies’ Home.

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In the charity work they performed between 1903 and 1915, the King’s Daughters filled a distinct niche within the city. In addition to the rescue work done by the group, the Sheltering Home Circle consistently provided a relatively small number of residents with charity in the form of money and other donations. As the wives and daughters of leading civic leaders and entrepreneurs, the King’s Daughters embraced their station in life and what they viewed as the accompanying Christian duty to help those less
fortunate. They recognized the inadequacy of the existing public welfare system and targeted their charitable efforts towards particular groups who they deemed worthy. By doing so, they both affirmed the role of private organizations and institutions and implicitly challenged the public system. Ultimately they saw the two systems as interconnected, forming a network of charity and the basis of the social safety net.

In order to perform any type of charity, the King’s Daughters needed money. From its inception, the organization concentrated a lot of time and money on finding new sources of funding to supplement the regular dues paid by members. One of the most continuous sources of income came from the hosting of a regular Exchange. An institution with a long history, the Exchange originated in the early nineteenth century as both a voluntary and commercial venture; wealthy women managed a shop in which genteel poor women could sell handicrafts and thereby support themselves. In the postbellum era, Exchanges proliferated across the country through networks of voluntary organizations and benevolent societies. By the turn of the century, the institution had evolved beyond its original purpose to become a forum that enabled “women of all classes [to] gain financial security by capitalizing on what they produced in their homes.”

The Sheltering Home Circle started an Exchange as one of their major fundraising endeavors. Although the organizational minutes are unclear about exactly who sold items at the Exchange, based on evidence from Exchanges elsewhere it is likely that the

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genteel poor did participate directly in the Exchange as a type of self-help.\textsuperscript{126} The minutes do, however, indicate that King’s Daughters members made “cakes, candy, and fancy articles” which could be sold at the regularly held Exchange.\textsuperscript{127} The profits from the sales of members’ items—totaling over $400 for an eight month period in 1910 and 1911—were added to the organization’s treasury, to be used for charitable causes.\textsuperscript{128}

The Exchange also prompted one of the most important and long-lasting structural changes made to the King’s Daughters organization. By 1910, the organization had grown to include eighty-one members. Even accounting for the fact that a significant number of members rarely or never attended meetings, this was an enormous increase over the group’s original sixteen members. The sheer number of members made it difficult to efficiently conduct regular meetings, let alone manage large projects such as the Exchange. In December 1910, the King’s Daughters decided “to divide the Circle into smaller circles to facilitate the work of the Exchange,” and subsequently the organizational work for the Exchange was conducted in four smaller groups.\textsuperscript{129} At the next meeting the King’s Daughters voted to continue meeting twice a month as a whole circle, and that the smaller circles would have additional meetings as called by the chairwomen.\textsuperscript{130} This organizational model, which was initiated to facilitate fundraising through the Exchange, soon came to be embraced as the primary method of doing any kind of business.

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 42.
\textsuperscript{127} Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, May 1910
\textsuperscript{128} “Annual Report of the Sheltering Home Circle,” 1911, SHC Papers.
\textsuperscript{129} Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, Dec. 1910.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., Jan. 1911.
In addition to the money raised from dues and the Exchange, the King’s Daughters hosted a few large events throughout the year. Each year the women hosted an alumni banquet at Trinity College, the preparations for which consumed nearly a month before the event; the secretary reported that the proceeds from the banquet “tides us over the winter.”\textsuperscript{131} The members also hosted an annual bazaar, which in 1912 netted over $200 of discretionary funds for the organization.\textsuperscript{132}

These fundraising methods were supplemented by occasionally soliciting money from members, particularly when existing debts needed to be liquidated. After many years of hard work lobbying the legislature and collecting funds, the North Carolina branch of the King’s Daughters finally opened a reform school for boys in 1909, the Stonewall Jackson Manual Training Institute located in Concord.\textsuperscript{133} The following year the state organization still owed over $3,000 on the school and requested that each local circle contribute money from its treasury.\textsuperscript{134} The Sheltering Home Circle responded by giving each member a book with slots for dimes, with instructions to fill the book by a certain date so that the money could be sent to the state branch.\textsuperscript{135}

Over time, the Durham circle directed the majority of the money that it raised to one large project: the construction of the Old Ladies’ Home. Although the group’s original raison d’etre was rescue work, and the group continued to do rescue work for women and children through the 1910s, over time it became a lower priority for most

\textsuperscript{131} “Annual Report of the Sheltering Home Circle,” 1913.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{133} Shaw, History of the North Carolina King’s Daughters, 18.
\textsuperscript{134} Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, June 1910.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., July 1910.
members. Initially the group discussed building a home for working girls in Durham as its first major project, but the women soon abandoned this idea.\textsuperscript{136}

The King’s Daughters then decided to open a home for “worthy” old women. The members, many of whom were older women themselves, “realized the worries which beset old women who do not have homes in their last years.”\textsuperscript{137} In the early 1900s, old people without the financial means to support themselves and without relatives to take them had very limited options. The only local institution that admitted the elderly was the poorhouse, which was maintained by the county. The poorhouse—which took in everyone from the sick, the mentally ill, and the disabled to widows and orphans—had such a stigma attached to it that it remained the last resort of the desperate elderly. In particular the genteel poor, who had once been members of the upper or middle classes but had fallen on hard times, would have avoided the disreputable poorhouse at all costs. During an era when urbanization and social changes often separated kin and hence disrupted the traditional safety net for the elderly, the threat of homelessness loomed large for elderly members of the better classes. This same desire to prevent the “worthy”

\textsuperscript{136} Conflicting explanations exist as to why the King’s Daughters did not pursue this project. Bridgers states that “this plan was submitted to a number of Durham people for their criticisms. Several people were interested, but they agreed with the most influential man in the group that such a home would not be a success because of the social distinctions among the working girls. The girls of good social position who were forced to earn their living would not association with the factory girls; so it seemed best not to develop this plan.” (“A History of Social Work in Durham County,” 44). Rochelle’s official history of the circle, however, claims that the women realized “that the YWCA would overlap this home” and hence they dropped that idea (\textit{History of the Sheltering Home Circle}, 15). However, Anderson indicates that there was not a YWCA branch in Durham during this time, although a YMCA building opened on Main Street in 1908 (\textit{Durham County}, 269).

\textsuperscript{137} Bridgers, “A History of Social Work in Durham County,” 44.
elderly from ending up in poorhouses prompted the movement to build homes for Confederate veterans and their widows.\textsuperscript{138}

The King’s Daughters embarked on the Old Ladies’ Home project with verve, and within a year the home had been constructed. The group diverted almost all incoming money—including the large proceeds from the Exchange—away from other charitable ventures and into the building fund.\textsuperscript{139} The women succeeded in convincing Brodie Duke to donate a lot across from Trinity College for the home, but the construction and furnishing of the building cost a massive amount, $8,500.\textsuperscript{140} Although the women received numerous donations of money and furniture from wealthy townspeople, the project consumed most of the group’s treasury for a time, and the King’s Daughters had to scale back other costly charity projects for a time.

\textsuperscript{139} “Annual Report of the Sheltering Home Circle,” 1911, SHC Papers.
\textsuperscript{140} Rochelle, \textit{History of the Sheltering Home Circle}, 17.
In 1911 the Old Ladies’ Home opened and the first residents were admitted. From the beginning, the home could best be described as “semi-philanthropic in nature.” The King’s Daughters elected a Board of Directors to oversee the operation of the Home, and the Board was vested with the power to vet and admit applicants on their discretion. The Board investigated the financial means and character of all applicants before admitting them, and for the first several years they admitted only old ladies who could afford to pay the monthly charge of $10 for a double room. Women without sufficient funds were turned away; when a resident’s board had not been paid, the Board of Directors investigated the financial status of relatives and solicited them for

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141 Old Ladies’ Home, Sheltering Home Circle Papers, North Carolina Collection, Durham County Public Library, Durham, N.C.
the money. Sometimes the members successfully collected donations to help pay for an inmate’s room and board. However, residents were evicted for failure to pay board.

One resident, Miss Lyon, remained a chronic problem for the Board because of her failure to pay her expenses. The case dragged on for years, with the Board reluctant to actually evict her. They wrote “to Miss Lyon’s people, to the effect that her board must be paid or they will have to remove her from the Home.” The Board agreed to accept provisions from her relatives’ farm as payment, but her account soon fell in arrears again. After threatening to her relatives numerous times that they would evict her and “take her to them,” in 1916 the Board finally found it necessary to hire an attorney to collect the amount owed by her relatives. This tension remained between the desire to perform a charitable service for these old ladies and the need to run the home as a financially solvent business, where monthly board was necessary to cover the costs of maintaining the Home.

The Old Ladies’ Home can thus be viewed as an attempt by the King’s Daughters to help respectable elderly women to avoid the poorhouse. Many of the inmates were members of the genteel poor, while others had financial means but no kin who were willing to take them in. The Home’s inmates had a class identity similar to that of the organization’s members, and undoubtedly the King’s Daughters empathized with the plight of the Home’s residents. The King’s Daughters aimed to provide the residents with the type of lifestyle to which both groups of women were accustomed. A cook, a

143 Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, Nov. 1913; Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Old Ladies’ Home, July 1914, SHC Papers.
144 Minutes of Board of Directors of Old Ladies’ Home, Dec. 1912.
145 Ibid., Feb. 1913.
146 Ibid., Jan. 1916.
maid and a matron looked after the residents, and the King’s Daughters regularly visited and entertained the women in the Home. The Board dedicated a significant amount of time and money to the furnishings and upkeep of the house, and in 1913 it was decided to buy a piano for the Home at the cost of one hundred dollars. The women maintained the Home at a standard which they themselves would live in; in fact, a few of the King’s Daughters members, including Mrs. Allen, eventually took up residence in the Home.

This expense illustrates the group’s priorities and its concept of “charity”; the one hundred dollars spent on buying a piano for the Home’s residents to enjoy equaled the amount that the group allocated annually for all other forms of charity. The King’s Daughters earned one hundred dollars every year for helping the Elks Lodge to arrange their annual “Christmas entertainment.” This arrangement was likely facilitated by Mrs. J.S. Mesley, a charter member of the King’s Daughters who served as president from 1904-1910; her husband was a member of the Durham Elks Lodge for many years. Most years the King’s Daughters set this money aside in a separate Elks Fund, to be used for small charity projects.

As with the Old Ladies’ Home, the King’s Daughters were keenly aware of the existing social services available in Durham and the community’s unfulfilled needs. The circle did not seek to supplant the outdoor relief given by the county or to usurp the role played by other charitable organizations. On the contrary, the King’s Daughters cooperated with other groups whenever possible. In 1910 the members voted to endorse

147 Ibid., May 1913.
149 Durham Elks Lodge No. 568 pamphlet, 1922, Durham Vertical File, North Carolina Collection, Durham County Public Library, Durham, N.C.
the Salvation Army, which focused their work on the transient poor and with needy families that were newcomers to Durham. The King’s Daughters appointed a committee to meet with the Salvation Army and assess the ways in which the women could assist the other organization in their work.\textsuperscript{150} Thereafter they cooperated with the Salvation Army on several projects, including distributing ice tickets in summer and donating old clothing that had been collected.\textsuperscript{151} In addition, individual women donated extensively to the Salvation Army; most notably, Mrs. H.N. Snow, an active member who donated $1,000 to the construction of the Home, also gave the Salvation Army a house to use as an office.\textsuperscript{152}

Similarly, the King’s Daughters worked in tandem with the Associated Charities, which in the 1910s became the main private distributor of alms in the city. Again this connection was largely established through an overlapping network of members. Mrs. R.D. Blacknall, a charter member of the King’s Daughters who remained actively involved through the 1910s, also served as secretary of the Associated Charities from 1908-1910.\textsuperscript{153} The King’s Daughters undertook a major clothing drive in 1912 to collect second hand clothing, which was then given to the Associated Charities to be distributed to the poor.\textsuperscript{154} The two organizations mainly cooperated, however, on the cause of rescuing children. In their work of distributing monetary relief to needy families, the Associated Charities often came across children in undesirable surroundings. The

\textsuperscript{150} Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, July 1910.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., July 1911; Ibid., Feb. 1912.
\textsuperscript{154} Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, Jan. 1912.
Associated Charities then referred these cases of vulnerable children to the King’s Daughters for investigation.¹⁵⁵

During this period both the Associated Charities and the King’s Daughters adopted many of the principles of charity-organization societies. This “modern” strategy emerged on the national level in the 1880s as an attempt to make the distribution of charity more efficient, more effective, and less costly. By studying the individual causes of poverty, proponents of “scientific charity” ultimately hoped to eliminate poverty altogether. In order to accomplish this goal, charity-organization societies intended to record the names of those who requested aid, investigate the individual circumstances of the case, and direct the “worthy” poor to agencies that would provide assistance. Preventing fraud was a central goal of this process, as the investigators were supposed to identify those who were “undeserving” and deny them assistance. This “scientific” investigation process emerged as the basis for social case work.¹⁵⁶

Although the Associated Charities appears to have done some investigating of cases, it cannot be considered a true charity-organization society. According to the principles of charity-organization, the society should not distribute alms itself but should instead refer needy cases to other organizations.¹⁵⁷ Durham’s Associated Charities received donations from churches, individuals, and after 1908, the city; it redistributed this money to those who requested it. The Associated Charities never effectively coordinated the other philanthropic organizations in the city, which continued to operate

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¹⁵⁵ Ibid., Oct. 1911.
¹⁵⁶ Green, This Business of Relief, 109-111.
¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 109-110.
relatively independently through their own existing networks. These characteristics led Margaret Bridgers, an ardent advocate of “modern” social work, to declare that the Associated Charities “did not merit being classed as a social work agency.”

The King’s Daughters, although not a charity-organization society, did adopt many of the methods of “scientific charity” that social reformers advocated. Because the King’s Daughters primarily relied on other agencies and the county government to distribute alms, the women used a “scientific” process of investigation to select the charity cases to which they did donate money and goods. Around the turn of the century, social reformer Mary Richmond became the main advocate of the system of “friendly visiting” that the King’s Daughters adopted. In 1899, Richmond published Friendly Visiting Among the Poor, a handbook of practical suggestions intended “for those who are beginning to do charitable work in the homes of the poor, whether as individuals or as representatives of some church, or some religious society, such as the King’s Daughters.” Richmond summed up her theories on this system of poor relief in an earlier speech:

> In districting our city and finding out the condition of the unfortunate in the districts, we have aimed to send to each family that needs an uplifting hand, a patient, persevering, faithful friend, who, but the power of that strongest thing on earth, personal influence, will gradually teach them habits of industry and self-control.

Thus friendly visiting was less about handing out donations than about investigating the causes of poverty and changing families through long-term moral assistance.

Although it is impossible to know if the Sheltering Home Circle adopted these methods from the beginning, by 1911 they had implemented a system of friendly visiting. The club appointed volunteers to be responsible for visiting specific districts of the city and investigating cases of need there. Committees were designated to visit each of the mill areas: West Durham, East Durham, the Pearl Mill area, and Edgemont.\footnote{Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, Oct. 1911.} By making regular visits to these areas, the women learned of requests for help (and also of women and children who needed to be rescued), investigated the circumstances of each case, and reported back to the whole circle.

Over the course of several years, patterns emerged among the cases that the King’s Daughters did take on. Most significantly, they helped whites almost exclusively. The King’s Daughters—along with other white organizations in Durham, both religious and nonsectarian—upheld the principles of racial segregation and generally neglected the needs of the city’s African American population. However, Durham’s black community developed its own extensive network of voluntary organizations. African American churches formed missionary societies that not only spread the gospel but also helped the poor. Black women also formed clubs and benevolent societies that performed work similar to that of their white counterparts. Although largely neglected by the white community and the county, poor blacks found aid through a variety of other channels.\footnote{See Leslie Brown, “Common Spaces, Separate Lives.”}

Those deemed “worthy” by the King’s Daughters had other characteristics in common as well. By definition, they were always deemed incapable of providing for themselves, and they were most often women and children. In most cases, the practical
aid given by the King’s Daughters was minimal and targeted. For instance, the circle sometimes assisted the sick with small donations; however, in almost every case the sick person was a woman or girl. In one instance a member reported the case of a “young lady” living in the Pearl Mills section who was sick with tuberculosis. The circle decided to put five dollars from the Elks Fund (the standard donation amount) towards buying food and medicine for the girl. Several members also promised additional “individual help.”

Another case in 1910 involved a girl who was sick with pellagra, a malnutrition disease that had recently become common in Durham and which had been heavily publicized by the newspapers that year. Pellagra was commonly understood as a disease of poverty, with a definite stigma surrounding it. The friendly visitor reported that the girl “wants especially oranges and tomatoes and is too poor to buy them.” The King’s Daughters voted to use money from the Elks Fund for this purpose.

Not surprisingly, the elderly formed another segment of the population that the society often targeted for relief. In one instance, the group became aware of an elderly man and his wife who lived near the coal chute. The man was unable to work, presumably due to age and possibly infirmity. After investigating the case, the women decided to donate five dollars. Another case involved Miss Rosa Weatherspoon, an elderly woman who was also listed on the county’s rolls of the outside poor. A member reported that Miss Weatherspoon was “a worthy but needy woman who sews for a living and who needs a new machine badly. She knows where one can be had for

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163 Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, Mar. 1911.
164 Anderson, Durham County, 250-251.
165 Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, July 1910.
166 Ibid., 1910.
167 Minutes of Durham County Commissioners, Nov. 1909.
$10.00, $2.00 of which is in hand.” The circle decided to donate the remaining eight dollars. In this case, the King’s Daughters exemplified the type of aid that “scientific charity” advocated; by helping Miss Weatherspoon to buy a sewing machine, they were addressing the immediate cause of her poverty and helping her to become self-supporting. The following spring, Miss Weatherspoon applied for admission to the Old Ladies’ Home. Her application proved to be rather controversial; many members expressed concern that she was too old and “a cripple”; presumably they feared that she would need more medical care than the Home was equipped to provide. After failing to reach a decision on her application, the members decided to go visit her in person before making a final decision. Apparently the visit to confirmed their fears that she was not fit for the Old Ladies’ Home; the following week Miss Weatherspoon withdrew her application.

Women with children, especially widows, formed the last large group that received charity from the King’s Daughters. In December 1910 a member reported that a Mrs. Adcock who lived near the Commonwealth Mill in the east end of the city was in need of aid. She had “no support,” meaning that for whatever reason there was no male breadwinner in the household, and could not provide for her “large family of children.” The ladies had “relieved her wants temporarily,” so the group appointed a committee to investigate the case. The case was brought up again at the next meeting and the matter

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168 Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, Nov. 1910.
169 Ibid., Apr. and May 1911.
170 Ibid., Dec. 1910.
was tabled again until the committee had finished investigating; it’s unclear whether Mrs. Adcock and her children ever received further aid.

Other cases reveal the King’s Daughters’ ambivalence towards supporting certain families. The circle occasionally did work with prisoners’ families, but the classification of who was “worthy” became murkier when violations of the law were involved. Such cases also exposed the women’s belief that government should be responsible for providing certain types of relief. For instance, in August 1910 one friendly visitor reported the case of several destitute families in Edgemont. The visitor “was instructed to help them from the Elks’ Fund if she found them worthy.” However, a discussion ensued about one particular family of a wife and five children “who were without any support because the husband and father was serving a sentence on the roads.” The women felt that it was somewhat unjustified for the county to profit from the man’s labor, while his family starved. During this discussion, “the question came up as to whether a law could not be passed by which a prisoner’s family could obtain half of what he earned on the roads.” The group decided to inquire as to whether such a law existed in Massachusetts or other states; it is unclear whether or not the King’s Daughters gave the family any aid.

This case exemplifies the ways in which the King’s Daughters adopted aspects of different national trends in social reform. Charity-organizers had a general hostility towards public welfare, which they deemed to be throwing money at the problem without addressing its causes. On the other hand, social-welfare Progressives, who dominated the discourse by the second decade of the twentieth century, “hoped to harness the power of
the state to work on behalf of the impoverished” and advocated an expansion of public welfare.\textsuperscript{171} While both groups utilized casework and other “scientific” principles of relief work, they disagreed on whether this relief should ultimately come from private or public sources.

As a private organization, the King’s Daughters obviously believed in the necessity of charity from churches and other nonsectarian clubs and agencies. They saw the role of these private charities as supplementing the existing public welfare system of outdoor relief, which had failed to grow enough to sufficiently provide for the city’s burgeoning population. Although these women viewed charity work as part of their Christian duty and as an obligation of their social class, their relief efforts can be viewed as a critique of the county’s system. By directing their aid towards vulnerable groups such as women and children, including some who already received outdoor relief from the county, the King’s Daughters recognized that the existing public welfare system was inadequate. For instance, the group’s largest financial endeavor, the Old Ladies’ Home, filled a need in providing housing for worthy elderly women, when the poorhouse was deemed tremendously inadequate.

On the other hand, public welfare had a stigma attached to it; the women believed that certain classes of people, although circumstances forced them to receive charity, should never have to stoop to the level of receiving public aid. The Old Ladies’ Home was also designed to prevent respectable elderly women from winding up in the poorhouse. At the same time, however, the group disavowed any responsibility for

\textsuperscript{171} Green, \textit{This Business of Relief}, 131.
African Americans and those they deemed morally reprehensible. These groups were not "worthy" to receive private charity, and the women believed the government should bear the responsibility of providing them with relief.

The social welfare system in Durham consisted of a complex web of public and private social welfare agencies. Collectively these organizations and institutions filled the majority of the community’s needs. The King’s Daughters envisioned themselves as one strand of this web, providing a vital safety net for needy women and children who were ill-served by the existing system.
CHAPTER TWO

The Poorhouse and the Problem of Dependent Children

In 1884, the tragic but relatively routine case of two orphans came before William Christian, the clerk of the Superior Court of Durham County. The two young children—Cara Morgan, age seven, and Alonzo Morgan, age five—had neither parents nor a home. The case had been brought to Christian’s attention by John Evans, the superintendent of the Durham County poorhouse. The children had been admitted to the poorhouse with their mother, Fannie Morgan; however, when Fannie died in the poorhouse, the children became orphans, “dependent upon the county for support.” Evans first approached a relative of the children, who refused to take in the orphans and “did not care about having them bound to him.” Having exhausted this option, Evans turned the case over to the court clerk. Christian, in order to remove the children from the poorhouse and thus take them off the county support rolls, apprenticed Cara and Alonzo Morgan to two different men. ¹⁷²

In the late nineteenth century, the Durham County commissioners and the court clerk commonly confronted cases such as that of the Morgan children. Orphans, as well as abandoned and neglected children, routinely became dependent on the county for support. The Durham County Commissioners, in accordance with state law, developed two primary methods for providing for these children. Many of them ended up at least temporarily in the county poorhouse, the infamous institution that functioned as a place

¹⁷² Durham County Apprenticeship Bonds, 1884.
of last resort for the indigent of all descriptions—the sick, the elderly, the mentally and physically disabled, widows, and unmarried mothers, as well as dependent children. However, North Carolina state law also dictated that dependent and neglected children could be apprenticed. Although a child-saving movement gained momentum in the last decades of the nineteenth century, which resulted in the founding of orphanages across the state, Durham County’s child welfare system remained resistant to change. Through the first decade of the twentieth century Durham continued to house dependent children in the poorhouse or to apprentice them to relatives or other masters. This limited and problem-ridden public welfare system served as the catalyst for the child-saving activities of the King’s Daughters and other private charitable organizations.

