

## ARTICLE

To Mentor and Control: How the North Bennet Street Industrial School Became a Pioneer of Philanthropy and Americanization at the Turn of the Century

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Abstract: This study explores how Progressivism, and a belief in the benefits of “Americanizing” immigrants, affected educational institutions such as Boston’s North Bennet Industrial School at the end of the nineteenth century.

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This study seeks to explore the links that exist between industrial education, immigration, and the women's movement during the Progressive Era, using the North Bennet Street Industrial School as a case study. This school, established by wealthy, elite women in 1881, became a powerful support system for immigrant and working-class children and their families, and contributed to the education reform movement in Boston. Situated in the city's North End, the school catered to European immigrants who arrived during the late 1870s and early 1880s. This group included Italians, as well as Russian and Polish Jews. Unlike the "old immigration" immigrants who had preceded them, these new arrivals were looked upon with suspicion by native-born Americans, and, as a result, were subject to programs of assimilation.<sup>1</sup> Native-born Americans feared that the changes occurring in American society resulted from rapid industrialization and urbanization, originated abroad, and threatened the American way of life. The study will demonstrate that the school was primarily established by wealthy benefactors, middle-class teachers, and social workers. The aim was to provide educational opportunities to immigrants living in the poor conditions of the North End. However, influenced by the Progressive movement, the school became an agent of cultural transformation, while it embraced Americanization programs intended to prepare immigrants to deal with the realities of the urban industrial age.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Nativism" is derived from the "Native American" parties, such as the "Know-Nothing Party," that emerged in America during the mid-eighteenth century. In this context, "native" does not refer to Indigenous persons but to those descended from the inhabitants of the original thirteen colonies. Native-born Americans spearheaded the anti-immigration movement.

## Settlement Movement Scholarship: The Dualistic Debate

Although the North Bennet Street Industrial School (NBSIS) differed somewhat from the settlement houses that emerged in the late 1880s, scholarly debate on the settlement houses and American philanthropy during the Progressive Era interlinks with this study. The Settlement Movement arose amid great social and political uncertainty at the turn of the century. Settlement houses sought to remedy poverty in needy neighbourhoods, and provide significant support to poor immigrant communities who often spoke little English and lacked an established support system. As a result, the houses often offered recreational facilities and food, as well as basic and higher education. Historians disagree on whether or not American philanthropy was singularly benevolent. The most seminal study of the settlement movement, *Spearheads for Reform*, written by historian Allen Davis, was one of the first to acknowledge women's contribution to the movement.<sup>2</sup> Davis argues that while some settlement reformers believed that settlement houses had a responsibility to control the community that they served this idea was not shared by the majority of reformers. For Davis, the legacy of the settlement house "lay not in its teaching [...] but in its insisting that immigrants preserve the customs and traditions of the old country, assuring immigrants that it was not necessary to reject the past to become an American."<sup>3</sup> Davis's work, which drew its conclusions from sources written by the settlement leaders themselves, has been

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<sup>2</sup> Allen F. Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 5, 10-11.

<http://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t56f3h58z>

<sup>3</sup> Davis, *Spearheads for Reform*, 89.

challenged by historians who followed for its generous depiction of settlement reformers and their attitudes toward the immigrant community.<sup>4</sup> Scholars such as Walter Trattner argue that charities and settlements were used primarily to control certain populations.<sup>5</sup> Ruth Crocker attempts to neutralize this dualism by arguing that social reformers often “entered the slums with brave but contradictory purposes.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, reformers had both benevolent and controlling motives. This study intends to examine the motivations of reformers in order to confront this dualism. Focusing on one institution, the NBSIS, will allow for an interpretation of reformers’ intentions within their context.<sup>7</sup> Although the institution was established in 1882 by perhaps the most “benevolent” reformer in Boston at the time, the programs that it came to adopt indicate motivations based on “control.” Thus, this study will argue that the Progressive environment in which the institution emerged transformed the school into an establishment guided by conflicting philanthropic aims.