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During most of the nineteenth century, the poorhouse served as the lynchpin in the public welfare system and a catchall institution for various groups of indigent people. During the years when outdoor relief from the county commissioners or limited private charity remained the only alternatives, many destitute people found themselves with no option but to enter the “county home.” The poorhouse served as a temporary home for working-class people, often accompanied by their children, who were in-between jobs. Widows unable to support their children found themselves there alongside young unmarried mothers. Before there were public hospitals the home served as a de facto infirmary for the poor, including the chronically ill, many of whom were accompanied by family members. Physically and mentally disabled people—accident victims, the
“feeble-minded”, and the insane—often became long-term residents, as did the elderly and orphans without relatives who were willing to take them in. As Amos Warner, a social scientist and social worker whose 1894 book *American Charities* became the preeminent textbook on the subject, observed, “idiots, epileptics, incurables, incompetents, the aged, abandoned children, foundlings, women for confinement, and a considerable number of the insane, the blind, and the deaf and dumb are all dumped together into some old farmhouse that has been bought by the authorities… The public then goes on its ways, and thinks as little about the institution as possible.” The myriad of people found in the poorhouse reflected the complex causes of poverty in the nineteenth century.

In North Carolina, poor relief in the state remained within the purview of individual counties, under the administration of the county commissioners. Each county built and maintained its own poorhouse, commonly referred to as the county home, which was the oldest social welfare institution and in most areas the only charitable institution through most of the nineteenth century. According to state law the county commissioners appointed a warden of the poor, later known as the superintendent of public welfare, who bore responsibility for providing for the indigent of the county. In his study *Public Poor Relief in North Carolina*, social scientist Roy Brown observed that “it is not unusual to find a superintendent who belongs to a class only slightly superior to most of the inmates.” The warden was considered a lower-level county employee, “not the type of

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man who be elected register of deeds or clerk of the court.”  Critics frequently maligned poorhouse wardens as being little better than the inmates they supervised. Despite the fact that the wardens exercised almost complete control over the poorhouse inmates, they had virtually no influence over welfare policy in the county. Not until the 1920s did counties begin employing trained social workers to oversee welfare policies.

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, state agencies in North Carolina had little authority over public institutions such as county poorhouses and county jails. In 1869, according to provisions laid out in the state constitution and subsequent law, the General Assembly created a State Board of Public Charities “to investigate and to supervise the whole system of the charitable and penal institutions of the State” which “shall recommend such changes and additional provisions as they may deem needful for their economical and efficient administration.” However, after its initial formation the state allowed the Board to “cease to function, first through the withholding by the legislature of the meager appropriations granted at the time of its creation, and then through the failure of the Governor to fill vacancies on the board.” Thus after one initial report, the Board failed to issue any reports for nineteen years and exercised absolutely no oversight of county institutions during that time.

176 Roy M. Brown, Public Poor Relief in North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1928), 114. Brown was a professor at the Institute for Research in Social Science at the University of North Carolina. His book developed out of his earlier work preparing a bulletin on poor relief for the State Board of Charities and Public Welfare in the mid-1920s.

177 Ibid., 120.


179 Brown, Public Poor Relief, 72-82; quote 82.
In 1889 the legislature revived the State Board of Public Charities, and in the following years the influence and authority of the Board grew. Although the Board claimed that it should not “be invested with direct control over any institution whatever,” Board members continued to assert that the Board should have “the power of examination and recommendation” over charitable and penal institutions in the state.\textsuperscript{180} To help execute these duties, the state appointed a voluntary board of visitors in each county (all of whom were men, although female auxiliary visitors were sometimes also appointed), who were charged with visiting county institutions and relaying their findings to the State Board of Public Charities. The Board collected these statements, submitted them to the General Assembly, and biennially or annually published official reports based on the visitors’ investigations. Although after 1889 the Board regularly functioned at least at a minimal level, it remained chronically underfunded; the secretary repeatedly complained that the Board had been “confronted with the entire want of means to conduct inspections” or carry out its other duties.\textsuperscript{181} As a result of the Board remaining relatively weak well into the twentieth century, ultimate control over all poor relief within the county continued to rest with the county commissioners, who appointed the Superintendents of Public Welfare. The boards of visitors exercised only as much authority as the commissioners granted them.\textsuperscript{182}

Throughout the late nineteenth century the Board used its annual reports to draw attention to the horrific conditions in most county institutions and to highlight certain

\textsuperscript{180} NCBC, \textit{Report of the Board of Public Charities} (Raleigh: n.p., 1890), 32.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{182} Brown, \textit{Public Poor Relief}, 66-99.
areas of particular concern. The first secretary’s report in 1870 indicates that the Board members were keenly aware of the wretched state of the poorhouses:

The County Alms-Houses are also an institution of the olden time, and very properly called “Poor Houses.” These are the receptacles of the infirm, aged and diseased who are destitute or cast off by unnatural or equally poor kindred, the orphan and the child of poverty, for whom beats no heart warm with kindly emotions. Here is almost equal banishment from the presence of human love and care, as in the cases of the prisons.183

These remarks indicate that the Board expressed the same concerns being voiced by reformers on the national level, and the secretary also appears to have been aware of trends in social welfare reform. However, the State Board of Public Charities had little authority or means of effectively enforcing any of the recommendations made in that report or in later years.

Following the limited guidelines provided by state law, the politicians of Durham County began constructing a public welfare system shortly after the formation of the new county in 1881. Shortly after Durham County came into existence, the county commissioners purchased 121 acres of land located three miles outside of town. On this site they built the county’s first poorhouse, a simple frame house.184 The commissioners also provided for the distribution of outdoor relief to needy people who were capable of supporting themselves outside of an institution. These two provisions—the county home and outdoor relief—became the central tenets of the public relief system in Durham in the largely rural community. As the city of Durham grew during the subsequent decades, the number of people supported by the county correspondingly grew, but the system

183 NCBPC, Report of the Board of Public Charities (1870), 7-8.
184 Minutes of Durham County Commissioners, Sept. 1881.
remained largely unchanged. Before 1900, relief provided by private charities was minimal.¹⁸⁵

Frequently nineteenth century poorhouses, as was the case in Durham County, were located several miles outside of town on a relatively isolated tract of farmland. In theory such poor farms enabled the county home to be relatively self-sustaining and more cost-efficient. The inmates could grow their own food, and the county could sell the surplus at market, using the profits to maintain the poorhouse and pay the superintendent’s salary.¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, the farm provided the inmates with productive work; reformers and politicians alike concurred that all able-bodied paupers should be employed in useful work, which they believed aided in rehabilitation and instilled a proper work ethic.¹⁸⁷ Work formed a central component of life in publicly supported institutions.

In the words of historian Michael Katz, often nineteenth century “social policy confounded crime and poverty.”¹⁸⁸ In Durham County the presence of a county prison, known as the workhouse, next to the poorhouse perfectly illustrated this conflation. In 1882, the year after the county home was built, the county commissioners decided to build a workhouse on the same tract of land as the poor farm. By combining these two institutions, the county could presumably cut costs and increase efficiency. Workhouse prisoners could be used as farm laborers and to perform other tasks, such as cooking and

¹⁸⁶ David Wagner, The Poorhouse: America’s Forgotten Institution (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 5-6. According to the 1911 Report of State Board of Public Charities, surplus food grown on the poor farm was also sent to the convict camps to feed prisoners.
¹⁸⁷ Wagner, The Poorhouse, 55.
¹⁸⁸ Katz, In the Shadow of the Poorhouse, 31.
cleaning, that were necessary for the maintenance of the county home.\textsuperscript{189} Only a few counties in North Carolina had a workhouse located next to the county home, which made Durham County relatively unique in that regard.\textsuperscript{190}

While the workhouse/poorhouse model allowed the county commissioners to concentrate their institutional expenses in one location, it also demonstrated the commissioners’ perception that work was an essential component of both institutions. For economic reasons the commissioners believed that able-bodied paupers should work in order to, in a very direct way, earn their keep. In an ideal world, the commissioners assumed that all able-bodied men would be gainfully employed and thus not in need of an institution at all. In fact, during the nineteenth century the myth of enough available work for all of the able-bodied persisted.\textsuperscript{191} In the case of “enforced idleness” during economic depressions, however, Amos Warner argued that the county could fulfill an economic function by employing men in the poorhouse. Thus in theory paupers earned room and board in the poorhouse in exchange for their labor.\textsuperscript{192}

The commissioners had more complex reasons for demanding that able-bodied paupers be engaged in productive work on the poor farm. Reformers and politicians contended that employing the inmates helped the warden to maintain an orderly, well-disciplined poorhouse. Amos Warner advocated that all almshouse inmates be given a

\textsuperscript{189} Minutes of Durham County Commissioners, 1882.
\textsuperscript{190} Brown, \textit{Public Poor Relief}, 98. In the 1889-90 \textit{Report of State Board of Public Charities}, Wake County is reported as having a poorhouse and a workhouse “within the same enclosure, but separated by broken ground” (11). In 1897 the state Secretary reported that in Bertie County he visited the “work-house farm where the convicts are raising the necessary supplies to feed the poor at the County Home, the two divisions being located together” (54).
\textsuperscript{191} Katz, \textit{In the Shadow of the Poorhouse}, 6.
\textsuperscript{192} Warner, \textit{The Poorhouse}, 177-183. Also, in the Minutes of the Durham County Commissioners there is evidence that Durham County employed able-bodied men as laborers in the stone yard, and these earnings were recorded with the rolls of the outside poor.
work-test; if the test demonstrated that the inmate was sufficiently healthy and capable, the inmate should be given work, even if it was mere task-work. He argued that “idleness conduces to restlessness, sensuality, bad temper, and various forms of nervous disorder. In almshouses, as well as in prisons, insane asylums, and other kinds of institutions, discipline is doubly hard when the inmates are idle.” Warner even went so far as to claim that “work for all is desireable because they are happier for having it,” thus implying that it was also in the inmate’s best interest for him or her to be engaged in productive labor.

The deterrence factor also played a major role in the county commissioners’ decision to operate a poor farm. In theory, “the advantage to the management in obliging all inmates capable of doing anything to work consists in the deterrent influence of this policy upon would-be applicants.” Social workers believed that work was particularly effective in “preventing tramps from using the institution as a winter clubhouse.” While rural southern counties encountered this problem far less frequently than large urban areas did, one of the main goals of a poor warden was preventing “unworthy” inmates from entering it. Although policy makers were willing to concede that a poorhouse was necessary (and also mandated by law), they hoped to minimize its use, particularly by able-bodied men. Poorhouse labor thus could be viewed as punitive in the sense that it punished able-bodied men who failed to support themselves in the outside world. Poorhouse supporters also contended that by developing a good work ethic while

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196 Ibid., 160.
in the county home, able-bodied men decreased the likelihood that they would return to
the poorhouse and become life-long paupers. 197

In Durham County the presence of a workhouse on the same grounds enhanced
the punitive nature of work in the poorhouse; the workhouse remained the only prison in
the county during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Those convicted of
serious crimes would be sent to the state penitentiary; however, until the late 1880s all
misdemeanants, both white and black, would be sentenced to the workhouse. 198

The combination poorhouse/workhouse meant that paupers and criminals lived in
very close proximity to one another, which inherently compounded the problems faced
by the county commissioners in maintaining a decent home for the “worthy poor.” The
close association between the two institutions cemented the image of the county home as
a place of labor and punishment, as well as a place of last resort to be avoided at all costs.

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By 1900 the Durham County home had grown from one single frame building to a
collection of nine buildings. The changes in the physical space of the poorhouse
reflected a significant transformation in the function of the home and its underlying
philosophy. By the second half of the nineteenth century, reformers nationwide began
seeking alternatives to indiscriminately warehousing all groups of poor people in the
county home.

197 Katz, In the Shadow of the Poorhouse, 30-32.
198 Minutes of Durham County Superior Court.
Social welfare advocates proposed the classification of poorhouse inmates as one solution to this problem. Amos Warner argued in 1894 that “a majority of the grave evils which could be charged at the present time to the American almshouse have their origins in a lack of classification of inmates.”\textsuperscript{199} Warner recommended that inmates within the poorhouse be classified by sex, race, health, age, mental status, and moral character. Warner remained particularly concerned about the mingling of “worthy” and “unworthy” groups in the county home. He cited the abuse of the poorhouse as “a winter resort for tramps, and a place where the drunkard and the prostitute can recuperate between debauches.”\textsuperscript{200} In most locations these inmates of bad character or “delinquents”, many of whom were former criminals, were housed alongside “worthy” widows, the elderly, the infirm, and children.

Critics in North Carolina levied these same charges against the county institutions. As early as 1870, the chairman of the State Board of Charities, Rev. G. William Welker observed that “the respectable, aged, and infirm pauper is shut up with the wornout strumpet, whose very presence is pollution.” In addition to lamenting the generally wretched conditions found in North Carolina poorhouses, Rev. Welker expressed particular concern about the lack of differentiation between poorhouse inmates. He observed that the “whole system, or rather want of system that seems to have grown up by accident and without any benevolent concern for the welfare of the pauper classes…needs patient and thorough revision.”\textsuperscript{201}

\textsuperscript{199} Warner, \textit{The Poorhouse}, 152.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 156.
\textsuperscript{201} NCBPC, \textit{Report of the Board of Public Charities} (1870), 8.
Reformers proposed the cottage system as one solution to this classification problem. Rather than inmates being warehoused in one large dormitory style institution, they would be segregated in small cottages based on their classification.\textsuperscript{202} However, this recommendation was more pertinent to poorhouses located in large cities; in the rural or newly industrialized South, existing poorhouses already tended to be collections of cabins or houses, as was the case in Durham County. Thus although poorhouse critics in North Carolina argued for proper classification, this strategy did not represent a major departure from earlier policies; rather, critics argued that classification and the sorting of inmates needed to be properly implemented.

The reality of children and other “worthy” groups living besides people of “bad character” helped convince reformers that classification was an inadequate solution. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, reformers across the nation and North Carolina reached a general consensus that the extreme heterogeneity of poorhouse populations inherently limited the success of classification. Reformers instead proposed the removal of certain categories of people from the poorhouse as the ideal solution to the classification problem. In the 1890s Warner articulated this solution when he claimed that “classification inside the almshouse is easy in proportion as the drafting off of special cases to special institutions has been practiced.”\textsuperscript{203} This “special cases to special


\textsuperscript{203} Warner, \textit{The Poorhouse}, 153.
institutions” theory became one of the dominant themes of social welfare reform in the late 1800s, as reformers embraced asylums to contain and care for certain populations.204

Relative to other southern states, North Carolina was an early advocate of diverting “special cases” into separate institutions, and by 1900 North Carolina had several state-run institutions for adults and children. This process began before the Civil War with the creation of the Institute for the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind in 1852. Following Dorothea Dix’s indictment of the treatment of the insane in poorhouses and jails in the 1840s, the state founded an insane asylum for whites in Raleigh in 1853. The state’s responsibility to care for both of these groups was reiterated in the 1868 Constitution, which declared that “the general assembly shall provide that all the deaf-mutes, the blind, and the insane of the State shall be cared for at the charge of the State.”205 In the 1870s, a second facility for the white insane opened in the western part of the state, as well as a counterpart institution, the North Carolina Asylum for the Colored Insane, that served black mental patients.206 Thus North Carolina politicians aimed to present the state as progressive in its treatment of the physically and mentally disabled. However, conditions in these institutions continued to generate criticism from reformers. Perhaps more

204 See Rothman, The Discovery of the Asylum. This represented a departure from earlier national movements, which had largely targeted able-bodied men for removal from poorhouses. Reformers believed that the influence of this group, that had no business being supported by public tax dollars, was largely responsible for the physical and moral degradation of the poorhouse. However, reformers’ efforts to remove able-bodied men yielded limited results. Although these campaigns continued into the early twentieth century, reformers shift in focus to removing more “worthy” populations from the poorhouse can be viewed as an admission of failure in their original goal. See Wagner, The Poorhouse, 49-55.
205 North Carolina, Public Laws (1868).
importantly, the capacity of these institutions remained woefully inadequate to house and
care for all of the needy cases in the state.\textsuperscript{207}

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, politicians targeted another
group for removal from the poor farm: prisoners. In Durham County, politicians and
reformers increasingly viewed the combination workhouse/poorhouse, in which paupers
and criminals lived side by side, as being in stark opposition to the principle of inmate
classification. Furthermore, the housing of prisoners on the poor farm became an
increasingly untenable and unprofitable situation. As a result, politicians began seeking
alternative solutions to the prisoner dilemma.

The issue of race emerged as a primary factor in the reconfiguration of the county
institutions. The evolving system of Jim Crow laws that emerged in North Carolina in
the years after Reconstruction caused a dramatic increase in the number of black
prisoners at the same time that racial intermingling, even of the lowest classes, became
increasingly unacceptable. As a result of the racially discriminatory judicial system, the
vast majority of criminals convicted of crimes, particularly petty crimes, during the late
nineteenth and early twentieth century were black men.\textsuperscript{208} In Durham County until the

\footnote{\textit{In the Reports of the Board of Public Charities}, the Secretary repeatedly called attention to the shortage of beds in insane asylums; for instance, in 1891-92 he noted that the visitors’ reports show “a large number of applicants for admission refused on the ground of ‘no room,’ and coupled with this, the large number of insane persons confined in the county homes and jails (2). The “worthy” elderly emerged as another group that was targeted for removal from poorhouses; this movement culminated in the founding of a Confederate Soldiers’ home in 1891 (Brown, \textit{Public Poor Relief}, 96).}

\footnote{\textit{Reports of the Board of Public Charities} indicate that in counties in the eastern and piedmont regions of the state the number of blacks confined in county jails almost always exceeded the number of whites. Also the Board of Visitors to the North Carolina State Penitentiary reported that on Dec. 15, 1891, the penitentiary housed 1,124 inmates, 895 of whom were black. For a more general discussion of the correlation between race and prison convictions in the late nineteenth century, see Edward L. Ayers, \textit{Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century American South} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).}
mid 1880s, all misdemeanants were confined to the poor farm; the result was that relatively large numbers of black men lived in close proximity to the county home inmates. As Durham began its transformation into an industrialized city and the county population grew, the number of prisoners correspondingly increased. By 1892 the board of visitors reported that, during a ten month period, the county confined a total of 40 prisoners: 32 black men, 2 white men, 5 black women, and 1 white woman. During the same period only 22 people resided in the poorhouse.  

Faced with these skewed demographics and their economic implications, the county reevaluated its confinement policies in the late 1880s. Given these statistics, the county could not feasibly accommodate and house that many prisoners on the poor farm. Furthermore, the fact that Durham County only had one prison facility, the workhouse, made the classification of prisoners difficult. Prisoners convicted of serious crimes had always been sent to the state penitentiary, or in the most extreme cases, executed; however, misdemeanants were housed indiscriminately in the workhouse prison. The State Board of Public Charities recommended the classification of prisoners by sex, seriousness of crime, and age. Durham County appears to have complied with at least the first recommendation; in 1892 the jail was a two story building constructed of “oak logs and iron,” with men’s cells on the first floor and women’s cells on the second,

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209 NCBPC, *Report of the Board of Public Charities*, (Raleigh: n.p., 1892). Statistics from earlier years are not available due to the fact that the *Report of the Board of Public Charities* was not published prior to 1890; the 1890 report also does not contain information this information. The data from 1892 is somewhat misleading because by 1892 all “confined” prisoners would not have been on the poor farm; most of them would already have been working on chain gangs.


which provided for the separation of the sexes.\textsuperscript{212} Each floor contained two rooms. As a public consensus emerged that racial segregation was necessary, the State Board of Charities and reformers more generally advocated the segregation of prisoners.\textsuperscript{213} Given the physical layout of the Durham workhouse, the only acceptable solution for segregating prisoners would have been to reserve one room each for black men, white men, black women, and white women. However, the majority of prisoners were black men, and only occasionally did the jail house a white woman. In 1892, if all prisoners had been housed in the workhouse according to the principles of segregation by sex and race, 32 black men would have been confined together in one room that was 18 feet by 18 feet square. The one white, female prisoner would have been the sole occupant of a room that same size.\textsuperscript{214}

By the late 1880s, politicians also began to reevaluate the county’s use of prison labor, which remained a valuable economic resource for the county. In earlier years the labor of a small number of prisoners had been profitably channeled into working the poor farm. However, it became increasingly clear to the county commissioners that employing forty prisoners on the farm was not the most profitable use of their labor. By 1890 the county board of visitors commented that “we are not advocates of farming them [prisoners] on poor land”; rather they preferred to have male prisoners work on chain gangs, “improving the public highways, keeping up bridges and the county property generally.”\textsuperscript{215} Indeed, in most counties that had some form of workhouse, the “chain

\textsuperscript{212} NCBPC, \textit{Report of the Board of Public Charities} (1892), 240-241.
\textsuperscript{213} NCBPC, \textit{Report of the Board of Public Charities} (1894), 234.
\textsuperscript{214} NCBPC, \textit{Report of the Board of Public Charities} (1892), 241.
\textsuperscript{215} Ibid., 241.
gang supplanted the workhouse” as the preferred employment of prisoners.\textsuperscript{216} Claiming that “outdoor labor is the negro’s natural occupation,” state officials purported that the chain gang system was a preferable use of black labor, as opposed to the “idle confinement of jails.”\textsuperscript{217}

Thus by the 1890s most black, male prisoners, a group that formed the vast majority of all county convicts, worked on chain gangs and were lodged for weeks at a time in convict camps along the roads of Durham County.\textsuperscript{218} In this way the county commissioners solved their most egregious classification problems in the workhouse and more generally on the poor farm. However, the close proximity of the workhouse and the poorhouse continued to create problems and greatly impacted the daily lives of the county home inmates. First of all, at any given point not all able-bodied male prisoners were working out in the county on a chain gang. Although the county commissioners intended the poor farm to be worked primarily by the poorhouse inmates, the inescapable reality was that most of the paupers were incapable of working due to infirmity, disability, or age. Thus a few male prisoners likely continued to work on the poor farm grounds. In the years before the establishment of a state reformatory for boys in 1907, and later due to inadequate space in these facilities, judges often sentenced teenaged boys to the workhouse rather than the roads.\textsuperscript{219} Female prisoners, who the state claimed were

\textsuperscript{216} Brown, 	extit{Public Poor Relief}, 97.
\textsuperscript{217} NCBPC, 	extit{Report of the Board of Public Charities} (Raleigh: n.p., 1903), 23.
\textsuperscript{218} For a discussion of the development of the chain gang system throughout the state, see Jesse F. Steiner and Roy Brown, 	extit{The North Carolina Chain Gang: A Study of County Convict Road Work} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1927).
\textsuperscript{219} Brown, 	extit{Public Poor Relief}, 98. The King’s Daughters mounted a large campaign in the first decade of the twentieth century to establish a reform school for delinquent white boys, in an attempt to alleviate this problem—see chapter 2.
“never worked on the roads,” were instead employed “cooking and mending for the prisoners at the [convict] camp or at the County Home.” Reformers remained most concerned, however, about the fact that the prison on the poor farm served as the permanent quarters for road prisoners. Prisoners returned to the poor farm during the intervals when they were not working on the roads, which included the entirety of the winter months.

Throughout North Carolina, workhouses came under criticism from reformers and politicians in the 1890s. In 1894, the state superintendent of the Board of Public Charities noted an increased number of workhouses and convict camps across the state to accommodate the burgeoning prison population. He stated the need for greater oversight of workhouses, which were frequently “managed by officers without penal experience,” with prisoners being guarded with “a laxity of control beyond belief.” The superintendent reported that workhouses often housed men who had been sentenced to prison “for an infraction of city ordinances…a slight misdemeanor which may be atoned for by a trivial fine and cost.” However, if the convicted man was too poor to pay the fine, he would be sentenced to work off his fine at hard labor on the county roads or in the workhouse. This failure of classification, combined with poor management, led to renewed criticism of workhouses.

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220 NCBPC, Report of the Board of Public Charities (Raleigh: n.p., 1905), 14. In an 1890 investigation of the superintendent of the poorhouse and workhouse (discussed further below), testimony revealed that female paupers, prisoners, and prisoner’s wives did laundry at the county home (Minutes of Durham County Commissioners, Jan. 1890).
221 Minutes of Durham County Commissioners, Jan. 1890; NCBPC, Report of the Board of Public Charities (Raleigh: n.p., 1913).
222 NCBPC, Report of the Board of Public Charities (Raleigh: n.p., 1895), 122-123.
223 Ibid., 16.
Durham County also exemplified this trend. In 1890, the county commissioners requested that a grand jury investigate John W. Evans, the superintendent of the poorhouse and workhouse since their creation almost a decade earlier. In the ensuing case, the county charged Evans with mistreatment of paupers and prisoners, misappropriation of county funds, and general mismanagement. One witness, J.L. Massey, who had served as prison guard for fourteen months, testified that Evans designated certain prisoners as “trustees” and let those men have the run of the grounds. Evans allowed one trustee, a Mr. Hicks, to leave the grounds altogether, “being at liberty to spend his nights and Sundays at his home” five miles away. Massey also testified that Evans “lets them [the trustees] eat at his own table” along with the superintendent’s family. The county commissioners appear to have been justified in their concern that Evans allowed at least some prisoners to have the run of the poorhouse grounds.224

The Grand Jury also investigated two cases in which Evans was accused of cruelty and neglect of a poorhouse inmate. When William Cameron, a black pauper, had been admitted to the county home the summer before, he had been suffering from gangrene in his foot. A local doctor who attended to poorhouse inmates amputated Cameron’s foot; then, a few days later, the doctor found that “the disease had advanced up his leg” and performed a second operation to amputate more of the man’s leg. Cameron’s leg, exposed in the summer heat, “became infected with maggots,” and he died shortly thereafter. Several paupers testified that Evans had been left unattended. Another black man living in the poorhouse, Jesse Mosely, had an “unexpected

224 Minutes of Durham County Commissioners, Jan. 1890.
hemorrhage of the lungs” and died unattended, “suffocating in a pool of his own blood.”

Although the Grand Jury concluded that “the management of the Poor House is 
by no means what it should be, being in many respects worse than can be imagined,” the 
testimonies of guards, doctors, and paupers offered a mixed assessment. The county 
commissioners ultimately ruled that Evans had not committed “any criminal act or 
neglect” and retained him as superintendent until Evans quit. Regardless of the 
outcome, the case publicized the poor conditions in the county home and the horrific 
details of Cameron and Mosely’s deaths. The controversy over the management of the 
poorhouse and workhouse helped to cement public opinion that those public institutions 
should be avoided at all costs.

Although the county had succeeded in removing the majority of prisoners from 
the poor farm, prisoners continued to be housed and worked there well into the twentieth 
century. According to the board of visitors’ reports, the buildings on the farm were 
located adjacent to one another. Only 90 feet separated the workhouse from the buildings 
where the poorhouse inmates were housed, a visible reminder of the relationship between 
poverty and punishment that had major implications for the poorhouse inmates, 
especially children.

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225 Ibid.
226 Ibid.
The presence of dependent or neglected children in nineteenth century poorhouses further heightened the need for inmate classification. As was true for adults, children ended up in the county home for a variety of reasons. Homeless orphans, without an estate or relatives to care for them, frequently wound up in the poorhouse at least temporarily. However, many children accompanied a parent to the county home, often as the result of temporary unemployment or illness. Widows and deserted mothers who were unable to support their children found their way to the county home, and many illegitimate children who had been born in the poorhouse remained there with their mothers, sometimes for years. As early as 1870 the State Board of Charities acknowledged the wretched conditions in which poorhouse children lived, where “no care is had…for the innocence of childhood” and where “no enlightened Christian concern is felt…for the education and training of the neglected children of want, who know nothing of the blessedness of parental affection.”

Evidence indicates that children on the Durham County poor farm in the late nineteenth century received little special consideration. In the course of the 1890 investigation into the death of William Cameron, one poorhouse resident, Polly Bower, testified about the circumstances surrounding Cameron’s death. She recalled that, after the man’s leg had been amputated a second time, “a little crippled boy” had been instructed to stay with the recovering man and keep the flies off the wound, despite the overwhelming stench in the room.

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230 Minutes of Durham County Commissioners, Jan. 1890.
The workhouse/poorhouse combination, where children interacted with prisoners daily, also greatly exacerbated the problem of classification for Durham County. First of all, the presence of the workhouse on the poor farm actually increased the number of children living in the poorhouse. Children sometimes accompanied their prisoner mothers to the poor farm and were housed in the county home.231 Secondly, the workhouse raised the stakes for reformers who sought to remove children from the poorhouse environment. Ironically, the poorhouse children (including those who did not have convict parents) were the most likely residents to have contact with the prisoners, both male and female. Due to the inability of many paupers to work on the farm, older children almost certainly would have been classified as able-bodied. During the course of their daily work in the fields, the kitchen, or the laundry, children potentially worked side by side with convicted criminals. Thus the least and most culpable populations on the Durham County poor farm would have had regular contact, and reformers viewed children as the most innocent victims of insufficient inmate classification and segregation.

231 Reports of the Board of Public Charities from 1903, 1904, and 1912 show that children of convicts were housed in the Durham County home.
Figure 5. Durham County Home and Prison Farm, mid-1890s.\textsuperscript{232} On the far right, the superintendent, Henry Daniel Leigh, stands with his family in front of the superintendent’s house. The other buildings where paupers and prisoners were housed can be seen in the distance, along with the well. Two white armed guards stand to the immediate left of the superintendent’s family, overseeing a work crew, most of whom are African American men and women. Notice the young black boy in the foreground.

Reformers had long understood the importance of isolating children from negative behavioral influences such as this. However, this was a matter of increasing concern to reformers as they came to fully realize the influence of environment on children. In contrast to earlier scientific views that children’s characteristics were predominantly determined by heredity, many late nineteenth century reformers argued that children were impacted primarily by their environment. Labeled by historian Paul Boyer as “positive environmentalists,” these reformers such as Jane Addams and John Dewey argued that

\textsuperscript{232} Durham County Home and Prison Farm, mid-1890s, Durham Historic Photographic Archives, North Carolina Collection, Durham County Public Library, Durham, N.C.
negative physical and moral environments, not innate hereditary flaws, caused poverty and vice. Progressive reformers used this scientific argument to buttress their efforts to create cleaner, safer environments in cities, with the belief that these changes in physical space would create better, more moral people. Using this theory, social welfare reformers singled children out as the group most vulnerable to pernicious influences and claimed that in the poorhouse, children learned how to be lifelong paupers as well as follow the immoral ways of their fellow inmates. Amos Warner claimed that when poorhouse populations were forced to intermingle, inmates who are “virtually boys give themselves over for instruction in the arts of vice to the old and decaying devotees of sensuality.”

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Although the emphasis on environment over heredity catalyzed a child-saving movement in the late 1800s, this was not the first attempt to rescue children from the poorhouse. Throughout the nineteenth century, apprenticeship served as the primary method for removing dependent children from poorhouses and for making long-term provisions for them. In North Carolina, the institution of apprenticeship dated back to the colonial era, and during the antebellum period it served multiple purposes. In an economy based on farming and artisanship, parents could voluntarily apprentice their child to a craftsman for the purpose of learning a skilled trade. In this sense,

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apprenticeship served as a type of indenture in which a child’s labor was supposedly exchanged for room and board, and knowledge of a trade. Arrangements such as this could be made either formally, through legal contract between parent, master, and child, or though informal agreement. However, apprenticeship also served as a means of providing for “orphans”—which until the late nineteenth century were legally defined as children without a father—and destitute children that would otherwise have become burdens on the county. Historian Karin Zipf argues that apprenticeship also became “an instrument used to control households headed by women and free blacks.”

By the late 1800s, North Carolina laws regarding guardianship and apprenticeship had evolved into an elaborate system. Although apprenticeships purely for the purpose of learning a skilled trade probably did still occur, legislators wrote the law in such a way that it also regulated the care of dependent and neglected children. The apprenticeship laws passed in 1889 stipulated that the clerk of the court could apprentice children according to the following criteria:

1) all orphans whose estates are of so small value that no person will educate and maintain them for the benefit thereof;
2) all infants [minors] whose fathers have deserted their families and been absent six months, leaving them without sufficient support;
3) any poor child who is or may be chargeable to the county, or shall beg alms
4) any child who has no father, and the mother is of bad character or suffers her children to grow up in habits of idleness, without any visible means of obtaining an honest livelihood
5) all infants whose parents do not habitually employ their time in some honest, industrious occupation

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This list of children who may be apprenticed contains the clearest definition in North Carolina law of a dependent and/or neglected child. These apprenticeship laws also formed the legal basis for determining parents’ legal rights to their children and for determining under which circumstances a child could be removed from his/her parents’ custody. Significantly, the categories of children who could be involuntarily apprenticed by the court overlapped with the class of children commonly found in poorhouses. Thus the contract-based system apprenticeship emerged as the main legal strategy for preventing these groups of children from ending up in the poorhouse.

In Durham, the institution of apprenticeship survived well into the second decade of the twentieth century. The records reveal that a dual system emerged for dealing with children who had lost both parents and were thus full orphans. The cases of children who inherited an estate were generally heard by the Superior Court, where the judge settled any disputes over the estate and appointed a legal guardian for the children. Orphans without estates, on the other hand, rarely appeared before a judge; rather, most often the county dealt with these children outside of formal court proceedings by apprenticing them. This process involved a hearing before the clerk of the court, in which both the child and the master agreed to the stipulations of the contract.

In the late nineteenth century, most of the children apprenticed in Durham County appear to have been either full orphans or abandoned children. In fact, the printed apprenticeship bonds used by the county used the phrase “an orphan” following the blank for the child’s name, confirming that this was the original constituency that the county
intended to apprentice. The county sometimes bound these children out to relatives. Although it is difficult if not impossible to know who initiated many of these proceedings, the bonds do offer some clues. In some cases it appears that the master approached the clerk to initiate the apprenticeship. In one case, Ernest and Lena Revis, two black children ages five and four respectively, had been abandoned by their father and mother. The clerk agreed that the children should be bound “to their grandfather who took them in,” and he subsequently apprenticed them to Sam Revis to learn the “art and business” of farming and housekeeping. Although it is unclear whether the apprenticeship bonds were initiated by the grandfather or by the clerk, Sam Revis had already demonstrated that he was willing to provide for his young grandchildren, and he willingly had them bound to him. Thus the apprenticeships formalized a relationship and living arrangement that already existed, and the young ages of the children indicate that at least initially this relationship was not primarily driven by an economic desire to control the children’s labor.

In other instances, it is likely that relatives only reluctantly agreed to accept the children. In 1887 the clerk dealt with the case of two white children, Ada Smith, age fourteen, and her brother Cleaver Smith, age eleven. Ada and Cleaver were without a father and had been abandoned by their mother. Ultimately the clerk apprenticed the two children to Prudence Smith, whose relation to the children is not indicated. Because no notes accompany the bond, it is likely that Prudence Smith did not request custody of the

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237 The apprenticeship bonds for Durham County from 1882-1913 indicate that about 20% of children apprenticed were bound to relatives.
238 Durham County Apprenticeship Bond, 1898.
children; although for whatever reason, perhaps at the urging of clerk, she did consent to have the children bound to her. The stipulation on the bonds that Ada and Cleaver were to learn the “art and business” of being an “operative in a cotton factory” offers another clue; the children were old enough to be economic assets for the household, rather than liabilities.\textsuperscript{239}

In the majority of cases, however, the county ordered that the orphan or abandoned child be bound to someone who was not related. In these cases, it appears that the adults involved—the clerk, the master, and other third parties—were motivated by a variety of factors including a desire for social control, control of the child’s labor, and altruism. The interplay of these factors depended to a certain extent on the age, sex, and race of the child. Although the bonds only occasionally indicated the child’s race, it is clear that the court apprenticed orphans and abandoned children of both races. However, during the 1880s, teenage black boys seem to have been apprenticed in larger numbers, presumably as a racial control measure.\textsuperscript{240} For instance, in 1885, John Vaughn, a sixteen-year-old African American boy whose mother had “left him to do as he pleases,” was apprenticed to learn farming. The third party who had brought the case to the clerk’s attention suggested that he be bound out to Sandy Hopkins, a “good man that will make him work and mind.”\textsuperscript{241} In John Vaughn’s case, the adults appear to have been less concerned with the well-being of the teenaged boy and more concerned with social control. Throughout this entire period, however, around thirty percent of the children

\textsuperscript{239} Durham County Apprenticeship Bond, 1887.
\textsuperscript{240} The apprenticeship bonds from the 1880s include many instances of a single teenage boy, sometimes identified as African American, being apprenticed. For a complete discussion of apprenticeship as a racial control mechanism in the period following Reconstruction, see Zipf, Labor of Innocents.
\textsuperscript{241} Durham County Apprenticeship Bond, 1885.
bound out were five years old or younger. This indicates that labor was not the primary reason why masters agreed to accept these children as apprentices, and altruism likely played a much larger role.

Some cases illustrate early attempts by Durham citizens to intervene on behalf of children to “save” them from undesirable surroundings. The wording of the law allowed the clerk to use his discretion to remove neglected or abused children from their parents’ custody. In 1886, three witnesses appeared before the clerk as advocates for fourteen-year-old Jesse Bell. One witness testified that he had seen the girl’s mother, Jun Bell, “whipping unmercifully her daughter” and “on one occasion he saw her strike Jesse with a wash board.” Another witness reported that the mother’s treatment of Jesse was “evil in the extreme,” and that she had heard Jun “threaten to kill” the girl. The clerk ultimately agreed with one of the witnesses that “it is dangerous to allow Jesse to remain in the custody of her mother,” and he apprenticed the girl as a housekeeper.242

Other cases represented a convergence between the desire to “save” the child and prevent him or her from becoming a juvenile delinquent. In 1884 the Durham Chief of Police wrote to the county clerk regarding Lewis Webb. According to the Chief of Police, Webb, who reported that he was thirteen years old, “had been on the streets for about a month or so and is quite a nuisance.” The boy further stated that he had “neither a father nor a mother living,” and the Chief of Police requested that he be apprenticed. In this case, apprenticeship both removed the boy from the streets and at least theoretically

242 Durham County Apprenticeship Bond, 1886.
reformed the boy’s behavior. In other cases, the court ordered that delinquent boys be apprenticed rather than serving time at the workhouse or on a chain gang.

The voluntary apprenticeship of children with one living parent provides a different perspective on the social welfare system in Durham during this period. During the entire time period, approximately 22% of children bound out had a parent’s permission. These bonds were accompanied by letters signed by the parent indicating this. Before the first decade of the twentieth century, legal adoptions of children were exceedingly rare; instead parents made arrangements to transfer custody of the child through an apprenticeship contract. Although many of these notes offer no more information about the case, some letters provide insight into the parent’s circumstances, often revealing the reasons why the parent was unable to adequately provide for the child. Six-year-old Annie Laura Wilkin’s mother agreed to the girl’s apprenticeship because she was “not able to give her the attention that she was entitled to,” while another mother apprenticed her daughter because she was too sick to care for her. The bond of seven-year-old Charlie Woods was accompanied by a note from J.F. Freeland, stating that the boy’s mother “came into my store as she was going to leave town and requested in my presence that she wanted Christian Tate to take the boy named and raise him in other words she gave him to her.” In each case, the mother voluntarily transferred custody of her child to another person.

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243 Durham County Apprenticeship Bond, 1887.
244 See 1894 case in which the Durham County Superior Court ordered that fourteen-year-old Sam Hopson be apprenticed.
245 Durham County Apprenticeship Bond, 1896; 1907.
246 Durham County Apprenticeship Bond, 1885.
As these cases indicate, apprenticeship—regardless of who initiated the contract—provided a mechanism for finding another adult who was both financially able and willing to care for a child. Without the intervention of the county clerk, relatives, or concerned third parties, orphans and neglected children undoubtedly would have ended up in the poorhouse. Mothers who gave permission for their child to be apprenticed actively utilized the system for the benefit of the child. By relinquishing the child to a person of her choosing, the mother proactively placed her child in what she deemed to be the best possible home. Furthermore, by apprenticing a child that she could not adequately provide for, a destitute mother could prevent both herself and the child from having to resort to the poorhouse. If they ended up in the poorhouse, the mother faced the possibility that her child would be involuntarily taken from her by the court and apprenticed to a stranger.

In at least several cases the county removed children from the poorhouse by binding them out. The county commissioners and the poorhouse warden reported to the clerk cases of poorhouse children who were old enough to be apprenticed. In addition to being motivated by altruism, county officials undoubtedly had financial motives as well. By utilizing the legal provision that children who were “chargeable to the county” could be apprenticed, they could shift the burden of supporting the child to his or her master.247

In 1884, the poorhouse superintendent, John Evans, notified the clerk of two children, Cara Morgan age seven and Alonzo Morgan age five, whose mother had died in the poorhouse. The warden recommended that the children, who were “dependent upon the

247 North Carolina, Public Laws (1889).
county for support,” be bound out, which they were. In 1898, the clerk apprenticed twelve-year-old William Barbee, an “orphan of the County-home,” that the county commissioners had ordered to be bound out. However, for unknown reasons that the apprenticeship was cancelled later that year, and the boy returned to the poorhouse. In both cases, officials sought to actively relieve the county of the financial burden of an orphan.

Although apprenticeship remained an important mechanism for dealing with orphaned, dependent, and neglected children in Durham County until the mid-1910s, the system did not remain static. The rate at which the clerk apprenticed children decreased significantly during the period under consideration, especially considering the enormous increase in the county’s population. Apprenticed children were significantly less likely to be orphans and more likely to be voluntarily apprenticed by a parent. These changes in the implementation of the system indicate that societal views of involuntary apprenticeships had evolved considerably since the 1880s.

On the national level, the apprenticeship system came under criticism from reformers as early as the 1890s. This criticism largely stemmed from changing conceptions of childhood. Whereas in earlier decades children had been valued for their economic productivity, during the late 1800s children came to be viewed with much more sentimentality. In addition, child and adolescent psychologists also introduced the

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248 Durham County Apprenticeship Bond, 1884.
249 Durham County Apprenticeship Bond, 1898.
public to new scientific understandings of childhood and human development, emphasizing the need to protect youth during their formative years.\textsuperscript{251}

On a less abstract level, reformers began to criticize the apprenticeship system as being woefully inadequate for the modern era. Originally apprenticeship was intended to teach the child a skilled trade, such that upon reaching the age of majority that child would become a productive member of society. However, critics often pointed out that in a modern society, education—academic, civic, and moral—formed at least as important a part of a child’s upbringing as work. In 1873, Governor Tod R. Caldwell observed that

\begin{quote}
It is well known that very few bound orphans are ever sent to any school, and that most of them are growing up in ignorance of the laws of God and of the laws of their country. Having lost their natural guides and protectors, and feeling that society has failed to afford them the means of improvement, they naturally sink into vice and degradation [sic] and become a plague and a burden to the State.\textsuperscript{252}
\end{quote}

Gov. Caldwell thus criticized the system of binding out orphans, which counties relied on to relieve themselves of providing for those children, for failing to prepare children for responsible adulthood and for making them more susceptible to delinquency. In 1889 the General Assembly amended the apprenticeship law as a result of these concerns about education; the new law required that “the apprentice be taught to read and write and the rules of arithmetic to the double rule of three.”\textsuperscript{253}

Critics also argued that the antiquated system was generally ill-suited to the modern economy. Although the system was designed to teach apprenticed children a skilled trade, the vast majority of children in North Carolina were apprenticed to learn the

\textsuperscript{253} North Carolina, \textit{Public Laws} (1889).
“art and business of” farming or housekeeping, hardly the skilled trades of a craftsman. Reformer Mabel Brown Ellis charged that “industry has swept past the handicraft stage, to which alone apprenticeship adapted itself. Indenturing a child now means little more than bartering his potential worth as a servant for his support during childhood.”

Ellis’s comments also reveal middle-class reformers’ changing views of child labor. Alexander J. McElway, the editor of the North Carolina Presbyterian who advocated on behalf of child labor reform in the first decade of the twentieth century, argued that forcing young children to work resulted in a “stunting of the body,” “dwarfing of the mind,” and “spoiling of the spirit.” As these views became more prevalent, reformers increasingly criticized apprenticeship as another form of forced labor.

Reformers also expressed concerns about the abuses of the system and the lack of oversight of apprenticed children. The secretary of the State Board of Charities called for “closer supervision of the children bound from time to time, as they are supposed to be old enough, from our County Homes.” Legislators also changed the apprenticeship laws to reflect these growing concerns. The apprenticeship contract involved obligations from both the master and the apprentice. If an apprentice refused to work or ran away, this was considered a criminal act and he or she faced imprisonment. On the other hand, masters if a master violated the legal provision to provide “diet, clothes, lodging and accommodations fit and necessary” for the indentured child, he or she faced negligible consequences. The court clerk investigated complaints, and if he found the master to be

254 See Durham County Apprenticeship Bonds.
“guilty of cruelty or ill usage” of the apprentice, the clerk would cancel the indenture.\footnote{North Carolina, \textit{Public Laws} (1889).}

However, in 1889 the General Assembly revised these laws such that neglectful masters could be convicted of a misdemeanor resulting in fines or imprisonment.\footnote{Ibid.} Regardless, the laws continued to provide minimal oversight of apprentices; masters were only required to make a report to the clerk once a year with regard to the “moral, mental and physical condition” of the child.\footnote{Ibid.  See Zipf, \textit{Labor of Innocents}, for a more thorough discussion of the evolution of apprenticeship laws.}

Although the apprenticeship system remained in place in North Carolina until the passage of the Child Welfare Act in 1919, ongoing criticism had a pronounced impact on the institution.\footnote{Zipf, \textit{Labor of Innocents}, 130.}

By the first decade of the twentieth century, the rate of apprenticeship in Durham County, particularly involuntary, court-ordered apprenticeship, had significantly decreased in relation to the total population. The number of children living in the poorhouse also declined. At the same time, however, the number of dependent and neglected children became numerically larger as industrialization and urbanization disrupted traditional patterns of family life. This evidence indicates that around the turn of the century, the traditional methods of caring for these types of children—apprenticeship and the poorhouse—were being displaced by a new institution: the orphanage.