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<sup>4</sup> Ruth Hutchinson Crocker, *Social Work, and Social Order: The Settlement Movement in Two Industrial Cities, 1889-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 1-9. <http://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t9q31k242>

<sup>5</sup> Walter I. Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America*, 5th ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 93-98. <http://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t4sj2kz8r>

<sup>6</sup> Crocker, *Social Work, and Social Order*, 225.

<sup>7</sup> Ramsey’s work, which focuses on a singular philanthropic organization has been methodologically valuable to this study. Paul J. Ramsey, “Wrestling with Modernity: Philanthropy and the Children’s Aid Society in Progressive-Era New York City,” *New York History* vol. 88, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 153-174. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23183310>

## **Immigration and Education: The Amalgamation of Two Movements**

Before exploring the role that the NBSIS played in transforming the North End immigrant community, it is essential to contextualize the state of immigration and education at the turn of the century. As industrialization, urbanization, and, most importantly, immigration expanded in Northeastern cities, America's education system transformed drastically. Progressives believed first and foremost in education and interpreted the education system as part of the broader political and social reform of the era. Perhaps one of the most important political and social problems that the education system was used to address was immigration. Between 1880 and 1924, education was used throughout the United States — though mainly in larger eastern cities — to assimilate the “new” immigrants who arrived in the late 1870s and early 1880s.<sup>8</sup> The Progressives quickly became aware that newly arrived immigrants suffered from poorly conditioned slums, terrible working conditions, and other problems that arose as a result of rapid industrialization, overpopulation in the cities, and the economic exploitation of robber barons.<sup>9</sup> Education became a tool used to both assist and assimilate the immigrant.<sup>10</sup>

Native-born Americans perceived “new” immigrants who arrived between the 1870s and 1880s in a completely different light

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<sup>8</sup> Joel Morton Roitman, “The Progressive Movement: Education and Americanization,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1981), 18-19.

<sup>9</sup> Robber barons is a derogatory term that refers to industrial businessmen during the late 1800s whose practices were often considered unethical and exploitative.

<sup>10</sup> Roitman, “The Progressive Movement,” 1.

than the “old immigrants” who preceded them. Between 1800 and 1870, immigrants came mostly from western and northern Europe and typically had relatives already living in America, resulting in higher living standards and immigrants feeling fairly at ease in their new country.<sup>11</sup> While particular groups, such as Catholics, suffered from discrimination during this period, the nativist movement was not just opposed to certain groups, but became opposed to all immigration. As historian John Higham writes, the nativist saw immigrants “as symbolic of a generalized foreign danger” and therefore, attacked foreigners indiscriminately.<sup>12</sup>

While journalist and public figures “indiscriminately” blamed immigrants for economic depressions, low wages, poverty, and crime, respected intellectuals endeavoured to cloak anti-immigrant feeling in academic legitimacy. Intellectuals claimed to be non-partisan as they used eugenics, which they claimed was science-based, to develop their racist attitudes into “a generalized, ideological structure.”<sup>13</sup> Nativist intellectuals claimed that the “new immigrant,” typically from southern and eastern Europe, appeared identifiably different from the native-born in appearance and culture, despite there being no evidence that this was true.<sup>14</sup> Native-born Americans were warned that their “good looks” would be degraded by interbreeding with “so many persons with crooked faces, coarse

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<sup>11</sup> Roitman, “The Progressive Movement,” 2-3.

<sup>12</sup> John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, rev. ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 64.

<http://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t5mb0mr5x>

<sup>13</sup> Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 64, 133.