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Orphanages had existed in North Carolina since the early nineteenth century, although they were generally short-lived. During the antebellum period, the first privately-run orphanages in the U.S. emerged as part of the general movement towards institutionalization.  Although a handful of these private orphan asylums were founded in North Carolina in the antebellum period, the systematization of the orphanage movement that occurred in northern states in the 1830s did not occur in North Carolina until several decades later, when the movement towards institutional care for dependent children gained momentum after the Civil War.  As one of its more progressive measures, the 1868 state constitution provided that “there shall also, as soon as practicable, be measures devised by the state for the establishment of one or more orphan houses, where destitute orphans may be cared for, educated and taught some business or trade.” However, the first large-scale orphanage to open in the post-Civil War era was privately funded. In 1873 the Oxford Orphan Asylum opened under the administration of the Grand Lodge of the Free Masons. The following year, Governor Tod R. Caldwell urged the General Assembly to appropriate funds to the new orphanage, an institution where destitute orphans “learn their obligations to God and to their fellow-men, and are taught to support themselves by some honorable occupation” such that they could “become useful and respectable citizens.” Ultimately the state heeded the Governor’s

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262 Rothman, *Discovery of the Asylum*, 206-207. Rothman also argues that prisons, almshouses, mental hospitals, reformatories, and orphanages all shared common characteristics of the asylum. He argues that “incarceration became the prime mechanism for punishment and treatment,” as reformers believed that isolation and labor would “transform the inmate’s character so that he would leave the institution a different person.” Institutionalization was thus a means of social control (xxv).


264 Brown, *Public Poor Relief*, 152.

message and began to subsidize the Oxford Orphanage in the late 1870s. An orphanage for black children was also established in Oxford in 1883 and received public funding beginning in the 1890s.\textsuperscript{266} However, the state of North Carolina never established its own orphanage nor fully funded the Oxford institutions.\textsuperscript{267}

The greatest evidence of this movement towards alternative forms of care for dependent children in North Carolina, however, was the enormous growth in the number of privately funded and administered orphanages in the late nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century. These orphanages continued to follow the asylum model established in the first half of the nineteenth century. According to historian David Rothman, orphan asylums sought to confine orphans so as to separate them from the negative influences of the environment from which they had been removed. In addition to providing food and shelter, these asylums aimed to rehabilitate their inmates through a program of discipline, labor and moral training and thus prepare them to reenter the world as productive citizens.\textsuperscript{268}

The majority of the private orphanages in North Carolina had a religious affiliation with a particular denomination. Initially the purpose of these sectarian institutions had been to care for the orphaned children of members of that denomination.

\textsuperscript{266} Ibid., 337-8. See \textit{Historical Sketch of Oxford Orphan Asylum} for more information. Fink also comments that in the early years the Colored Orphanage received financial support from several of the prominent citizens of Durham—the Dukes, George Watts, and Julian S. Carr (339).

\textsuperscript{267} Fink, “North Carolina Orphanages,” 339. During this time period, Buncombe County also established a Children’s Home, which reformers intended as a model of a county-supported institution for children. However, no other counties followed suit.

Although most affiliated orphanages changed their policies such that they also admitted children who belonged to other churches, most institutions continued to state a preference for children of that particular denomination.\textsuperscript{269} The primary mission of these orphanages remained not just to provide for the physical needs of the child but also for his or her spiritual well-being. Many of these orphanages remained decidedly evangelical in nature, and the administrators viewed them as missions to dependent children. The monthly publication of the Eliada Orphanage in Asheville, which was affiliated with the Holiness Church, stated that in the course of its “mountain mission work” the home admitted homeless, destitute children “without distinction to faith or creed.” However, the orphanage also proclaimed that its “great mission to this world is to preach and live Christ who is the wisdom and power of God,” and that “the very life of the home is prayer.”\textsuperscript{270}

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries child-caring institutions maintained strict admissions policies. Until 1914 the Colored Orphanage at Oxford remained the only child-caring institution that accepted black children.\textsuperscript{271} Many private orphanages would not accept illegitimate children; the Eliada Home claimed to differentiate itself in that it would admit children without regard to legitimacy.\textsuperscript{272} Orphanages almost universally did not admit delinquent children; in the years before the establishment of industrial schools, these children largely remained in prisons and county

\textsuperscript{269} Fink, “North Carolina Orphanages,” 339.
\textsuperscript{270} New Testament Christian 1, no. 1 (1909); Ibid. 1, no. 8 (1909).
\textsuperscript{271} NCBPC, Report of the Board of Public Charities (Raleigh: n.p., 1914), 44.
\textsuperscript{272} New Testament Christian 1, no. 8 (1909). Although this may have been influenced by the evangelical nature of the home, the presence of a maternity home for unmarried mothers undoubtedly influenced the orphanage to admit illegitimate children.
homes. Similarly, most orphanages did not admit children who had serious mental or physical disabilities; not only did these children require special care, but the emerging consensus was that the state should provide institutions for these special cases. Most orphanages, however, did not require that children be full orphans in order to be admitted; in fact, many of the children admitted had mothers who were living but unable to provide for them. By using a liberal definition of “orphan,” private orphanages catered to a group of children that overlapped somewhat with the juvenile residents of the state’s poorhouses. However, private orphanages as a group primarily offered care to a specific clientele: white, “normal,” legitimate children who were orphaned or destitute.

In addition, the cumulative number of children that could be accommodated in orphanages remained relatively small until the first decade of the 1900s. In 1890, the Oxford Orphanage, the Colored Orphanage at Oxford and the Buncombe County Children’s Home (which was funded and administered by the county) were the only child-caring institutions reported by the state and they cared for approximately 370 children. By 1903, the number of child-caring institutions in the state had grown to fourteen, and over the course of the year they provided for a total of 1,304 children. In 1910, twenty-four institutions admitted 2,124 children.

As indicated by the enormous increase in child-caring institutions and the number of children they cared for, these institutions began to supplant older methods of providing for dependent children such as apprenticeship and the almshouse. As the number of

274 NCBPC, Report of the Board of Public Charities (1890).
275 NCBPC, Report of the Board of Public Charities (1903).
institutions specifically for children increased, the number of children in poorhouses across North Carolina correspondingly decreased. In 1891 the county boards of visitors reported that they found 81 children in county homes in North Carolina; in 1892, 114 children were reported in county homes. However, these numbers are not an accurate reflection of the total number of children who stayed in poorhouses during that two year span. Many counties did not submit reports to the State Board of Public Charities; in fact, in 1892 the annual report included information on only 56 counties. Furthermore, most poorhouses the board of visitors often made only one visit during the course of the year; hence the count of children generally only included children who were present on the day of the visit rather than a cumulative count for the entire year. Thus the actual number of children who passed through an almshouse during the course of a year was likely much higher than the reports indicate. Undoubtedly the State Board’s official count of 76 children residing in county homes in 1903 significantly underestimated the actual number.

Children living in the Durham County poorhouse remained a continuing problem as well. As late as 1894 the visitors reported six children in the county home: three white orphans, two black orphans, and one infant who had died while living in the poorhouse with its mother. Although the number of children reported in the county home appears to have declined significantly after that year, the visitors still reported one or two children in the home most years. The children reported, however, were increasingly likely to have

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277 NCBPC, Report of the Board of Public Charities (1892).
279 NCBPC, Report of the Board of Public Charities (1894).
one or more defining characteristics; they were likely to be black, be accompanying a convict mother, be an infant with its pauper mother, or have a physical or mental disability. White, “normal” children appear to have been found in the Durham County home very rarely after the mid-1890s.  

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Taken as a whole, by 1905 the efforts to remove various groups from the Durham County poorhouse had achieved varied amounts of success. The creation of chain gangs had channeled the majority of prisoners to convict camps, rather than the workhouse, at least for portions of the year. The various state run insane asylums housed a large number of inmates. However, the Durham County home reported eleven insane people still residing there, out of a total of only 22 inmates. Thus the state’s efforts to provide institutions for the mentally ill still lacked the capacity to care for all of the needy, who continued to make up a large percentage of poorhouse residents. And while orphanages cared for over a thousand, mostly white, destitute children, a small number of “undesirable” children remained in poorhouses. The poorhouse was predominantly populated by the elderly, the insane, and the physically and mentally disabled.

The partial transformation of the Durham County poorhouse population indicates several things. First, although the State Board of Charities had little authority to implement any changes in the county home, the Board’s recommendations, based on

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281 In 1905, the Durham convict camp housed 88 prisoners: 69 black men, 9 white men, and 10 black women. See NCBPC, *Report of the Board of Public Charities* (1905), 150.
282 Ibid., 150.
national trends in social work, trickled down to the county level where they were at least partially implemented. In the absence of an active county superintendent of the poor, the group that bore the most responsibility for reforming the poorhouse was the state-appointed board of visitors. By investigating conditions in the home and sending their findings to the State Board, the visitors succeeded in publicizing the conditions of the poorhouse and generally advocating reform.

Although the overall population of Durham increased enormously as the city industrialized during this time period, the overall number of poorhouse inmates did not radically change. Various types of “special cases,” including orphans and dependent children, never ended up in the poorhouse because they were diverted to special institutions. However, this does not adequately explain the steady number of inmates in the poorhouse. A much larger number of destitute people, including children and adults, avoided the poorhouse by receiving outdoor relief from the county or private charity, as Durham’s private welfare system grew much more complex and extensive.

Lastly, the significant decrease in the proportion of county children in the Durham poorhouse indicates that public opinion no longer viewed the poorhouse as a pillar of the child welfare system. County officials—the clerk, judges, and the county commissioners—along with parents and relatives played an increasingly active role in child welfare. These groups continued to use apprenticeship, both voluntary and involuntary, to prevent children from ending up the poorhouse. However, by 1900 committing a child to an orphanage became the most common method of providing for dependent children. 
CHAPTER THREE

Placing “the Homeless Child in the Childless Home”:
Child Rescue and the North Carolina Children’s Home Society

In 1910, eleven-year-old Eliza Norton found herself in a precarious position.283 Her mother, Margaret Norton, had been convicted of prostitution and sentenced to the Durham County workhouse. Although Eliza had temporarily found a place to live, both her home and her legal status remained in jeopardy. As a dependent child of a convict, the girl’s fate lay in the hands of a Superior Court judge. The judge listened to the pleas of several Durham County police officers, who testified that Margaret would soon be released from the workhouse and that she would surely continue to raise her daughter in a “house of ill-fame.” The judge concurred that Eliza would be “degraded and ruined” if left in her mother’s care, and consequently he ordered that the child be removed from Margaret Norton’s custody and conveyed to the North Carolina Children’s Home Society.284

Only ten years earlier, a case such as Eliza Norton’s probably would not have been heard by the Durham County court at all. In all likelihood, a dependent child of a convicted criminal would have found herself living in the poorhouse until the county commissioners or court clerk decided to bind her out. By the first decade of the twentieth century, however, the child-saving movement had gained new momentum in Durham

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283 The names of all children and their parents appearing in this chapter have been changed to protect the confidentiality of adoption case records, in accordance with the wishes of the North Carolina Children’s Home Society.
284 Minutes of the Special Proceedings of the Durham County Superior Court, 18 Apr., 1910.
through the advocacy of the King’s Daughters on behalf of children like Eliza Norton. The organization’s child rescue work can be viewed as the culmination of the general shift in attitudes towards the care of dependent and neglected children, a movement that had led to the creation of orphanages in North Carolina in the late 1800s. The activities of the King’s Daughters after 1905, however, coincided with the rise of a new national trend in the care of dependent children: the rejection of institutionalization in favor of “placing children out” with foster families. Responding to this larger national movement and to the problem-ridden child welfare system in Durham, the King’s Daughters stepped in to fill a void as advocates for needy children and in the process helped to revolutionize care for a certain subset of the city’s dependent and neglected children. Those children deemed “worthy” of saving—those who were white and “normal”—were removed from Durham and funneled to the North Carolina Children’s Home Society, while those children who did not meet the women’s criteria remained in the care of the county’s public welfare system.

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During the nineteenth century, the asylum dominated American social services and relief efforts. Social reformers viewed orphanages, poorhouses, reform schools, penitentiaries, and other “special institutions” as the main vehicles of reform and relief. Reformers hoped that by confining and segregating orphans and dependent children in the artificial environment of an orphanage, they could mold the children into responsible and moral citizens.
By the turn of the century, reformers had begun to turn away from this model of institutional care. This national movement towards family care for dependent children, however, had begun decades earlier. In the 1850s, the minister Charles Brace’s sympathy for the homeless waifs on the streets of New York City had led him to found the first Children’s Aid Society. Motivated by charity and by the desire to prevent the children from becoming permanent members of the “dangerous classes,” Brace helped provide housing, religious instruction, schooling, and employment for unfortunate youths. The organization’s boldest and most significant contribution to child welfare, however, began in 1854 when it arranged for a group of New York City street children to be shipped out of the city by railroad to new homes in other states, mainly in the Midwest. The society claimed that in its first twenty years of operation it had placed over twenty thousand children with individual families. The New York Children’s Aid Society’s activities represented the first large-scale effort to “place out” dependent children with foster families rather than institutionalize them in orphanages.  

Although the modern concept of foster care did not emerge until the late nineteenth century, the idea of placing dependent children in the care of families was not new. Apprenticeship can be seen as a variant of this idea; as in Durham County, rural counties often relied on binding orphaned children out to individual masters. However, by the late nineteenth century apprenticeship in northern urban areas had been almost completely replaced by institutional care in orphanages. Furthermore, the philosophy

behind Brace’s placing-out system differed substantially from the apprenticeship model. Whereas apprenticeship essentially remained a contract based on the exchange of a child’s labor for food, shelter, and a basic education, Brace’s system did not involve a formal contract. The Children’s Aid Society retained legal custody of a placed child, and the society also maintained the right to remove the child from a foster home at any time. Brace hoped that the child’s relationship with the family would be based on affection rather than labor and that it would ultimately lead to the child being legally adopted.286

In the years following Brace’s efforts, the placing-out system gradually gained in popularity. Similar reformers in states across the North and the upper Midwest formed loosely affiliated Children’s Aid (or Home) Society organizations in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and in 1882 Massachusetts became the first state to place its wards with individual families using a type of foster care system.287 By the 1890s, social reformers began promoting child-placing as part of a larger movement to reject institutionalization in favor of making “the home…the center of the reconstructive and preventive social effort.”288 Prominent child advocate Homer Folks became an ardent supporter of the child-placing system in the 1890s, and his 1902 treatise The Care of Destitute, Neglected, and Dependent Children became one of the standard texts on the subject. In summarizing the leading trends in societies that provided for such children, Folks concluded that “among the newer institutions there is almost a general acceptance of the fact that orphans and children upon whom there is no valid parental claim are much

286 Tiffen, In Whose Best Interest?, 90.
287 Ibid., 90-91.
better off if adopted by families, and that to rear them in asylums until they are twelve, fourteen, or sixteen years of age is an expensive, wholly unnecessary, and seriously harmful blunder.”

By 1909, the child advocates gathered at the White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children reiterated this position when they resolved that “the carefully selected foster home is for the normal child the best substitute for the natural home.”

In 1902, the idea of a child-placing society in North Carolina came to the forefront. In Greensboro a group of industrialists and entrepreneurs, members of the Young Businessmen’s Club, decided to undertake the founding of such a society. With the help of Colonel W.H. Osborne, the mayor of Greensboro, Benjamin Duke of Durham, and other notable philanthropists, the project came into fruition in 1903 with the founding of the North Carolina Children’s Home Society (CHS). The organization opened its first office in the Benbow Hotel in downtown Greensboro, near the train station. Although loosely affiliated with Children’s Aid and Home Societies in other states, the North Carolina society was a local initiative.

When the founders sought a new solution to the problem of caring for dependent children, they not only turned to a type of organization with national prominence but also sought an experienced social worker to head it. The Young Businessmen’s Club

289 Ibid., 244.
291 Judy Harrison-Barry, Adoption Means Love: The History of the Children’s Home Society of North Carolina ([Greensboro, N.C.]: The Children’s Home Society of North Carolina, 1994), 15-16. This work was written and published in cooperation with the CHS. Some of the documents quoted in it are not publicly accessible.
ultimately asked William B. Streeter to come to North Carolina and serve as the CHS’s first superintendent. Streeter had been a prominent social welfare reformer on the national scene for a decade. He began his career as the agent of the Michigan State Public School, a central institution controlled by the state that received dependent children and placed them in homes; social reformers widely regarded Michigan as a model for state care of dependent children. Streeter then moved to Indiana, where he implemented major reforms to the state’s child welfare system while serving as the agent of the State Board of Public Charities. He gained further national recognition by serving on the National Conference of Charities and Correction’s committee on Destitute Children, Truancy, Child Labor and Recreation and by publishing articles in leading national journals on social welfare and charities. Significantly, the Young Businessmen’s Club turned to a professional and an outsider, a northerner no less, to get the North Carolina CHS off the ground. Although the national Children’s Home Society appears to have had some influence on the group’s decision, it is unclear how extensive this influence was.

Charged with organizing a child-placing agency in North Carolina, Streeter’s first task was to articulate the CHS’s mission. He began addressing this issue before he even arrived in the state. A letter from Streeter to Dr. Eben Alexander of Chapel Hill indicated that even Alexander, a founding member of the CHS’s Board of Directors, did not clearly

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understand the society’s mission. In his correspondence Streeter repeatedly referred to the organization’s certificate of incorporation, which stated that:

The objects for which this corporation is formed are to receive and provide for destitute, neglected, ill-treated, abandoned and orphaned white children; to seek out suitable family homes for those that are normal and protect their interests by proper contract and otherwise; and to perform such other acts as will tend to improve the condition of the above mentioned classes of children.

Streeter faced some resistance in his quest to gain support from prominent citizens and politicians of the state. The largest source of opposition stemmed from the belief that the CHS would unnecessarily duplicate the work being done by the state’s orphanages. H.W. Jackson, a banker from Raleigh, replied to Streeter’s solicitation by commenting that “your society is engaged in a noble work and I understand it—a work very similar to that of our orphanages. We have two in this city [Raleigh]… I do not think there is a necessity for your society in this city.”

Dr. Eben Alexander also inquired about “how The Society is going to work in North Carolina in relation to the various asylums, orphanages, homes, etc., which are now and have long been in somewhat the same field.”

In response to such correspondence, Streeter attempted to allay the confusion by articulating the differences between the organizations’ philosophies. He informed Dr. Alexander that “the work of the Children’s Home Society will in no way interfere, or conflict with, the work of any other child-saving organization in the State, except…we shall foster the family home idea, as against the institution plan of caring for homeless

295 William Streeter, to Dr. Eben Alexander, no date, NCCHS Papers.
298 Dr. Eben Alexander, to William Streeter, no date, quoted in Harrison-Barry, Adoption Means Love, 18.
children.” He went on to assert that if the CHS would gladly cooperate with the orphanages if “they see fit to make use of the facilities of the Children’s Home Society.”

In addition to arguing that individual homes were the ideal environment for raising children to be “self-supporting, self-respecting, law-abiding citizens,” Streeter also claimed that child-placing societies made more sense from an economic perspective. The CHS could, at a lifetime cost of only $100 per child, “produce seven times the results produced on the strictly orphanage plan.” In addition, Streeter claimed the CHS would also care for children that orphanages would not admit. Because an orphanage functioned as “a boarding school for dependent children,” they could not admit infants due to inherent limitations.

Streeter claimed that orphanages succeeded in placing children in homes only “after they are large enough to be of some service,” whereas the CHS would concentrate on finding homes for all children, including young children, “before they are grown to a size to be of service.” Although Streeter was a newcomer to North Carolina, he had a clear vision of how the CHS, a private child-placing agency, could supplement the existing network of public and private institutions for dependent children.

Over the course of a few years, the CHS gained prominence as word of the organization’s work spread across the state. The year 1907, however, proved to be a turning point in the child-placing movement, both in the U.S. and in North Carolina,

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299 William Streeter, to Dr. Eben Alexander, no date.
300 William Streeter, to Gov. Charles Aycock, 28 May 1903, NCCHS Papers.
301 William Streeter, to R.A. Nunn, 6 Nov. 1909, NCCHS Papers. For a discussion of the professed advantages of foster care over institutionalization, see Warner, American Charities, 224-226 and Tiffen, In Whose Best Interest, 92-97.
302 William Streeter, to R.A. Nunn, 6 Nov. 1909.
303 William Streeter, to Dr. Eben Alexander, no date.
when the *Delineator*, a popular women’s magazine, undertook a “Child-Rescue Campaign.” Each month, the magazine published a feature that included the life stories and photos of individual dependent children in need of homes. It also ran informational stories that more generally encouraged middle-class, white couples, particularly childless couples, to adopt homeless children. One story, for instance, described the life of a young boy in an institution; “at first,” it proclaimed, “when nobody cares for him, he is only sad. Later, when he cares for nobody, he is unsafe.” Women across the country responded with letters pleading to adopt the waifs featured in the stories, expressing a very personal connection to the profiled children. The magazine ultimately received hundreds more requests than could be filled, which they referred to individual placement agencies. By appealing to women’s maternal instinct and sense of civic duty, the *Delineator* helped to legitimize and popularize foster care and adoption across the U.S.  

In the fall of 1907, James West contacted William Streeter on behalf of the *Delineator*, asking for the North Carolina CHS’s participation in the “Child-Rescue Campaign.” West wanted to feature two children from North Carolina and requested that Streeter send him the photos and stories of a boy and a girl, to be published in an upcoming issue of the magazine. Streeter’s reply underscored both the problems inherent in the *Delineator*’s campaign and the status of the child-placing movement in North Carolina. He informed West that his request placed him in a “rather embarrassing position” due to several complications. The *Delineator* aimed to present “types of

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305 James West, to William Streeter, 7 Nov. 1907, NCCHS Papers.
306 William Streeter, to James West, 11 Nov. 1907, NCCHS Papers.
attractive children” in an effort to convince the general public that “the work of a home-
placing agent is superior to that of an institutional official.” Streeter, however, 
reported that “the work is so well organized in the Carolinas that we have a dozen first 
class homes ready and waiting for every normal child that the Society can possible get 
hold of.” Furthermore, Streeter objected to the logistics of the arrangement; if he agreed 
to advertise specific children, these children would have to be held by the Society for 
several months until the publication of the article, denying them homes in the mean 
time. Within just a few short years, and even before the height of the Delineator’s 
campaign, Streeter and the CHS had succeeded in developing an effective child-placing 
organization in North Carolina.

Streeter’s main concerns had moved beyond those of the Delineator’s editors; he 
requested that the magazine feature the stories of children that had been classified as 
“non-placeable.” He suggested a particular twelve-year-old crippled girl with club feet. 
Although the girl was “of rather evil disposition,” Streeter believed that a few years of 
“careful watch-care and training” in the right home could transform her into “a decent 
girl.” He also proposed they feature a four-year-old girl in the society’s care who was 
“blind in one eye and about half blind in the other.” Although Streeter expected to 
eventually place her in the state school for the blind, the girl needed a foster home until 
she was old enough to be enrolled. After West reiterated the Delineator’s desire for 
stories about “attractive children” only, Streeter finally conceded and instead sent the

307 James West, to William Streeter, 21 Nov. 1907, NCCHS Papers.
308 William Streeter, to James West, 11 Nov. 1907.
309 William Streeter, to James West, 14 Jan. 1908, NCCHS Papers.
profiles of one “bright loveable little fellow” and another “sturdy little chap, perfectly sound physically” that conformed to the editors’ qualifications.\textsuperscript{310}

By 1907 the CHS had already succeeded in finding homes for hundreds of children; in fact, Streeter reported to the State Board of Public Charities that the society had placed 93 children in family homes in just that one year.\textsuperscript{311} However, the \textit{Delineator}’s campaign undoubtedly helped to further publicize at least part of the CHS’s mission in North Carolina. The numerous letters that Streeter received from women and couples, anxiously expressing their desire to take in the featured children, testified to the increasing popularity of foster care and adoption across the state.

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By 1908, the Sheltering Home Circle of the King’s Daughters in Durham had formed a Rescue Committee that actively participated in child-saving activities. The King’s Daughters had responded to the shift, on the national and state level, in philosophies on the care of dependent and neglected children; as a result, they worked almost exclusively with the Children’s Home Society to place children in homes rather than sending them to orphanages. However, the group’s child-saving activities were also a response to the specific problems and limitations of the existing welfare system in Durham. The King’s Daughters, who were keenly aware of the complexities of the

\textsuperscript{310} James West, to William Streeter, 21 Nov. 1907; William Streeter, to James West, 14 Jan. 1908. The article featuring children in the custody of the NC CHS appeared in the \textit{Delineator} in May 1908.

\textsuperscript{311} NCBPC, \textit{Report of the Board of Public Charities} (1907).
Durham system, filled a particular social service niche by seeking out “worthy” children, rescuing them, and funneling them to the CHS.

The Sheltering Home Circle also operated within a larger network of King’s Daughters circles in North Carolina that focused on child protection. In local circles’ efforts to “unite, and by their combined efforts render some definite service to the State,” in 1902 the state branch launched a campaign to establish a state-supported reform school for delinquent white boys. The King’s Daughters thus reinvigorated a campaign that had been underway for years. As early as 1870, the superintendent of the State Board of Public Charities had pointed out the problem of “uncontrolled youth, whose very neglect is training them for crime, and who are soon to be a burden to the State and violators of its laws.” By the 1890s, the State Board and various organizations across the state advocated that juvenile offenders should be removed from prisons, workhouses, and chain gangs by building a reform school. The outcry was partially driven by the large number of juvenile prisoners; the president of the white WCTU stated that the majority of the state’s prisoners were under twenty-two, and that one-third of them were actually under sixteen years old. In 1891 the State Board introduced a bill to the General Assembly that would establish a reform school for boys and girls that the courts had deemed to be “vagrants” or “of incorrigible or vicious conduct.” Ultimately reformers focused their efforts on young white boys, motivated by a desire to prevent them from being further corrupted and influenced by exposure to hardened adult criminals in jail.

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312 NCBPC, Report of the Board of Public Charities (1870), 10.
In 1902 the King’s Daughters took over this campaign, asking other white women’s organizations to join in the fund-raising efforts. After several disappointing years, in 1907 the King’s Daughters finally succeeded in getting the General Assembly to vote in favor of building the Stonewall Jackson Manual Training and Industrial School in Concord.\(^{315}\) The Sheltering Home Circle in Durham contributed financially to this statewide campaign on behalf of delinquent boys, as did circles across the state.\(^{316}\)

Through their involvement with the state branch of the King’s Daughters, the Sheltering Home Circle also learned of the child-saving activities of other circles in North Carolina. In the 1890s, the King’s Daughters in Raleigh had expressed their concern to the State Board of Public Charities over the existence of “no less than one hundred and fifty waifs, boys and girls, food for destruction,” living on the capital city’s streets. In response, the local Rescue Circle in Raleigh had undertaken this work with dependent children as its primary cause; as of 1895, “more than thirty have been taken from the streets [by the King’s Daughters], chiefly very young girls, and sent to orphanages in this State and to the generous institutions of the city of Baltimore.”\(^{317}\)

At the 1903 state convention of the King’s Daughters, the first convention attended by members of the Sheltering Home Circle, Raleigh’s Rescue Circle reported on this work at some length. The delegate recounted that “our pleasantest and in all respects most satisfactory work, is the branch known as primitive work; i.e. saving children and young girls who would in their present circumstances be lost.” She described a specific

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316 Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, June 1910.
case to illustrate the type of work done by the circle: a twelve year old girl, “born in sin and reared in shame,” who with her brothers “lived out of doors half clad, and almost starved.” Although the women found homes for the boys, no one would take the girl, a “repulsive creature,” and the King’s Daughters had to temporarily take her to the county home. Ultimately they arranged for the girl to be admitted to an industrial school in Alexandria, Virginia, where she was transformed into a “bright faced, neatly dressed little girl” being successfully trained into “self-respecting womanhood.” 318 The work for dependent children done by the Rescue Circle in Raleigh and others served as a model for the type of work undertaken by the Sheltering Home Circle.

The Rescue Circle’s work also illustrates the importance of the county home as the basis of the child welfare system in North Carolina. Some of the group’s earliest efforts in Raleigh in the 1890s focused on providing alternative homes for children besides the poorhouse. In 1896 the circle “resolved to devote itself to the enterprise of establishing a waif-saving station for the neglected children of our capital and the surrounding country.” In this way the women hoped to divert homeless children into a temporary receiving home, rather than the county home. That same year after “learning that four bright and intelligent white children were inmates of the County House of Wake,” the Rescue Circle cooperated with the WCTU and the State Board of Public Charities in arranging for the children to be sent to the Orphanage of the Friends near High Point. The King’s Daughters also furnished the children with a new set of

318 Proceedings of the 14th Annual Convention of the King’s Daughters and Sons of the North Carolina Branch (Weldon, NC: Harrel's Printing House, 1903), Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, N.C.
clothing. As demonstrated by the case of the “repulsive” girl who no one would take in, the women viewed the county home as a place of last resort.

Although the model of rescue work performed by the Raleigh Rescue Circle and other groups across the state likely influenced the Sheltering Home Circle, the problems and limitations of the existing child welfare system undoubtedly spurred the Durham women into action. These middle- and upper-class women had a keen awareness of the inner workings of the system. Many of them had husbands who played an integral role in some aspect of the city’s social services. Rev. Edward Leyburn, a Presbyterian minister whose wife was a founding member of the King’s Daughters, served as one of the official Durham County “visitors” designated by the State Board of Public Charities. Several other members of the King’s Daughters were also married to ministers, who would have been actively involved in charity work in the city. Other members’ husbands served as city or county officials. Mrs. Caleb Green’s husband, for instance, served as the Clerk of the Superior Court for twenty-one years; in this capacity he bore the primary responsibility for apprenticing dependent and neglected children.

Many of the women, however, had first-hand knowledge of the failings of the child welfare system and the needs of the city’s dependent children. Mrs. R.D. Blacknall, a founding member of the King’s Daughters, also served as secretary of the Associated Charities from 1908-1910. Miss Lily Jones worked as a teacher at the Edgemont Graded School, in the city’s most notorious poverty-stricken and vice-ridden

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neighborhood. Another founding member, Mrs. W.W. Shaw, had served as an “auxiliary visitor” for the State Board of Public Charities beginning in the 1890s; in this official capacity she made regular visits to both the county home and the workhouse. Thus many of the women had individual experiences which motivated their participation in rescue work through the King’s Daughters.

In addition, as a collective group the women of the Sheltering Home Circle formed a committee to visit the county home. Although it is unclear when the members began this practice, the State Board of Public Charities’ “visitor” indicated in 1909 that the King’s Daughters made visits to the poorhouse at regular intervals. From these visits the women garnered first-hand knowledge of conditions at the county home. They knew the various types of cases that intermingled on the poor farm’s grounds—the destitute sick, the insane, the disabled, and the widows. There they witnessed the close proximity between the prisoner population, the majority of whom were black men, and the paupers. And they sympathized with the homeless children who resided in the county home’s bleak, cell-like rooms.

These powerful images undoubtedly motivated the King’s Daughters to take action. First, the organization worked as advocates on behalf of specific county home inmates, particularly women and children, whose cases they became aware of through their regular visits. For instance, the group took on the “pitiable case of an insane girl at the county home, who had been there confined in a cell for several years.” The King’s

323 NCBPC, Report of the Board of Public Charities (1896), 68.
Daughters formed a committee to urge the County Commissioners that “more humanity be showed this unfortunate” and succeeded in having the girl removed from the county home and sent to the state hospital for the insane. The organization also worked to rescue specific children from the county home, such as one child the Rescue Committee found in 1909 living at the poorhouse “with a pauper—from the county.” Second, the group’s intervention on behalf of inmates and close oversight of the home undoubtedly spurred the County Commissioners to generally improve the conditions at the poorhouse.

Most significantly, from their visits to the county home the King’s Daughters gained a larger awareness of the needs of Durham’s poorest residents, particularly women and children. The Sheltering Home Circle thus devoted a large amount of time and energy to working on behalf of dependent and neglected children that they deemed “worthy” of rescuing from undesirable surroundings. In addition to the county home, the King’s Daughters found “worthy” cases in all of Durham’s poor neighborhoods—the mill villages of East and West Durham, the Pearl Mill area, and Edgemont, plus the nearby hollows that housed the city’s most destitute populations.

Rescue work formed the core of the Sheltering Home Circle’s projects from the group’s inception in 1903. According to sociologist and professional social worker Margaret Bridgers, Mrs. J.R. Patton, president of the King’s Daughters from 1910-1927, reported that the society had as its “first purpose rescue work among the women and girls of Durham’s underworld.”

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325 Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, May 1914; Ibid., June 1914.
few years exist, Mrs. Patton indicated that from 1903-1906 the women “carried out their plans by assisting Reverend Thaddeus Trot,” a city missionary, “who did the actual rescue work.” From Bridgers’s account it is unclear whether this early rescue work was aimed primarily at young women—unmarried mothers, delinquent women, and prostitutes—or children, or both.

However, in addition to the work being done on behalf of young women, by 1908 the King’s Daughters, in cooperation with the Children’s Home Society, functioned as the primary rescuers of Durham’s dependent and neglected children. One woman bore most of the responsibility for the large volume of work done by the organization. Mrs. J.W. Allen, who was present at the founding of the Sheltering Home Circle in 1903, remained one of the group’s most active members for many years. As the wife of a county commissioner, she belonged to the upper middle class that devoted its energies to civic improvement. Mrs. Allen served as chair of the building committee for the Old Ladies’ Home and also served on the home’s Board of Directors for several years. However, during this entire time period her role in the King’s Daughters was primarily defined by her position as chair of the Rescue Committee. Mrs. Allen single-handedly directed the organization’s rescue work on behalf of children through the 1910s. In recognition of her work as an “untiring King’s Daughter,” the members voted in 1924 to admit her to the Old Ladies’ Home at no charge.

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328 Ibid., 43-44.
329 Anderson, Durham County, 483.
330 Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, Jan. 1924.
In performing this rescue work, the King’s Daughters developed a close working relationship with the Children’s Home Society in Greensboro. The King’s Daughters clearly found the only available public institutions that provided for dependent children—the county home and apprenticeship—flawed and inadequate. Through the 1910s Durham did not have any private institutions for dependent children; the city had no orphanages or industrial schools. Thus the King’s Daughters had no local options and out of necessity had to look outside of the city for assistance in finding homes, temporary or permanent, for unwanted children. The group, influenced by national and statewide trends in child welfare, decided to conduct all of their rescue work in cooperation with the CHS; the group consulted CHS about rescued children and funneled all of them to the CHS. In this way the King’s Daughters could tap into the larger, established network of private family homes and industrial schools that the CHS had access to.

Thus, upon finding the public child welfare system inadequate, the King’s Daughters transformed Durham County’s existing policies for dealing with a certain group of dependent children. The organization focused on completely removing dependent children from the county, which had traditionally born responsibility for providing for such cases. Instead they participated in a trend to use private agencies and institutions to find homes for and to care for children on a statewide basis.

In many respects the King’s Daughters’ rescue work can be viewed as preventative. By and large the Superior Court, the County Commissioners, and politicians of Durham County only focused on dealing with children who had already

become a burden to the county. County officials only took action when confronted head-on with the case of a specific child—whether to remove a child from the poorhouse, to apprentice a child, or to sentence a juvenile delinquent who had already committed a crime. Current trends in social welfare, on the other hand, emphasized the necessity of preventive work on behalf of children. \(^{332}\) Thus in addition to having humanitarian motives, the King’s Daughters viewed intervention on behalf of dependent and neglected children as a means of preventing them from becoming delinquents, thus maintaining the social order.

By 1911, the King’s Daughters had in place a system for identifying “worthy” children in need of assistance. In the early years, it appears that the group relied mainly on other individuals and organizations, such as Rev. Trot, the city missionary, to refer cases to them. \(^{333}\) Undoubtedly the women continued to become aware of needy children through missionaries and church aid societies. Similarly, if in the course of its work the Associated Charities encountered neglected children, the charity workers informed the King’s Daughters. \(^{334}\) However, the King’s Daughters found out about cases largely through their own investigative work. As part of their efforts to practice “scientific” charity, the women implemented a system of “friendly visiting” whereby individual women were assigned to specific districts of the city. \(^{335}\) They canvassed these areas, talking to the local residents in an effort to create communication networks. Through


\(^{334}\) Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, Oct. 1911.

\(^{335}\) Ibid.
these networks, the King’s Daughters learned of most of the needy children they
attempted to rescue.

The King’s Daughters also established a methodology for pursuing a case. Once
a member of the Rescue Committee had identified a needy child, she generally informed
Mrs. Allen of the case. As chair of the Rescue Committee, Mrs. Allen bore most of the
responsibility for pursuing the case from that point on. Mrs. Allen often personally
investigated the case further, gathering information about the child’s parents,
circumstances, and health. If she deemed the case worth pursuing, Mrs. Allen contacted
William Streeter at the CHS. With Streeter’s help, she then determined what the course
of action should be. Often this involved further investigation by Miss Sadie Bilyeu, the
CHS’s sole caseworker during this time period.

The King’s Daughters and the CHS shared similar goals and provided similar
services by attempting to find “good Christian homes” for white children. Embracing the
Progressive philosophy of “scientific” charity based on identifying individual needs on a
case by case basis, Streeter claimed that the CHS proposed “to find a solution for every
troubled child’s trouble,” with an emphasis on relieving “that particular child’s
difficulty.”336 This did not necessarily entail removing a child from its current residence;
only in circumstances where the society deemed that it was in the child’s best interests
did they take this course of action. In 1909 Streeter reported that since its founding the
CHS had received into legal custody 358 children. In addition, the society had “done
something for probably 400 more children,” which often frequently involved referring a

336 William Streeter, to R.A. Nunn, 6 Nov. 6 1909.
child to another charitable organization. Thus the CHS did not advocate removal in all cases but concentrated on finding homes for children whose “best interest” did warrant removal.

Similarly, while the King’s Daughters wholeheartedly pursued cases in which they felt the child needed to be rescued from “undesirable surroundings,” they took limited action in other instances. The organization did encounter cases where poverty, rather than neglect or immorality, appears to have been the primary problem in a household. In these cases the King’s Daughters occasionally handed out a trivial sum, typically five dollars, to the destitute family. Generally, however, the group relied on other charitable organizations such as the Associated Charities and churches to provide monetary assistance. Thus the King’s Daughters focused on cases in which children needed to be saved, while the CHS devoted most of its resources to finding homes for the rescued children.

The CHS used certain criteria to select children to receive services. Throughout this time period, the most important criteria remained race; the CHS provided no services for black children during the first few decades of the 1900s. Initially the society had to “of necessity…limit its work to normal white children, under twelve years of age, and destitute” due to limited resources. From the beginning, however, Streeter expressed hope that the society would be able to extend assistance to “needy childhood,” more broadly defined to include “the physically and mentally disabled, the morally tainted, the neglected, the ill-treated, the incorrigible, the truant.”\footnote{William Streeter, to Gov. Charles Aycock, 28 May 1903.} By 1909, the CHS had
succeeded in substantially expanding its clientele. The agency prided itself on the fact that it could provide services for children that orphanages would not admit, including infants and young children; the society offered services to white children of all ages, with the stipulation that “it does not care to assume legal responsibility for a child above fifteen years of age.” Furthermore, the CHS’s focus on caring for individual children in private homes allowed them to receive children “that are hard to manage, or that have been living in very evil surroundings” and who consequently could not be cared for in an orphanage setting. Similarly, the CHS took on the cases of physically disabled or sick children.338

The King’s Daughters, on the other hand, served a narrower subset of children. Although the King’s Daughters indirectly worked on behalf of infants through their separate attempts to rescue unmarried mothers, the group focused its child-saving efforts on school-aged, white children.339 The group appears to have shown a preference for girls, although the King’s Daughters also rescued young boys. The Rescue Committee often described the children as poorly dressed, dirty, and malnourished; however, despite the outward appearance of neglect, the children rescued by the group could be classified as “normal”—without serious physical or mental disabilities. Mrs. Allen’s correspondence with Streeter always emphasized the fact that the targeted children were healthy, intelligent, and “attractive.” For instance, Sadie Bilyeu described John Clark, a four-year-old boy rescued by the King’s Daughters, as “beautiful”—with “very dark expressive eyes, rosy cheeks and blond hair”—and “quite bright.” She concluded that

338 William Streeter, to R.A. Nunn, 6 Nov. 1909.
339 There is no evidence that the King’s Daughters ever rescued any black children.
“almost anyone would like such a boy if they need one.” The CHS would have made every effort to accommodate white children who did not meet all of these criteria; however, the King’s Daughters concentrated their efforts on a particular type of child that they deemed most “worthy” and most likely to be adopted. Other less desirable children—those who were black or “subnormal”—were left behind, to be provided for by the county.

Despite the variety of circumstances from which the King’s Daughters rescued children, most of the children were not full orphans. Although they typically did not have fathers—either they had died or had abandoned the children—most of the children did have living mothers. In some instances, the King’s Daughters had a relatively easy time rescuing children, either because the mother voluntarily gave up custody or because the mother had abandoned the children, effectively making them orphans. However, the organization frequently encountered cases of “neglect,” where the King’s Daughters and CHS deemed the mothers to be “of bad character” for one reason or another and therefore unsuitable. Regardless, the King’s Daughters had to follow the proper legal channels in order to remove a child from a parent or other legal guardian’s custody and have custody transferred to the CHS.

The case of Betsy and John Clark exemplified the type of scenario that led some women to voluntarily give up their children to the CHS. In 1909 the Rescue Committee discovered during one of its visits that the Clark children were living in the county home. Clearly the efforts of reformers and the State Board of Public Charities to prevent this

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scenario from occurring had not deterred Mrs. Clark from entering the poorhouse with her two children. Mrs. Clark, a pregnant widow, had supported her children on her own for four years. She had worked as a domestic fifteen miles from Durham until she lost her job, presumably when her employers learned of the impending “trouble” of her out-of-wedlock pregnancy. She entered the county home with Betsy, age ten, and John, age four, to await the baby’s birth. When approached by Mrs. Allen, however, Mrs. Clark conceded that she could not provide for the children and willingly signed the papers to turn them over to the CHS. Despite this fact, Mrs. Allen still requested that Betsy and John not be placed in a local home, for fear that when Mrs. Clark “gets so she can work again,” she “would hold out inducements to [her] little ones to return to her.”

In other instances, however, the process of rescuing the children proved much more difficult, as illustrated by the case of several other children that the King’s Daughters also worked to rescue in 1909. Mrs. Allen expressed concern to Mr. Streeter about the Smith children, whose mother, age twenty-seven, had been accused of keeping an “immoral home.” The woman had “been made to run away three times in one month” after the neighbors complained, presumably because they suspected her of being a prostitute. Mrs. Allen reported that the mother was “fine looking” and “dresses well,” but the children were “in rags and without shoes—or fathers.” Clearly the disparity between the mother’s and children’s appearance raised concerns in the neighborhood as well. Mrs. Allen’s investigation revealed that the mother also appeared to be fraudulently receiving relief. Although she had “a young colored woman with her” as a domestic

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servant, the woman claimed to be destitute and “had been living on the churches and Associated Charities” for over a year. Having decided that this woman was clearly an unfit mother, Mrs. Allen wrote to Streeter requesting assistance.\footnote{Mrs. Allen, to William Streeter, 24 Mar. 1909, NCCHS Case Records.}

Streeter’s reply indicates that the King’s Daughters and the CHS had limited recourse if they could not gain legal control of the children. The first course of action in such a case would be to get the mother’s consent to take the children. This, however, involved the woman signing a legal document indicating that she “surrendered” the children to CHS “with the understanding, of course, that she is to have nothing further to do with them and not even to know exactly where they are.”\footnote{William Streeter, to Mrs. Allen, 25 Mar. 1909, NCCHS Case Records.} In other words, the mother had to legally and permanently give up custody of the children. If the mother refused, the children’s advocates would have to take legal action. Under apprenticeship laws, the clerk of court had the legal authority to remove a child from its mother’s custody if the mother was deemed to be of “bad character.”\footnote{North Carolina, \textit{Public Laws} (1889).} In order for these proceedings to be initiated, three citizens had to petition the clerk. If the clerk was convinced that it was in the best interest of the child, he could involuntarily apprentice the child to the CHS, without the mother’s consent. A court-ordered apprenticeship effectively revoked the parent’s custody rights. Streeter repeatedly emphasized the necessity of the CHS receiving legal custody of the rescued children; he asserted that “we must have the right to protect both the child and the family in whose care we place it from wrongful interference of relatives.”\footnote{William Streeter, to R.A. Nunn, 6 Nov. 1909.}
Gaining legal custody of the children often proved to be the most difficult part of the process. Parents frequently refused to voluntarily give up custody of their children. In the case of the Smith children, Mrs. Allen attempted to convince the mother to turn the children over to the CHS. Mrs. Smith “refused to sign papers” relinquishing custody to the CHS; instead, she would only consent to sign papers to send the children to Oxford Orphanage. The case of Mrs. Smith appears to have been fairly typical in this respect. Mrs. Allen lamented that “they are so crowded at all the Orphanages…yet all the poor people want their children sent to one, instead of going to homes.” Destitute parents, including women such as Mrs. Smith who had been reduced to prostitution to earn a living, remained extremely hesitant to give their children over to the CHS. Despite Mrs. Allen’s implied belief that the morally questionable mothers did not want their children to have a good home, poor parents likely had other reasons for electing to send their children to an orphanage. These parents viewed orphanages as a temporary solution to the problem of not being able to support their children. They could turn their children over to an orphanage and temporarily board them there, without losing legal custody. In a few months or a few years, when the parent was again able to care for the child, he or she could reclaim the child from the orphanage. Turning a child over to CHS, on the other hand, meant permanently relinquishing custody.

Although some parents did voluntarily give the CHS custody of their children, in many instances the children’s advocates had to involve the courts. Mrs. Allen, with the assistance of Sadie Bilyeu, facilitated the legal process in Durham. The women

347 Zmora, Orphanages Reconsidered, 48-53.
sometimes approached the County Commissioners or clerk on behalf of a particular child. In other cases, the King’s Daughters enlisted the help of other county officials in the petitioning process. For instance, the Rescue Committee identified the case of eleven-year-old Eliza Norton and initiated the process. They likely played a role in finding a temporary home for the girl, whose mother had been sent to the workhouse for running a “house of ill-fame,” a crime that typically resulted in a four month sentence. But because Margaret Norton, who they accused of immorality and neglect, was also a convict, the King’s Daughters asked three police officers to be the petitioners in the case. The policemen testified that Margaret was “a woman of very bad character and unfit to have charge of a girl child.” The clerk ultimately agreed with the petitioners that Eliza Norton would be “degraded and ruined” if she remained in her mother’s custody, and he ordered that the girl be conveyed to the CHS in Greensboro “where a Christian home can be provided for her.”

Sometimes this process of removing a child from “undesirable surroundings” involved confronting extremely resistant parents or guardians; in extremely difficult cases, Mrs. Allen or Ms. Bilyeu requested that Streeter himself intervened. In the case of the Jones children, the CHS followed up on the case after learning of it from Mrs. Allen. Ms. Bilyeu traveled to Durham to investigate the circumstances of the three Jones children, whose mother had abandoned them. The caseworker apparently had no problem convincing the clerk to draw up the papers transferring custody to the CHS. However, although the children were in good health, they currently were “in the hands of

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people that won’t give them up.” Ms. Bilyeu reported to Streeter that “the Clerk thinks it will be necessary for you to come and take the children as he thinks as soon as the papers are served there will be some trouble.”  This situation occurred fairly often—someone who did not have legal custody of a child, or who had lost custody through the clerk’s actions, refused to give up the child. Although in some cases the guardian probably felt an emotional attachment to him or her, in other cases this resistance appears to have been motivated by the guardian’s desire to control the child’s labor.

In another case, the children’s advocates expressed frustration with the clerk’s reluctance to cooperate with them. Mrs. Allen was well acquainted with the two Baker children, fourteen-year-old Rose and nine-year-old Thomas. The King’s Daughters minutes indicate that the group had already rescued, or at least attempted to rescue, Rose once a few years earlier, apparently with unsuccessful results. In 1909 the two children still lived with their mother in East Durham in “immoral surroundings,” until the mother finally ran away.

Apparently at the urging of the local Justice of the Peace, the clerk of the Superior Court consented to the children being “hurriedly adopted” a few days after the mother disappeared. Upon investigating, Mrs. Allen discovered that their new adoptive home was less than desirable. A foreman at the Commonwealth Mill informed her that Fannie and Henry had been adopted by “two very poor mill men.” One of the men had seven boys and had “never sent one of his own boys to school a day.” Although clearly Mrs.

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349 Sadie Bilyeu, to William Streeter, 5 Apr. 1909, NCCHS Case Records.
350 Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, 1910.
Allen was concerned for the children’s well-being, she also expressed frustration at this misuse of the adoption process. Rather than following the proper channels dictated by the “scientific” process of casework that Mrs. Allen advocated —turning the children over to the CHS, who could properly investigate prospective homes—the clerk had hastily ordered an adoption to an untested individual, without any investigation.\footnote{Ibid.; Mrs. Allen, to William Streeter, 27 Mar. 1909.}

Mrs. Allen immediately set about intervening on behalf of Rose and Thomas. The King’s Daughters lobbied the clerk to undo what Mrs. Allen referred to as his “‘adopted work’” and also tried to convince the Justice of the Peace to do the same. Finally the clerk said that he would cancel the adoption papers. However, the fact that Rose apparently had found a temporary home elsewhere further complicated the matter. The fourteen-year-old worked in a mill, where she earned six dollars a week. In the meantime she temporarily lived in “filthy” surroundings with “an old shrewd woman” who Mrs. Allen anticipated would “use all the girl’s wages for her [own] benefit and keep the girl in the mill.” Mrs. Allen wrote to Streeter that the King’s Daughters hoped “to induce her to go to some good home, go to school, church and be decently clothed and surrounded.” But she feared that it would “be hard to get her [Rose’s] consent to leave” due to the influence of the old woman’s desire, even though the guardian did not have legal custody. Although Mrs. Allen expressed concern about taking Rose against her will, she concluded that in her present circumstances “the girl’s prospects are very foreboding—for morality and good citizenship.”\footnote{Mrs. Allen, to William Streeter, 24 Mar. 1909.} Rose Baker’s case illustrates the complexities involved in removing a child. Before ultimately being conveyed to the
CHS, the King’s Daughters and Sadie Bilyeu had to cancel an unwanted adoption and removed Rose from another non-legal guardian’s care.

Gaining legal custody was only the beginning of the CHS’s work on behalf of these dependent and neglected children. Given the problems that Miss Bilyeu and Mrs. Allen frequently encountered in removing children from a situation, it was often imperative that a child leave the situation as expeditiously as possible. That, however, presented an additional problem; although the society did not believe in placing children in institutions permanently, those received into custody by the agency had to be temporarily housed somewhere. In a report made to the CHS Board of Directors in 1908, Streeter stressed the difficulty of finding short-term accommodations for the children. He reported that since the Board’s last meeting the society had received nineteen new children. Having successfully placed nine of them, the CHS had twenty-two children on hand. Because the agency did not have a central receiving home, the children were scattered across Greensboro and the state: “one sick girl is in here in the City, another sick child is in the hospital in Greensboro, two children are in the Children’s Home at Balfour, five are in the Children’s Home, at Asheville, seven are with Mrs. Taylor, two tough boys are with the Sisters, at Nazareth, and we have four children here in the City, in care of relatives until they can be placed.” In the case of the Durham children that the King’s Daughters helped to rescue, in all likelihood the CHS removed the children from the city altogether and sent them to temporary homes elsewhere in North Carolina.

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In the case of May Joyce, for instance, the King’s Daughters paid for the girl’s train ticket to transport her to a temporary home in Greensboro.\(^{355}\)

This recurring problem led Streeter and the Board of Directors to begin fundraising and making plans to build a receiving home. Streeter emphasized that “in no sense of the word will it be a permanent home for any child. No child will be held in it one day longer than is necessary to find for him a suitable family home.” In fact Streeter reckoned that having a receiving home would actually reduce the number of children that the society had on hand at any given time. For instance, if a child was temporarily housed in Asheville and the CHS located a home for her in the eastern part of the state, Miss Bilyeu or Streeter would have to schedule a special trip to pick up the child, thus prolonging her stay in temporary accommodations. A more conveniently located receiving home would eliminate these delays and cut down on travel expenses, as well as eliminate the problem of overseeing multiple temporary boarding locations.\(^{356}\)

Having thus decided to build a receiving home, Streeter observed that “the securing of a suitable site is one of our hard problems.”\(^{357}\) The Board of Directors finally settled on a site in Durham to build “Joyland,” the CHS’s first receiving home. It is unclear what influence the King’s Daughters had on this decision; surely the organization’s close cooperation with the CHS would have led them to believe that the citizens of Durham would be receptive to the idea of a receiving home. The CHS also had close connections to Durham through its Board of Directors; General Carr, the

\(^{355}\) Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, May 1910.

\(^{356}\) William Streeter, “Superintendent’s Report to CHS Board of Directors”, 5 Mar. 1908

\(^{357}\) Ibid.
tobacconist and philanthropist, served on the Board for several years in the 1910s, as did W.J. Holloway, another prominent Durham resident.\textsuperscript{358} The CHS’s official history asserts that Streeter assumed that General Carr, Benjamin Duke, and George Watts would personally fund Joyland.\textsuperscript{359} Unfortunately, the project was a dismal failure for Streeter, ultimately causing the Board to fire him for “mismanagement and incompetency” in 1914.\textsuperscript{360} The CHS thus functioned without a receiving home during this entire time period.

Once the CHS had a child in its care, Streeter had to determine what course of action to take regarding a child. The society’s ultimate goal, of course, remained placing every child in a private home. However, the best “solution for that particular child’s difficulty” varied. Perhaps a child had relatives in another state that would be willing to take care of the child if they were aware of the situation; the CHS could, “through [its] connection with other State Societies,” try to find the relatives and get the child into their care. In some cases, a teenaged boy would “merely need to be shown a way to take of itself,” and the CHS would attempt to help the boy do this, possibly through a foster care arrangement that more closely resembled a traditional apprenticeship.\textsuperscript{361} The society generally found that it could easily place “normal,” attractive children in private foster homes, with the hope that the child would be adopted into the family.\textsuperscript{362}

The cases of children with some perceived defect proved more difficult to resolve. Sick children obviously needed medical attention before they could be placed. And as

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358 Joyland donation card, Dec. 1912, NCCHS Papers.
361 William Streeter, to R.A. Nunn, 6 Nov. 1909.
362 William Streeter, to James West, 11 Nov. 1907.
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Streeter had explained to the editors of the *Delineator*, it could be very difficult to find homes for children with physical disabilities.\textsuperscript{363} The CHS sought “special surgical or medical attention” for these children; in one instance, the society had even “secured the services of an eminent New York Surgeon and Specialist in joint diseases to straighten the club feet of a four and a half year old girl” in CHS’s custody.\textsuperscript{364} Perhaps this very real difficulty in placing sick or physically disabled children influenced the King’s Daughters to concentrate their efforts on healthy, “normal” children.

Some of the children that the King’s Daughters did rescue, however, also proved to be difficult to place. Even if a child was healthy and “attractive,” the neglect she had suffered or the length of time she had lived in “immoral surroundings” impacted that child’s prospects for placement and adoption. For instance, Streeter wrote that the case of Rose Baker, who had been working in a mill, presented “the most difficult problem of all” and that he would have to study the situation “to determine what should be done with her.” He went on to write that he had “had no success whatever in placing mill-reared children other than in mill communities, and immediately on placement she would go right [back] into the mill, undoubtedly.”\textsuperscript{365}

Streeter concluded that in such problematic cases of “non-placeable” children such as Rose, sending the child to an industrial school was the only viable solution. Rose, he concluded, needed “some institutional training, so that she could get an education.”\textsuperscript{366} Thus the CHS sometimes felt compelled to temporarily place a child in an

\textsuperscript{363} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{364} William Streeter, to R.A. Nunn, 6 Nov. 1909.
\textsuperscript{365} William Streeter, to Mrs. Allen, 25 Mar. 1909.
\textsuperscript{366} Ibid.
institution, while he or she was “being cleaned up and prepared to enter a family home.” The agency hoped that these children, in the supervised and regulated environment of an industrial school, could be molded and reformed into the types of children that middle-class families would be willing to take into their homes.

Arranging for the children to be admitted to an industrial school, however, proved to be another challenge. Although a few such institutions did exist in North Carolina, they were all privately funded and maintained (with the exception of the Stonewall Jackson School, which was established in 1907). Streeter, who arranged for the children to be sent to institutions, lamented the fact that it was difficult to secure admission for children in the CHS’s custody due to insufficient room. Even when Streeter could secure a spot for a child, the CHS had inadequate funds to pay for tuition at privately run industrial schools. To this end Streeter asked Mrs. Allen if the King’s Daughters would be willing to raise the necessary tuition to send Rose Baker to an industrial school. By contributing towards a child’s tuition, and furnishing the child with a new set of clothing, the King’s Daughters helped the children they had helped to rescue to start a new life outside Durham. From that point on, the CHS bore sole responsibility for the children in its custody.

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369 For a complete listing of child-caring institutions in North Carolina, see Report of the Board of Public Charities (1910). 47.
Streeter established a relationship with the Elhanan Training Institute in McDowell County, North Carolina, where the society sent several children, including Rose Baker, during these years. Founded in 1899 by two sisters affiliated with the Holiness church, the institution’s letterhead proclaimed that it was “a school for poor boys and girls who need help and are struggling for an education.”

Although Streeter was glad to have found an institution to accept these children, conditions at the school were not ideal. The society endeavored to periodically check on the circumstances and health of all children in its custody, receiving two reports a year from the child’s guardian and two reports from the society’s representatives who visited each child.

To this end, Streeter inquired about the health of one Durham boy, William Brown; the superintendent of the Elhanan Training Institute responded that the boy had “developed a contagious sore mouth” and requested that he be removed. Two months later, Sadie Bilyeu traveled to Elhanan to check on a few children. She found that Rose Baker had sores on her scalp, and the CHS withdrew the girl from the institution immediately.

For children lucky enough to be placed in homes, either immediately or after a transitional period in an industrial school, there was no guarantee that the placement would be permanent. For whatever reason, some children did not thrive in particular foster homes and many of these placements proved to be only temporary. William Brown, after recovering from his illness, was released from Elhanan and placed in a series of foster homes. Although the CHS maintained contact with him, and apparently

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373 Ms. Perry, to William Streeter, 2 June 1909.
374 Notes, Case Record of Rose Baker, Aug. 1909, NCCHS Case Records.
did not need to intervene to remove him from an undesirable situation, William repeatedly moved to different foster homes and was never adopted. The CHS last had contact with him in 1922, by which time William had become an adult and reportedly worked on a farm.  

After she left Elhanan, Rose Baker’s life followed a similar pattern. Her first foster home placement looked to be successful, and the girl’s foster mother corresponded with Streeter about the possibility of adopting the child. Tragically, the foster mother died, and Rose shifted from one foster home to another throughout her teenage years. Despite this turbulence, in 1924 Sadie Bilyeu reported that Rose Baker had grown into “a beautiful young woman” and was “engaged to be married to a very nice young man.”  

Through intervention on behalf of children such as Rose Baker, the King’s Daughters transformed some aspects of the child welfare system in Durham. By utilizing the courts and their own networks of contacts, these women rescued homeless children from the streets and the county home and removed children from the custody of destitute and neglectful parents. These children—who ten or twenty years earlier would likely have found themselves living alongside criminals in the poorhouse or apprenticed as a child laborer—instead were funneled to the CHS and out of Durham altogether. Although it is impossible to know what Rose Baker’s life would have been like had she continued to live in Durham, an abandoned child earning six dollars a week in a mill, the intervention of the King’s Daughters irreversibly altered the course of the girl’s life. At the same time, however, the King’s Daughters ignored the plight of countless other

375 Notes, Case Record of William Brown, 1922, NCCHS Case Records.
376 Notes, Case Record of Rose Baker, 1924.
“undesirable” children, who were left to languish in the poorhouse, toil in factories, or labor under the contractual obligations of apprenticeship.\textsuperscript{377}
CHAPTER FOUR

Rescuing “Fallen Women” and “Child-Mothers”

In 1910, the plight of a thirteen-year-old unmarried mother came to the attention of Rev. Lucius Compton, a Holiness preacher who headed the Faith Cottage Rescue Home in Asheville, North Carolina. The “beautiful school girl,” who had been “snared, ruined” and impregnated at the age of thirteen, had been abandoned to “the mercy of a cold-hearted world with her baby in her arms.” Compton lamented the pitiable case of this “child-mother”, who had been rejected by her suitor, her family, and the community. Ultimately he laid the blame for such cases on the “human brutes” who victimized young girls and on their mothers, who “did not control them at home.”

The Sheltering Home Circle, who had adopted rescue work among unmarried mothers as one of their main endeavors at the group’s founding, endorsed the work done by Compton and others. The organization viewed this mission as the natural complement to its other line of rescue work; saving young, vulnerable mothers went hand in hand with rescuing children. Rather than allowing a young girl to remain in an undesirable environment, where her prospects for morality and good citizenship were “foreboding,” the King’s Daughters tried to intervene on such a girl’s behalf and prevent her from falling into vice by removing her from that environment. Once a young woman had already been “ruined,” the organization stepped in to aid the vulnerable pregnant girl by sending her to a private maternity home.

378 New Testament Christian 2, no. 9 (1911).
The King’s Daughters’ goal in such rescue work was more than just providing medical attention; the women viewed it as a moral intervention to rescue both the mother and the unborn child, thus hopefully preventing the circle of poverty and vice from repeating itself. However, many of Durham’s poor unmarried mothers resisted the King’s Daughters’ offer to send them to private maternity homes and instead chose to navigate the city’s complex system of public and private welfare on their own.

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During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an out-of-wedlock pregnancy could upend a young woman’s entire world. Unmarried mothers faced moral scrutiny from their families and the community. Moral codes required that these women be labeled as “fallen,” and they faced the serious risk of ostracism as the result of their transgressions. Out-of-wedlock pregnancies often caused families to reject the unmarried mother; in the case of young teenage girls, families often sought to remove the girl—the source of their shame—from the household and the community. In Durham’s mill villages, an out-of-wedlock pregnancy was grounds for the entire family to be fired and evicted from mill housing. On the other hand, a woman who lived apart from her family, working in the city while her parents remained on the family farm, faced the prospect of not being able to return home or being able to provide for herself and her child. Families with the financial means frequently arranged for the “fallen” girl to be

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sent away to a distant relative or to a private maternity home. If the family lacked the resources to provide for her, an unmarried mother often faced the prospect of destitution and homelessness. In an era when the overwhelming majority of childbirths took place at home, these women had to find other accommodations in which to give birth to their illegitimate children.381

As with other aspects of charity in Durham, the poorhouse remained one option for poor, unmarried mothers. Although without the Durham County home’s records it is impossible to know how many women chose to give birth there in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, historians have shown that poorhouses elsewhere in the U.S. often functioned as crude maternity homes.382 Furthermore, the Board of Visitors reported instances of infants residing in the Durham County home with their mothers.383 As in other scenarios, however, it is likely that those poor women who could chose to avoid giving birth in the poorhouse.

Although most women of all classes gave birth at home during this period, prior to 1895 the county home would have been the only place in Durham that a poor woman could seek medical attention. If a poor pregnant woman experienced complications, or a new mother needed care for herself or her newborn, the poorhouse remained the only publicly-funded option. Since the early 1880s, the County Commissioners had employed a physician to attend to county home inmates.384 Thus admittance to the poorhouse also

382 Green, This Business of Relief, 165; Marian J. Morton, And Sin No More: Social Policy and Unwed Mothers in Cleveland, 1855-1990 (Columbus, Oh.: Ohio State University Press, 1993), 23-36.
384 Minutes of Durham County Commissioners.
garnered inmates free medical care. However, the care provided by the physicians and the superintendent of the poorhouse was minimal at best. As the Commissioners’ 1890 investigation of the death of William Cameron revealed, paupers had died due to a lack of proper medical care and inattention by the superintendent.\textsuperscript{385} Undoubtedly the poorhouse’s bad reputation in this regard spread rapidly through the city. A destitute mother would likely search out all other alternatives first.

In 1895 the city’s public health prospects improved dramatically when Watts Hospital opened its doors. The hospital, a gift to the city from tobacco magnate and philanthropist George Washington Watts, could be viewed as another attempt by Durham’s elite to promote the city as a model of civic-minded progressivism. At the hospital’s dedication, George Watts proclaimed that “it is the only Hospital in the State…which has a real charity feature connected with it.” The hospital’s policies dictated that anyone “in need” would receive “care and treatment absolutely without price.”\textsuperscript{386} Although the city donated some money for its maintenance, the hospital remained a private institution well into the twentieth century, funded primarily by the Watts family and other charitable donations.\textsuperscript{387}

Despite its claims to be a community hospital, Watts Hospital did not cater to the entire community. Upon opening, the building contained separate female and male pavilions, each with seven free beds reserved for “charity cases”; the hospital’s new facility greatly expanded the number of beds. However, hospital policies barred black

\textsuperscript{385} Minutes of Durham County Commissioners, Jan. 1890.
\textsuperscript{386} \textit{Annual Report of Watts Hospital} (Durham: Seeman Printery, 1896), 12.
patients from being admitted. In addition, the hospital primarily served a particular class of Durham residents. During the first few years of operation most patients admitted to the hospital were members of the lower classes, indicating that portions of the population remained very reluctant to patronize the hospital. In general nineteenth-century hospitals often were established in association with poorhouses, as counties and cities hired doctors to care for sick inmates in the poorhouse. In Durham, the hospital’s well-advertised policy of admitting “charity cases” undoubtedly added to the institution’s stigma. Thus well into the twentieth century, patients who could afford it hired physicians to care for them in their private homes. During this time period, the hospital, like the county home, had a reputation as a place of last resort that served the city’s lower classes.\textsuperscript{388}

Most women, especially middle- and upper-class women, avoided giving birth in a hospital during this time period. Women of all classes routinely gave birth at home, with the help of physicians and midwives if they could afford it; however, by the 1910s the movement towards hospital births had gained popularity.\textsuperscript{389} Watts Hospital’s annual reports indicated that it did admit some obstetrics cases. In 1906 the report showed that eighteen babies had been born at the hospital during the course of the year.\textsuperscript{390} Although this number is small relative to the total birthrate in Durham, some women clearly did utilize the hospital for this purpose. Given the stigma that middle- and upper-class women attached to the hospital, the majority if not all of these cases were probably “charity cases,” poor women living in the city who could not afford to pay a private

\textsuperscript{388} Ibid, 40-47.
\textsuperscript{389} Wertz, \textit{Lying-In}, 132-145.
\textsuperscript{390} \textit{Annual Report of Watts Hospital} (Durham: Seeman Printery, 1906).
doctor for medical care and perhaps lived apart from their families. When Watts Hospital’s new facilities opened in West Durham in 1909, however, they contained a separate and more private maternity ward, designed to accommodate the growing numbers of middle-class patients who gave birth in the hospital.  

However, Watts Hospital did not admit pregnant white women indiscriminately. Obstetric patients could only be admitted upon approval by the hospital’s Executive Committee. Although there is no further written explanation of these policies, it is clear that hospital administrators scrutinized pregnant women, even “charity cases,” before admittance. The Executive Committee almost certainly gave preference to cases of difficult pregnancies, but it is quite possible that administrators on at least some occasions refused to admit unmarried mothers and instead referred them to private maternity homes.

The presence of a “charity” hospital distinguished Durham from many cities of similar size and from rural areas; however, the King’s Daughters believed that the possibility of receiving free medical care did not solve an unwed mother’s problems. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the organization joined many other women’s benevolent societies across the country in conducting rescue work among unmarried mothers and “fallen” women. By removing these women from the city and sending them to maternity homes across the state, the King’s Daughters hoped to provide for their physical needs as well as rehabilitate and redeem the mothers in an environment of evangelical moral uplift.

392 Ibid., 41.
As part of the organization’s self-proclaimed “first purpose,” the King’s Daughters worked to rescue women and girls who were the “victims” of Smoky Hollow and other poor areas of the city.\(^\text{393}\) Throughout the 1890s and first years of the twentieth century, Durham’s newspapers had portrayed Smoky Hollow as a den of vice and poverty. Often these sensationalist reports featured vulnerable single women and children. One article reported the high profile case of a young, pregnant white woman, who had filed an affidavit with a judge swearing that James Norwood, a state legislator from Orange County, was the father of her illegitimate unborn child. Norwood never complied with the judge’s request to appear before him. Several weeks later, the newspaper reported that the mother and infant had both been found dead, presumably as a result of the extreme cold, in a Smoky Hollow basement.\(^\text{394}\) Such cases mobilized the King’s Daughters to take up rescue work.

Many members of the King’s Daughters also served on the Board of Lady Visitors at Watts Hospital. The hospital’s annual report issued in 1906 recognized many women who had served on the Board since 1895; this list included nine women who were also active members of the King’s Daughters during the same period. In their capacity as members of the Board of Lady Visitors, the women met regularly to “discuss the condition and needs of the Hospital.” In addition, the members regularly visited the hospital, “thoroughly inspecting the various departments.”\(^\text{395}\) Through these activities,

\(^{394}\) Anderson, *Durham County*, 206.  
the members of the King’s Daughters would have been more personal knowledge of the need for social services—medical and otherwise—for working-class unmarried mothers.

The society’s commitment to rescue work varied in intensity during the period from 1903-1917. During the group’s first three years, when the women worked in conjunction with Rev. Thaddeus Trot, “who did the actual rescue work,” they helped forty-seven women and girls. For the next several years, the King’s Daughters continued to concentrate most of their efforts on rescue work for women and children; although the women continued to cooperate with other agencies in Durham, by then the Rescue Committee worked directly with the “fallen” women. Mrs. Allen’s efforts again proved to be vital to the continuation of this work for unmarried mothers. By 1910, however, the Old Ladies’ Home absorbed most of the group’s time and money. The Sheltering Home Circle’s annual report for the 1910-1911 year indicated this shift in priorities; the Elks’ Fund money, which had previously been designated for use in rescue work and local charity efforts, had instead been diverted into the Home’s funds that year. The circle reported having saved only one girl, “for whom the Chairman of the Rescue Circle had long been working,” from “undesirable surroundings.”

The following year, dissension materialized in the group about the direction of the organization’s work, as some members wanted the King’s Daughters to devote more time and energy to rescue work. In May 1912, Mrs. Follett, an active member of the Rescue Committee, “made an interesting talk” about the work of the Florence Crittenton League, a national organization that rescued fallen girls and operated the largest chain of

maternity homes in the nation. The Crittenton League, which had been in operation since the late 1880s, served as a forum through which middle- and upper-class women could harness their maternalist energies to save women who had become the sexual “victims” of men. The Sheltering Home Circle endorsed the idea of forming a chapter of the Crittenton League, but a majority ultimately voted that “it would not be practical to do so in connection with the King’s Daughters,” presumably because of the group’s existing commitments to operating the Old Ladies’ Home. Thus a portion of the circle’s membership decided to begin a local chapter of the Crittenton League, which many members of the King’s Daughters chose to join. In 1913 the King’s Daughters reported that the Crittenton League had assumed the responsibility for conducting rescue work in the city. Thus at least some members of the group embraced a national organization as the solution to the local problem of unmarried mothers, a cause for which the King’s Daughters had been working for years. However, this arrangement proved to be temporary; the following year the King’s Daughters reported that the Crittenton League had disbanded and that “the rescue work is again ours and we find that there is much to be done.”

Although the Durham chapter of the Crittenton League was short-lived, the King’s Daughters embraced the league’s principles in the rescue work it performed. These guiding principles were articulated by the organization’s founder, the evangelist

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398 Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, May 1912.
400 Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle, May 1912.
Charles Crittenton, and Dr. Kate Waller Barrett, its long-time president. The Crittenton League employed the rhetoric of motherhood to encourage American women to address the plight of unmarried mothers and prostitutes. Barrett in particular encouraged middle-class women to cross class lines to work directly with “victimized” women, encouraging “fallen” women to give up their sinful ways and embark on a new life in a rescue or maternity home. Barrett also embraced the “scientific” principles of professional social work, promoting the religious, moral, and practical training of volunteer female rescue workers.  

Although the women in the Sheltering Home Circle do not appear to have had any formal training in rescue work, they likely absorbed these principles through the literature of the Crittenton League, such as Kate Waller Barrett’s 1903 manual *Some Practical Suggestions on the Conduct of a Rescue Home*, which became one of the seminal works on the subject.

Through the “friendly visitor” system and through referrals from other organizations, the King’s Daughters became aware of various types of “fallen” women in Durham. The organization likely targeted prostitutes at first; over time, however, the society’s focus appears to have shifted towards rescuing unwed mothers. This transition mirrored that occurring in the Crittenton League and other national organizations. Rescue workers found that prostitutes proved to be very difficult to subjects to reform. Even if they succeeded in convincing them to enter a rescue home, the home’s staff had a difficult time compelling prostitutes to stay in the home long enough to be permanently

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redeemed. One Crittenton worker concluded that “the money and effort involved were found to be all out of relation to the tangible results achieved,” as prostitutes relapsed into their former ways. Thus the rescue workers “turned more and more toward the erring girl rather than to the confirmed professional.” The King’s Daughters hoped that the immediate dilemma of an illegitimate pregnancy would compel “fallen” girls to reform their ways. Regardless, rescue workers relied on a familiar trope of seduction and abandonment to portray all “fallen” women, prostitutes and unmarried mothers alike, as the sexual victims of men.

In keeping with this philosophy, the King’s Daughters attempted to gain more legal protection for young girls and to hold men legally accountable for their sexual transgressions with these vulnerable adolescents. As one member of the state branch of the King’s Daughters explained, “it seems to remain with the women to provide and care for those who have become what they are through these ‘Lords of Creation’ who make a plaything of them and tiring, cast them adrift.” To this end, the King’s Daughters joined with the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, the Crittenton League, and other women’s organizations in lobbying the state legislature to raise the age of consent and criminalize sexual relations with under-aged girls. In North Carolina, the age at which a girl could legally agree to sexual relations had been ten, until a coalition of women’s organizations succeeded in having the age raised to fourteen in 1895. In the 1910s, these groups launched a second campaign to raise the age to sixteen. The state legislators

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405 Kunzel, *Fallen Women*, 16-17; quotes, 17.
406 Ibid., 20.
ultimately voted to defend the sexual freedom of white men by defeating the proposal, and the age of consent remained fourteen.408

On a less abstract level, the King’s Daughters sought to hold the male citizens of Durham responsible for the consequences of their illicit liaisons. By utilizing the existing legal system, the women implicitly criticized the double standard which allowed men to avoid repercussions for their immoral behavior, while the woman had to bear the shame and burden of the illegitimate child. In their efforts to rescue “fallen or betrayed girls,” the King’s Daughters also had to face financial limitations on the amount of rescue work they could do. Some of the private maternity homes charged an admission fee, which the King’s Daughters had to find a way to pay. The women lamented that “at first we humiliated ourselves by begging funds to send them off,” collecting donations from individual members and soliciting money through fundraising drives. However, by 1913 the women had settled on “a better way, namely, the author of the girls’ ruin to be taken up and made to pay the usual fine of $50.00.”409 According to bastardy laws that had been on the books since the nineteenth century, an unwed mother could sign an affidavit, a “warrant against the reputed father,” naming the father of her illegitimate child. The clerk could then summon the alleged father before the court and, finding enough evidence, order the father to sign a “bastardy bond.” This legal contract compelled the father to pay a fee for the maintenance of his illegitimate child.410

408 Ibid., 71-73.
410 Durham County Bastardy Bonds, 1895-1912.
As with their efforts to rescue children, the King’s Daughters showed an adept understanding of the legal system. Although bastardy laws had been on the books for years, the existing records of bastardy bonds in Durham County indicate that the laws had been little utilized in the late 1800s and first decade of the twentieth century. The 1896 case of the woman and infant who died in Smoky Hollow, after the court failed to hold the child’s father’s accountable, offers further evidence that officials frequently failed to enforce bastardy laws.  

Although no bastardy records exist for the post-1912 period, the King’s Daughters’ asserted that they had successfully utilized the legal system “to correct the growing evil” of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

The Rescue Committee sought more than just financial recompense for their pregnant charges; the girl’s rescue invariably entailed removing her from the negative environment that had led to her “fallen” state in the first place. The King’s Daughters hoped to place the woman in a nurturing, structured Christian environment in which she could give birth and begin raising her child. In the early years the King’s Daughters accomplished this goal by “sending some of them to their parents”; this strategy was obviously best suited for girls who lived alone in the city while working in the tobacco factories or textile mills.

In at least one other instance the King’s Daughters sought to personally aid a woman who was pregnant out-of-wedlock. Mrs. Clark, a pregnant widow, had sought refuge in the county home with her two children after losing her job as a domestic due to

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413 Bridgers, “A History of Social Work in Durham County,” 44.
the pregnancy. Ultimately, at the urging of the Rescue Committee, she decided to give up custody of her children, Betsy and John. Mrs. Clark, however, still had to find a way to provide for her unborn child. Mrs. Allen, moved to pity by the fact that the “kind, hard-working” woman had “made a mistake,” took her in.\footnote{Mrs. Allen, to William Streeter, 3 Mar. 1909, NCCHS Case Records.} Nine months later, Mrs. Allen reported that “she and her little baby are living with us and she is doing my domestic work.”\footnote{Mrs. Allen, to William Streeter, 11 Dec. 1909, NCCHS Case Records.} In addition to providing them with a roof over their heads, Mrs. Allen believed that the environment of her own home, along with the redemptive value of domestic work, would morally benefit both mother and child. Mrs. Allen even requested that Streeter send photos of Betsy and John so that Mrs. Clark could see that the children were healthy and well provided for.\footnote{Ibid.}

By the 1910s, however, the Rescue Committee sought a more systematic approach to dealing with unmarried mothers, and for practical and cultural reasons they decided to send the women away from Durham. Most likely the King’s Daughters could not find enough suitable individual homes in Durham that would be willing to take in and employ a pregnant woman. Durham did not have any private institutions that provided services for unwed mothers, and Watts Hospital provided only medical services. Furthermore, the social stigma attached to unmarried motherhood also motivated the King’s Daughters to seek new homes for the women outside of the city. The agency had limited options outside of the city as well. In the case of younger girls, it is likely that parents often refused to take in their pregnant daughters; the daughter’s sin also called
into question her upbringing and hence her parents’ morality, raising the possibility that her parents could not provide a suitable environment for the girl and her baby. The King’s Daughters thus opted to institutionalize the rescued women in one of three private, evangelical maternity homes in North and South Carolina.\footnote{417} This policy also provided a practical financial reason for coercing “the author of the girls’ ruin” to pay a fifty dollar fine; many of the maternity homes charged an admission fee, plus the King’s Daughters had to find a way to cover the cost of transportation.

One of the homes the King’s Daughters most frequently relied on was “the Rev. Compton’s Home at Asheville.”\footnote{418} Rev. Lucius B. Compton had worked for many years as a Holiness missionary in the mountains of western North Carolina. During the course of his missionary work, “the need for a haven where the fallen and outcast girls might find love and sympathy, Christ and a chance, became more and more evident to him, until, at last, it assumed the proportions of a clear call from God.”\footnote{419} In 1903 Compton’s vision came into fruition when he founded the Faith Cottage Rescue Home in Asheville. Although Faith Cottage was “not incorporated under any church denomination, but stand[s] on the principles of New Testament Christianity,” the home clearly was evangelical in nature. Through the Home’s monthly newsletter, The New Testament Christian, Compton and his associates sought to publicize the Home’s mission and raise the funds necessary to maintain it. Unlike some other maternity homes, Faith Cottage did not charge an admission fee and operated entirely on a charity basis.

\footnote{418} Ibid.  
\footnote{419} John C. Patty, Life of Lucius Bunyon Compton, the Mountain Evangelist (Cincinnati: Revivalist Press, 1914), 102.
In *The New Testament Christian*, Compton put forth the same image of victimized “fallen” girls that the Crittenton League publicized. Compton attributed the plight of these “fallen” women to several factors. First, he traced the source of vice to the girl’s upbringing. He charged that “any parent, whether rich or poor, who does not teach their children to work, are bringing up a family to pollute society with base depravity.” Thus, Compton asserted, “the greater majority of the 365,000 fallen women in America could not cook or laundry respectfully.” Rather than forcing the girl to build character by doing household work, “fallen” girls had often been treated as “the lady of the house,” with “time to rove the streets as they pleased.” These girls “who lacked early discipline and who roved in idleness” later found themselves the victims of men and often ended up in “red light districts.”

Furthermore, Compton found that in many cases the girl’s fall from purity resulted from childhood neglect and poverty. Compton observed that most of the girls in Faith Cottage could not read or write; they were often “brought up in poverty and are unable to appear in public without feeling intimidated.” As a result of these limited options, “they hire out as servants or go to the factories and stores.” Once these girls are living in the city, “through an ambition to keep up with the whirl of fashion, they become easy victims for the procurors in this awful traffic of girls,” and many hence fell into the “white slave traffic” of prostitution.

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421 *New Testament Christian* 2, no. 2 (1911).
Compton ultimately traced the plight of all “fallen” girls, both unmarried mothers and prostitutes, to the evil men who had manipulated and deceived them. These girls, “trapped, and through circumstances and environments,” had been “led captive at the will of brutal men.” Although Compton acknowledged that in some cases the girl had been “seduced” through false promises and later abandoned by her lover, in many cases Compton described the illicit liaisons in terms of abuse. For instance, the New Testament Christian featured the photo of a very young mother holding an infant, invoking similar images of children with dolls. The accompanying article stated that Compton found “this

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422 Faith Cottage, from Patty, Life of Lucius Compton, D.H. Ramsey Library Special Collections, UNC Asheville.
423 Ibid.
beautiful school girl snared, ruined and a mother at thirteen years of age, at the mercy of a cold-hearted world with her baby in her arms.” Compton decried the fact that although the girl was under the age of consent, and “the human brute who deceived her could be, and should be placed behind the bars to pay the penalty of such a heinous crime,” no legal action had been taken against the father. Instead, the father “goes off, marries and lives at ease while this poor little mother with her child wanders in search of home and friends.”

Figure 7. Thirteen-year-old mother and her baby, Faith Cottage, 1911.

424 *New Testament Christian* 2, no. 9 (1911).
Faith Cottage sought to be a “light house and saving station for our unfortunate sisters” who found themselves in circumstances such as this girl’s. Compton proclaimed that the Rescue Home stood “with open doors to befriend any unfortunate woman who in her heart has a desire to leave the old life.” At Faith Cottage, the mission staff sought “to get them acquainted with Jesus and to give them spiritual training that

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they may become established in Him as Saviour and Lord." The only other criteria for admission to the Home was that the girl be “willing to work, or if she does not know how is willing to be taught.” Faith Cottage hoped to redeem rescued girls through evangelism and reform them through a highly disciplined schedule and hard work. Ultimately, after several months or years of training, a reformed girl could be sent back to her parents or placed as a domestic servant in “Christian homes where they can work and make an honest living and live for the right.”

Faith Cottage also relied on the power of motherhood to lure the girls away from their sinful lives. Although many girls undoubtedly entered Faith Cottage with the intention of giving birth and then giving up their illegitimate babies, Faith Cottage encouraged all unmarried mothers to keep their babies. This policy was consistent with those of other maternity homes; rescue workers hoped that the baby, “nature’s rescue-and miracle-worker,” could aid in the redemption of the unmarried mother and be a powerful motivator for her to resist the temptations of her former life. Compton emphasized this point when reporting the case of one girl, Maude. “An innocent child of fifteen years,” Maude had been “deceived by her own sister’s husband.” Although Maude herself was only a child, “when her baby came, it seemed all the pent up longings of her heart burst forth in a passion of love for him.” After some time had passed, Maude’s “people were willing to take her but were not willing to take little Paul.” Maude “clung to him with the heart of a true little mother,” and rather than separate the mother

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428 *New Testament Christian* 2, no. 9 (1911).
431 *New Testament Christian* 2, no. 9 (1911).
432 Quote in Kunzel, *Fallen Women*, 33.
from her child, Faith Cottage sought to place them both in another home.\textsuperscript{433} Even in the case of the thirteen year old mother, Compton concluded that the solution was to place both mother and infant with “a true Christian mother who would take the responsibility of training both children.”\textsuperscript{434}

Despite the best efforts of Compton and the evangelical staff at Faith Cottage, many girls did give up their babies. Compton felt a Christian responsibility to provide for these illegitimate children, “as worthy of love and tender care, and culture, and place in Society’s arms, as those children whom the law acknowledges as legitimate.”\textsuperscript{435} Compton also reported that “while engaged in rescue work among the fallen girls of Asheville and the surrounding country, homeless, destitute children were frequently brought to us to be provided for.”\textsuperscript{436} He struggled to find homes for the illegitimate children, as most orphanages refused to accept them.\textsuperscript{437} Compton also objected to the traditional means of providing for such children through apprenticeship, by “putting them out in homes to become little servants—to carry in wood, nurse the baby, sweep the house, and to grow up without love, [or] education.” He further criticized the practice of giving away these children “so they are changed from place to place until very often before reaching manhood or womanhood, they are ruined.” Finally, “disowned by all, they wander to the slums of our cities,” and many of these illegitimate girls ultimately ended up in rescue homes, pregnant with their own illegitimate babies.\textsuperscript{438} Compton

\textsuperscript{433} New Testament Christian \textit{1}, no. 5 (1910).
\textsuperscript{434} New Testament Christian \textit{2}, no. 9 (1911).
\textsuperscript{435} Patty, \textit{Life of Lucius Compton}, 142.
\textsuperscript{436} New Testament Christian \textit{1}, no. 8 (1910).
\textsuperscript{437} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{438} New Testament Christian \textit{2}, no. 2 (1911).
clearly conceived of rescue work for children and women as two solutions to the same problem—a cycle of neglect that led to vice. By 1906 the need for an institution to care for abandoned and neglected children became apparent, and Compton founded Eliada Orphanage on the grounds of Faith Cottage.\textsuperscript{439}

Initially most Faith Cottage residents came from the areas of western North Carolina surrounding Asheville. However, within a few years the maternity home had expanded to a point where it could accept girls from across the state. Thus in addition to being used for fundraising, \textit{The New Testament Christian} also publicized Compton’s mission and the facilities available at Faith Cottage and Eliada Orphanage to readers across the state and beyond.

The King’s Daughters in Durham likely learned of Compton’s work through communication with other organizations and through \textit{The New Testament Christian}. Compton also traveled across the South as an itinerant preacher. He regularly held camp meetings and gave talks on missionary work in Greensboro, and in 1914 he traveled to Durham.\textsuperscript{440}

Although the King’s Daughters primarily sent unmarried mothers to Asheville, some teenage girls rescued by the group probably ended up in Eliada Orphanage, which also functioned as an industrial school for older girls. In some instances it is difficult to ascertain the exact reason why the King’s Daughters sent a girl to Rev. Compton; the organization often failed to distinguish between the rescue of girls who were already pregnant and those who would likely be “ruined” in the near future. For instance, in 1914

\textsuperscript{439} \textit{New Testament Christian} 1, no. 8 (1910).
\textsuperscript{440} \textit{New Testament Christian} 1, no. 5 (1910); \textit{New Testament Christian} 4, no. 5 (1913).
Mrs. Allen informed the circle of one such vague case; she reported “the rescue of a girl who had been sent to the Home at Asheville. She was quite a pitiable character, being forsaken by all of her people, with whom Mrs. Allen had corresponded.” The *New Testament Christian* reported a more detailed case of a teenaged girl. Mary, a “homeless, motherless child,” had grown up “hundreds of miles” from Asheville. She had fallen into the hands of some bad people who first “sent her out to solicit money” and then “left her to care for herself as best she could.” Compton reported that “some Christian women who learned of the case, sought admittance for her in our institution.” Although the girl “was not a subject for a rescue home” yet, remaining in her current environment would “no doubt have meant a life wrecked and ruined by some beast in human form.” So Compton admitted the girl to Eliada Orphanage, where she could be “mothered” and “properly trained.” The King’s Daughters shared Rev. Compton’s view that rescue work aimed at younger girls and unmarried mothers ultimately addressed the same problem.

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441 Minutes of Sheltering Home Circle, May 1914.
442 *New Testament Christian* 2, no. 4 (1911).
Figure 9. Eliada Orphanage, c. 1914.

Figure 10. Eliada Orphanage schoolchildren, c. 1914.

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The King’s Daughters also sent unmarried mothers to Greensboro Rest Cottage, which had been founded in 1903 by Rev. Winfred Cox and his wife. Rev. Cox, who ran a Bible school in Greensboro as well, was also a Holiness minister and, through these denominational connections, was a close associate of Rev. Compton. Rev. Compton in fact referred to Rev. Cox as his “dear friend and co-laborer” in mission work. The Coxes established the Rest Cottage “with the sole purpose of saving and reclaiming those unfortunate girls who, without deliberate intent, suddenly find themselves outcasts from society.” Unlike at Faith Cottage, girls admitted to Rest Cottage had to pay an admission fee to contribute towards the maintenance of the home.

The third home that frequently received unmarried mothers rescued by the King’s Daughters was the Salvation Army Home in Greenville, South Carolina. The Salvation Army operated the second largest network of maternity homes in the nation. The Greenville home, opened in 1908, was operated by the Women’s Social Services Department of the Salvation Army. Like Compton’s Asheville facility, it was also connected to a home for dependent children, which had been opened by a Greenville citizen not affiliated with the Salvation Army in 1906. The Salvation Army assumed formal control of the Bruner Home for Children in 1917 and thereafter operated both of the institutions.

All three of the maternity homes utilized by the King’s Daughters shared a similar evangelical philosophy premised on the reformative principles of Christianity, work, and

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446 Pamphlet for Greensboro Rest Cottage, undated, NCCHS Papers.
motherhood. Despite their connections with these three maternity homes, the King’s Daughters in Durham found it difficult to gain admission for a rescued girl. The organization reported in 1914 that “it is a sad and alarming fact that these homes are always over crowded and it is very hard to find entrance for those we rescue.”

Nevertheless, the King’s Daughters continued to raise funds and advocate for maternity homes. The organization also tried to aid the homes through smaller projects. The women donated clothes to all rescued girls and often made clothing items to send to the homes. In one instance, the King’s Daughters’ decided to sew aprons to send to Faith Cottage in Asheville, a material form of endorsement for the home’s policies of domesticity and work.

Not all unmarried mothers approached by the King’s Daughters, however, willingly agreed to be rescued. The Rescue Committee was limited in the work that they could do without the girl consenting to reform. For a variety of reasons, some unmarried mothers preferred to remain in Durham rather than leaving the city to go to a maternity home. The most likely reason was that the mother had decided to not to keep the baby. All three maternity homes to which the King’s Daughters referred girls heavily pressured the mothers to keep their babies. In fact, the Salvation Army Home and the Greensboro Rest Cottage required admitted girls to agree to keep their babies with them as long as they were patients in the home. Some women might also been turned off by the homes’ policies. They all were unabashedly evangelical, with conversion being a

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450 Ibid.
451 Ibid.
452 Pamphlet for Greensboro Rest Cottage, no date; Kunzel, *Fallen Women*, 32-33.
main tool in the home’s rehabilitative process. Women who did not find this sort of compulsory redemption appealing likely would have avoided these evangelical homes. Maternity homes also required that an admitted woman remain in the home for an extended period of time, at least six months in the case of Greensboro Rest Cottage. \(^{453}\) Furthermore, while in residence at the home, the women had to adhere to a strict set of rules that regulated every aspect of life in the institution. Historian Regina Kunzel has shown that many unmarried mothers resisted the discipline imposed by the homes’ staff. \(^{454}\) Thus some unmarried mothers in Durham would have been reluctant to enter such a controlling institution for several months or longer.

For whatever reason, some unmarried mothers in Durham chose to reject the King’s Daughters’ offer of assistance. Furthermore, black women would not have had the option of entering the state’s private maternity homes, which only admitted white women. Having been rejected by their families and often times homeless, these pregnant women faced the short-term problem of finding a place to give birth. Although some women continued to resort to the poorhouse, particularly black women who had few other options, by the 1910s this was increasingly less common. Instead, unmarried white mothers utilized Watts Hospital; it is unclear whether or not hospital administrators tried to discourage this practice through their admissions policies. Regardless, the presence of Watts Hospital in Durham likely made the King’s Daughters offer to send a pregnant girl to a maternity home less attractive to many.

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\(^{453}\) Pamphlet for Greensboro Rest Cottage, no date.

\(^{454}\) Kunzel, *Fallen Women*, 91-114.
The long-term prospects of raising a child as an unmarried mother proved to be more daunting. Unmarried mothers faced the sad reality, as did widows and deserted wives, that it was extremely difficult to earn enough money to support a child. Some potential employers refused to hire an unmarried mother. The mills, which required employees to uphold a strict moral code, not only fired unmarried mothers but dismissed the girl’s entire family and evicted them from the mill village. Denied these higher-paying jobs in the mills, unwed mothers’ only choices were to find work in the tobacco factories or to work as a domestic. The woman’s most likely job prospects were as a domestic servant. Although many maternity homes successfully found positions for girls in middle-class homes where they could board with their babies, it could be extremely difficult for an unmarried mother to find one of these positions on her own without the help of an intermediary.

This economic reality, combined with the social stigma associated with being an unwed mother, compelled many women to give up their babies. Some women undoubtedly chose to give birth in the poorhouse or in Watts Hospital with the intention of giving the baby up soon after birth. Others tried to raise the baby on their own for several months or years, before ultimately coming to the difficult conclusion that they could not provide for the baby. In some instances, serious illness forced an unmarried mother to give up her child. Regardless of the reason and the time frame, unwanted

455 Janiewski, *Sisterhood Denied*, 111.
456 Ibid., 145.
457 Kunzel, *Fallen Women*, 34; Green, *This Business of Relief*, 169.
458 Durham County Apprenticeship Bond for Nora Harris, 1906.
illegitimate infants and young children became an increasingly common problem in Durham in the early twentieth century.

Durham county officials appear to have been relatively unconcerned about the fate of illegitimate children in the early 1900s. Historically during the nineteenth century, counties had relied on apprenticeship as a means of providing for illegitimate children. Apprenticeship laws dictated that “any child who has no father” could be involuntarily apprenticed by the clerk of the court. In the late 1800s, however, courts increasingly granted single women custody of young children.\(^{459}\) Although the law remained on the books, in the first two decades of the 1900s not a single case occurred in which the Durham clerk intervened to involuntarily apprentice a single child because of illegitimacy alone.\(^{460}\)

The King’s Daughters also did not actively seek out illegitimate infants. The organization concentrated its efforts on rescuing unmarried mothers while they were pregnant, and no evidence exists that they ever rescued an infant.\(^{461}\) Likely the King’s Daughters judged that women who had rejected their help during pregnancy were unworthy of receiving their assistance after the child’s birth.

Faced with limited social services available in Durham, unmarried mothers developed their own strategies for making provisions for their children. In many instances, women simply abandoned their children, effectively orphaning them; in these cases the clerk usually ordered that the infant be apprenticed to whoever would take the

\(^{459}\) Zipf, *Labor of Innocents*, 128.

\(^{460}\) Durham County Apprenticeship Bonds.

\(^{461}\) Minutes of the Sheltering Home Circle.
child or arranged for the child to be sent to the Children’s Home Society. Others undoubtedly made informal arrangements with relatives or neighbors to care for the children.

However, unmarried mothers who wanted to give up custody of their infants, but wished to do so in a way that guaranteed the child would be provided for, had limited options. No local institutions existed in Durham that could provide temporary or permanent care for children. Most orphanages in the state did not accept babies and very young children due to their inability to properly care for them. In addition, many orphanages had stipulations that they would not accept illegitimate children. Eliada Orphanage, which did take in illegitimate infants and children, always had serious space constraints; they were frequently forced them to turn away such children, especially those who were not from the local area around Asheville. African American women had even fewer options; in 1910 only two orphanages in the state provided for black children.

Giving their children over to the Children’s Home Society thus remained one of the only options for white unmarried mothers who wanted to ensure that their children would be cared for. The CHS, however, did not have a policy of automatically accepting illegitimate children. In a paper presented at a 1916 meeting of the National Children’s Home Society, superintendent L.H. Putnam laid out the North Carolina CHS’s policies on accepting illegitimate infants. Putnam emphasized that the CHS “cannot, either from

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462 Durham County Apprenticeship Bonds.
464 NCBPC, Report of the Board of Public Charities (1910), 47.
the standpoint of the child or from the standpoint of our own welfare, allow ourselves to be made the avenue of escape from an unpleasant situation to the mother, her parents, or the father, where there is no question…[of them] being financially able to bear the burden and no seeming probability that the child will not receive the proper moral training.” The CHS thus was not in the business of removing the “living evidence” of “shame and disgrace” as a convenience to the parents. Putnam argued that “the adoption of such a policy would be conducive neither to the furtherance of public morals nor to the building up of a good name and influence for the Society.”

Consistent with its general policies, Putnam declared that “neither society nor foster parents can take the place of THE RIGHT KIND OF A MOTHER,” and that conceiving a child outside of wedlock did not necessarily disqualify a woman from being a good mother. In cases where the CHS deemed the mother to have “sufficient character,” the Society endeavored “to induce some true Christian woman, preferably a widow, to take her into her home and aid her.” Thus CHS followed policies similar to those of the maternity homes by making every effort to pressure the mother to keep the child. In cases where the mother was “promiscuous” and “depraved,” or even a true “professional,” the CHS agreed to take a child who would otherwise “be contaminated by his surroundings.”

Ironically, these policies dictated that a mother might have to retain custody of her illegitimate child for a time and demonstrate her financial inability to care for it in order for the CHS to be willing to take the child.

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466 Ibid.
Even if the CHS agreed to take the illegitimate child, it could be a difficult process for a mother to legally surrender her child to the CHS. She must remain in her home county with the child until the CHS could investigate her case and get “the consent of the county commissioners of said county” or the clerk to release the child to the agency. However, Putnam found that this could be difficult, since “many women quietly leave or are sent from their own homes to the large cities to give birth to illegitimate children and drift.”\textsuperscript{467} Hence an unmarried mother from the surrounding counties, who currently lived in Durham with her baby, could not apply to the CHS to take her child without first returning to her home county.

Most significantly, mothers had to be willing to permanently relinquish custody of their children to the CHS, “with the understanding, of course, that she is to have nothing further to do with them and not even to know exactly where they are.”\textsuperscript{468} As Mrs. Allen’s experiences with rescuing older children indicated, many mothers could not provide for their children but hesitated to permanently sign them over to the CHS.\textsuperscript{469} Undoubtedly this was also true for unmarried mothers, particularly those who did not initially chose to give up the baby. A pattern emerged in cases like these in Durham during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Although apprenticeship had always been used in Durham as a means of transferring custody of a child, an increasing number of unmarried mothers, white and black, chose to voluntarily apprentice their illegitimate babies and young children.

\textsuperscript{467} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{468} William Streeter, to Mrs. Allen, 25 Mar. 1909.
\textsuperscript{469} Mrs. Allen, to William Streeter, 27 Mar. 1909.
Apprenticeship in the form it had traditionally existed in Durham—voluntary apprenticeships for training in a trade and involuntary apprenticeships to “dispose” of orphans—had virtually ceased by the twentieth century. Similarly, the clerk no longer ordered the involuntary apprenticeship of illegitimate children. However, the clerk continued to process a number of apprenticeships every year, most of which were for very young children being apprenticed with their mother’s permission.\textsuperscript{470}

In some of the earlier examples of these types of cases, the apprenticeship bond was accompanied by a handwritten note. In some instances the note simply stated that the mother gave her permission for the child to be indentured, and often these letters were signed with an X.\textsuperscript{471} In other instances the letter provided more insight into the circumstances that compelled the mother to give up the child. The apprenticeship bond for one-year-old Nora Harris, for example, included a handwritten note from her mother: “i gave Mrs. Stone this chile i don’t mene to take it from her as long as she live i don’t i am sick.” On the back of the note was a grocery list, neatly penned using correct spelling, perhaps belonging to Mrs. Ella Mary Stone.\textsuperscript{472} The haste with which Nora Harris’s mother turned her child over to Mrs. Stone hints at her desperation.

Unmarried mothers in Durham consciously chose apprenticeship over other available options. The apprenticeship system was familiar, whereas in the 1910s the CHS and the idea of placing a child in foster care was a relatively new idea. The legal arrangements required to turn a child over the CHS could be daunting, particularly if an

\textsuperscript{470} Durham County Apprenticeship Bonds.  
\textsuperscript{471} Durham County Apprenticeship Bond for John Bass, 1896.  
\textsuperscript{472} Durham County Apprenticeship Bond, 1907.
agent of some organization had not solicited the mother in the first place. Whereas if she already knew of someone in Durham willing to take the child, a simple note of permission was all that was needed for a mother to apprentice her child. As was the case with Mrs. Harris, a mother could choose to whom she wished to give custody of her child. This arrangement, particularly if the mother had to reluctantly give up an infant, likely provided the mother with some comfort and a relative guarantee of the child’s well-being. If a mother agreed to work with the CHS, on the other hand, her child would be removed from Durham altogether and placed in a distant, unknown home. And perhaps most significantly for some women, a mother legally had the ability to cancel a voluntary apprenticeship. If in the future the mother found herself capable of providing for the child, she could approach the clerk to have the child returned to her, especially if the master had been neglectful. In this manner some women may have apprenticed babies, similar to the way in which they took older children to orphanages, so that the child would have a temporary boarding place.

By 1909, the simple handwritten notes of permission from a mother to apprentice a child for the most part no longer appeared in the clerk’s books. The clerk had instead developed an elaborate typed form letter, which the mother then signed. Hattie Winters, for instance, submitted a handwritten note saying that she released her “bastard child,” twelve-month-old Eddie Love Winters. However, Hattie also signed a typed form letter, which read in part as follows:

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473 Durham County Apprenticeship Bond for Lu Cash, 1907.
...That Ben F. Hester may rear the said Eddie Love Winters and provide for him a comfortable Christian home; and it is further expressly understood and agreed...that he is to carry out his obligation, to be good and kind to the above child, educate and raise him to be a good and useful citizen...and that should he fail to do this or fail to carry out any part of his obligation, then he is to deliver back to me the above named child, and the testimony of the neighbors shall be conclusive evidence as to whether he is fulfilling his obligation or not.\textsuperscript{474}

Although legally this agreement conformed to standard apprenticeships, the language of the contract indicated that both parties understood the arrangement to be more akin to adoption than traditional apprenticeship. Gone were the pretensions that the primary purpose of the apprenticeship was to train a child in “the art and mystery of” a trade, with the accompanying assumption of child labor. Instead, Hattie Winters hoped that Ben Hester could provide little Eddie with “a comfortable Christian home.”

Thus most unmarried mothers had the same basic goal as the maternity homes and the CHS—to rear their illegitimate child in a good Christian home, where he or she could become a productive citizen. However, some white unwed mothers rejected the maternity homes’ model of evangelical reform and redemption as a means of accomplishing this goal. Some of these women in Durham instead refused the help of the King’s Daughters and chose to raise their illegitimate children on their own. Black women, on the other hand, received no offers of help from the King’s Daughters or other white charitable organizations. If raising the child on their own proved to be an impossible task, many unmarried mothers took responsibility for finding another home for their child. Ironically, they often chose to manipulate the apprenticeship system—which a few decades earlier had been used to forcefully remove illegitimate children.

\textsuperscript{474} Durham County Apprenticeship Bond, 1909.
from their mothers—to their advantage, to select a new home for their child. Thus, in a
city with limited social services, poor unmarried mothers nevertheless made the best of
the existing public welfare system.
EPILOGUE

In April 2006, a for-sale sign appeared on the lawn in front of 204 N. Buchanan Boulevard, the King’s Daughters Home in Durham. The Sheltering Home Circle, which had operated the home for elderly women since 1911, had finally been compelled to sell the building due to financial difficulties. After nearly a century, the Old Ladies’ Home had become a city landmark. Although it had not been the circle’s first project, its longevity had caused many Durhamites to indelibly associate the King’s Daughters with the Home. The enterprise even came to dominate the circle’s own historical memory. Most of the fifty-seven pages of the official history of the Sheltering Home Circle published in 1946 described the building and maintenance of the Home; the author devoted only three sentences to the group’s early social service work.

Although the charity and rescue work conducted by the King’s Daughters consumed a great deal of their time and energy for more than a decade, the organization ceased its rescue work in the late 1910s. A series of laws passed during this time period dramatically altered the social welfare system across North Carolina, as the state assumed greater fiscal and administrative responsibility for social services. In 1917 the General Assembly, at the urging of professional social workers, overhauled the organization of the State Board of Public Charities, which it renamed the State Board of Charities and Public Welfare. The 1917 act, with additional provisions made in 1919, granted the State

476 Rochelle, History of the Sheltering Home Circle.
Board the power to inspect all county- and state-run institutions, to investigate all social service problems, and to work towards “the prevention of any hurtful social condition.”

Following an investigative study of child welfare in North Carolina published by the National Child Labor Committee, the General Assembly passed the Child Welfare Act of 1919. Through this act the state assumed guardianship over all children legally declared to be dependent, neglected, and indigent, and the legislation created new provisions for children born out of wedlock. The Child Welfare Act also implemented child-labor regulations, to be enforced by a newly created commission, that replaced the antiquated contract between master and apprentice dictated by the apprenticeship code. Lastly, the legislation established a system of Juvenile Courts throughout the state that held jurisdiction over all cases involving juvenile delinquents, as well as dependent and neglected children, stripping the county clerks and Superior Courts of their authority over such cases.

The combined effect of these laws radically altered the public welfare system in Durham. Whereas once private organizations such as the King’s Daughters had assumed responsibility for saving Durham’s “worthy” dependent and neglected children, now the county and state employed professional case workers to provide for all needy children. Despite these changes, private charities continued to flourish in Durham. In 1923 Durham finally got a child-caring institution, when the Wright Refuge opened its doors “to provide for the temporary care and study of the neglected and dependent children of

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479 Zipf, Labor of Innocents, 141-7.
Durham and Durham County, with a view to their permanent placement.” The Wright Refuge worked in cooperation with the county welfare department, representing a much closer relationship between the public and private social service systems.480

Confronted with these changed conditions, and with the city no longer having a need for its rescue services, the Sheltering Home Circle chose to concentrate almost exclusively on the Old Ladies’ Home. The Home continued to provide “worthy” elderly women with a respectable housing option. Over the decades the Home remained a visible hint of the much more complex history of the King’s Daughters’ work in Durham.

The massive changes implemented in the public welfare system in the twentieth century have to some extent obscured the longer history of private benevolence in the city. As Durham underwent a major transformation in the late nineteenth century from a small railroad depot to an industrialized city, the county’s public welfare system was quickly overwhelmed by the needs of the growing population. Relying on an older model that centered on the poorhouse as the pillar of public relief, county officials proved resistant to reform movements sweeping across the North and the Midwest. Private organizations such as the King’s Daughters recognized the shortcomings of the public system and stepped in to fill the void, providing “modern” social services to a segment of the city’s population. Thus the intervention of charities and benevolent societies spurred the county to implement some important reforms, although the public welfare system in Durham remained largely unchanged until the late 1910s.

480 First Annual Report to the Board of Trustees of Wright Refuge (Durham: n.p., 1924), 6.
During the first two decades of the twentieth century, private organizations boldly took the initiative in confronting the challenge of providing relief to the city’s destitute population. However, the way in which organizations such as the King’s Daughters chose to address these issues reveals much about both their own worldview and the reality of life for the poor. The King’s Daughters, although influenced by national trends, sought to address particular needs within the local community by finding solutions that conformed to their own social mores. The Sheltering Home Circle participated in ongoing conversations about reform methods with other chapters of the King’s Daughters across the state as well as with other organizations. Through this dialogue, the Durham circle learned of broader movements in reform and benevolence work, such as the child rescue campaign, and deduced which types of reform work would be appropriate for women of their status to advocate. Guided by this information, the King’s Daughters assessed the needs of their own community; given the abysmal condition of the poorhouse and the persistence of apprenticeship, the women decided to prioritized child rescue. They then turned to current methodological trends for models of how to conduct this reform work, and consequently the group practiced a rudimentary type of casework. However, national models of child rescue did not conform to the King’s Daughters understanding of race relations. The system of white supremacy dictated that the circle could only offer assistance to white children and women.

Undoubtedly a desire for social control played some role in spurring these upper- and middle-class women to action. Economic turmoil around the turn of the century caused large numbers of people—most of whom were poor and many of whom were
African Americans—to flock to Durham in search of work. As the traditional rural systems of social control lost their hold on these migrants, Durham’s white elite felt threatened by the resulting instability. The elite struggled to reassert the social hierarchy and find new methods to control marginal populations. This anxiety led male city officials and business leaders to search for means of controlling labor, such as creating mill villages. In upper- and middle-class white women, this same impulse often manifested itself as a desire to police morality. The King’s Daughters attempted to assert control by promoting middle-class values and by classifying these marginalized populations, sorting out those who were deemed morally worthy of receiving assistance.

The most important factor motivating the King’s Daughters, however, was a humanitarian and evangelical impulse to help those with whom they could most easily identify. These women understood the reality of a patriarchal system that made it difficult for widows and single mothers to provide for their children. The young city of Durham had been produced by rapid industrialization. These massive economic changes had created opportunities for social advancement for some people. The women who joined the King’s Daughters—the wives and daughters of social entrepreneurs, businessmen, and professionals—had reaped the benefits of industrialization. However, they recognized the precarious nature of their newly acquired status, and, as women, they realized that their social and economic status depended largely on their husbands. In addition, they sympathized with respectable women who had become the sexual victims of men. These gendered experiences prompted the King’s Daughters to reach across class lines. Hence they concentrated on rescuing needy women and children, harnessing
their maternal instincts to address a particularly female problem. At the same time, the women’s endorsement of the existing system of white supremacy caused them to offer assistance only to whites.

The limitations of the sources make it difficult to fully complicate the story of welfare and charity in Durham during this time period. The documentation left by the King’s Daughters offers only a partial, biased record of the group’s charitable activities. The group’s public statements, such as their annual reports, have a self-promotional tone, as they were designed to inform the state branch, as well as other women’s organizations, of the many accomplishments of the Sheltering Home Circle. These reports omit or minimize any difficulties (besides financial issues) that the group encountered, such as the complications they faced in legally removing a child from an undesirable situation or in convincing an unwed mother to enter a maternity home. Even in the private records, such as minutes from meetings, some things went unspoken. For instance, the King’s Daughters never addressed the issue of race, evidence of a quiet consensus on the fixed nature of the race line in Durham. The records of state and county agencies, where they exist, have similar limitations in that they provide very little specific information about the needy populations of Durham. The State Board of Public Charities’ reports on the Durham County home, for instance, offer only vague statistics about the residents of the poorhouse, placing them into reductionist categories based on race and whether or not they were considered “insane” or “feeble-minded.”

Most often the women and children who were being aided by private organizations and public agencies remain silent in these records. Frequently the life
stories of these beneficiaries and clients are reduced to a few descriptive phrases, in which they are represented as tropes—the worthy widow, the orphan on the streets, the dirty and neglected child. This raises questions about the accuracy of these stories, and whether middle-class philanthropists saw and heard only what conformed to their preconceptions. Hence the rare occasions in which the voices of the marginalized can be heard—in court documents, for instance—are all the more poignant. However, in most cases the voices of the needy women and children of Durham are lost, compelling the historian to reconstruct these voices based on the clients’ actions and other sources.

Other questions also remain unanswered. As Glenda Gilmore has shown, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, in at least some areas of the state, white women continued to seek the cooperation of black women in some municipal housekeeping projects. For instance, in Salisbury, North Carolina, white and black Civic Leagues joined forces to carry out an interracial community cleanup day.\footnote{Gilmore, \textit{Gender and Jim Crow}, 168-171.} In many southern cities, public health threats such as typhoid and tuberculosis also spurred cleanliness campaigns led by women that spread beyond white neighborhoods and into black ones.\footnote{Ibid., 168-169; Tera Hunter, \textit{To 'Joy My Freedom}, 187-218.} Gilmore has also pointed out that the rise of the charity organization movement prompted fund-raising campaigns and even poor relief efforts that reached across color lines in some North Carolina cities.\footnote{Gilmore, \textit{Gender and Jim Crow}, 171.} Hence the possibility of interracial cooperation among black and white women, at least under certain limited circumstances, persisted.
Furthermore, a model of interaction across racial lines existed in Durham itself during this time period. Despite the pervasive nature of white supremacy in the city, Durham gained a reputation as the “capital” of the black middle class in the early twentieth century. Although the majority of blacks remained at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale, a small number of African American entrepreneurs gained some level of economic and political power in Durham. The city’s white male leadership interacted with and on occasion cooperated with these black elites, as illustrated, for example, by the opening of Lincoln Hospital in 1901. John Merrick, a prominent black entrepreneur, capitalized on whites’ fears of the spread of disease by soliciting the Dukes for support of constructing a hospital for the black community. The Dukes conceded and donated $8500 for the erection of Lincoln Hospital in Hayti, but the negotiation process reveals much about interactions between the two communities. Despite their reliance on white financial resources, the city’s black businessmen and educational leaders ran the hospital, which was named after Abraham Lincoln. However, the Dukes meticulously made public their motives in donating the money. An inscribed marble tablet next to the hospital’s entrance read in part: “With grateful appreciation and loving remembrance of the fidelity and loyalty of the Negro slaves to the Mothers and Daughters of the Confederacy, during the Civil War.”484 Thus the ideology of white supremacy and paternalism pervaded such instances of white “collaboration” with the black community. Nevertheless, it is significant that Durham had an established pattern of interaction and cooperation between the male leaders of the black and white communities.

White female reformers in Durham, however, chose not to follow this model when providing social services. Although the city’s African American “better classes” supported a number of all-black women’s organizations, there is no evidence, even in non-public records such as minutes, that the King’s Daughters had any association with these groups. The King’s Daughters instead chose to reinforce a firm racial division in the city, leaving the task of providing services for Durham’s black population to the county and to African American charitable organizations.

Given this context, how can the King’s Daughters’ reluctance to cross the color line be explained? In the early years of the twentieth century, Durham remained a young city. Thirty years prior, it had existed only as an insignificant crossroads at a railroad depot. Compared with most other North Carolina cities, Durham was still in its early, formative stages of development. The newness of the city meant that social structures—including institutions such as city government as well as broader patterns of social interaction—had very shallow roots. The city’s elite consisted almost entirely of the nouveau riche, industrial capitalists and business entrepreneurs who had acquired their wealth and status within the past generation. In this environment of social instability, as the elite sought to delineate the boundaries between classes while the middle class clamored for upward mobility, status remained precarious.

White elites—both men and women—sought to demarcate their own status by assuming the burden of social uplift and participating in benevolent work. However, male industrialists viewed interracial cooperation with black leaders as imperative to the city’s economic development and hence their own interests. These interactions between
men within the context of white supremacy, part of a broader pattern of industrial paternalism, came to typify the city’s race relations. Interaction across racial lines, however, proved detrimental to the interests of middle-class white women. Women bore a greater responsibility for defining the family’s status through social interactions, and membership in a charitable organization such as the King’s Daughters played a crucial role in this process. For these women, reaching out to middle-class black women proved too risky to a venture, one which could jeopardize their insecure social standing in the white community. White women’s organizations largely ignored the possibility of cooperation with all-black women’s associations until decades later, when social relations within the city had changed significantly.485

Ultimately, the myopic view of Durham that dominates white sources such as the King’s Daughters’ minutes and county records conceals significant portions of the story. These sources reveal the worldview of middle-class women who forged new territory by crossing class lines and offering assistance to homeless white children, as well as white widows and unwed mothers, but who refused to reach out to the African American community. While acknowledging the horrific conditions in the county home, the King’s Daughters ignored the fact that the majority of poorhouse inmates were black and expressed no concern over the proximity of these black inmates, including some women and children, to prisoners in the workhouse. The circle did not acknowledge that black children also needed to be rescued, and they refused to offer assistance to African

American mothers who were unable to support their children. The King’s Daughters made no attempt to collect information specifically about blacks in need of assistance or to relay any information to African American charitable organizations. Utilizing only these white sources, the narrative of benevolence and need in Durham remains incomplete. Questions about the nature and relief of black poverty can only be answered by more thoroughly studying the benevolence and independent charitable groups orchestrated by the city’s African American community.

The empathy and compassion of the King’s Daughters and similar organizations allowed them to cross class lines and enter the world of the poor and marginalized in a way that was unprecedented in Durham. However, their own biases blinded these women to the plight of other groups—blacks, the “unworthy,” and other “undesirables”—who continued to be consigned to the county home. Under the auspices of private benevolent societies in the early twentieth century, the transformation of Durham’s social welfare system remained incomplete.
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