<sup>14</sup> Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 133.

mouths, bad noses, heavy jaws, and low foreheads.”<sup>15</sup> Although German anarchists and Slavic contractors were attacked as individuals, the xenophobes mostly interpreted their target as emblematic of foreign danger.<sup>16</sup> The immigrant was blamed for several social ills and environmental conditions that came about as a result of rapid industrialism. Journalists were quick to attack immigrants for the growth in crime rates. Factory workers often blamed immigrants for the lowering of wages. Perhaps most commonly, though, immigrants were blamed for the poor conditions of the slums. Racial nativism in this period was made up of two patterns that often interlinked. This involved, firstly, taking advantage of popular emotions, developed from a historical popular mistrust of groups distinctly different in appearance from white Americans. The other depended on systematic ideas formed by racist intellectuals and their speculations on race matters. The power of this form of racist ferment is evident in the intersection of racial attitudes with nationalistic ones. Racial nativism extended “that sense of absolute difference which already divided white Americans from people of other colors.”<sup>17</sup>

After 1900, as xenophobia increased, so too did efforts to implement immigration restrictions. Higham suggests that the strengthening of anti-immigrant xenophobia was a Progressive response to social problems and came about as an “outlet for

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<sup>15</sup> Edward Alsworth Ross, *The Old World in the New: The Significance of the Past and Present Immigration to the American People* (New York: The Century Co., 1914), 287. <http://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t53f4nd0b>

<sup>16</sup> Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 64.

<sup>17</sup> Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 132.

expectations which progressivism raised and then failed to fulfill.”<sup>18</sup> The problems of assimilation became more vivid in this period. “Native stock” appeared drastically different from the new immigrant.<sup>19</sup>

E.A. Ross, one of the leading social science scholars of his day, published one of the most influential studies of the decade. In his research, he emphasized that the “gulf between the Americans of today and the new immigrants” was wider than the “Americans of a generation ago and the old immigrants.”<sup>20</sup> According to Ross, these new immigrants had many failings. They lacked substantial mental ability, were often alcoholics, and were more violent than “old immigrants.”<sup>21</sup> The northern Italians were frauds, and southern Italians were extremely violent.<sup>22</sup> Ross’s conclusions were by no means reflections of far-right groups such as the Ku Klux Klan; they were simply that of an intellectual of the time. To ensure that the foreigner did not continue to be an economic burden to the American, Ross believed that the immigration problem could only be fixed through the process of Americanization.

Despite Ross’s interpretation, he can still be defined as a humanitarian — a distinctly Progressive trait. His understanding, however, was that humanism could be too extreme. He did not “consider humanity and forget the nation, who pity the living but not

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<sup>18</sup> Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 179.

<sup>19</sup> Roitman described how “being different, ‘he [the immigrant] was perceived as a problem — almost immediately so.” Roitman, “The Progressive Movement,” 2.

<sup>20</sup> Ross, *The Old World in the New*, 232.

<sup>21</sup> See “Lack of Mental Ability,” 113-117, “Mental and Practical Traits,” 85-92, Alcoholism, 32-33, 60-61, 72-73, 127-129, 229, Violence, 33, 98-101, 106-111, 118-119, 128-129, 136, 169-170, 175, 193, in Ross, *The Old World in the New*.

<sup>22</sup> Ross, *The Old World in the New*, 98-99.



the unborn.”<sup>23</sup> Although Ross believed that assimilation worked for some immigrants, he felt it was almost impossible for others. The “new immigrants” were so different in terms of culture and language, that it was difficult for them to adapt to “American” life.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, Ross concluded that unrestricted immigration was a danger to the American people.

Although nativists blamed the natural characteristics of certain immigrants for the failures of assimilation, they also — with a Progressive spirit that was emotionally invested in “helping” others — believed that the environment could produce positive and significant changes.<sup>25</sup> Along with the immigration problems that emerged in the late nineteenth century, prominent Progressives were concerned with the education system. Progressives examined ways to ensure that the education system was preparing students to cope with the new realities of industrialization. Influenced by the Progressives, schools that developed at the end of the nineteenth century moved away from a curriculum based on classical and liberal art classes to programs that focused on science and industrial training for the immigrant and poor classes.<sup>26</sup>

Jane Addams, a pioneering settlement activist and social worker who was particularly vocal on education reform, believed that education programs should be established in the community, and used as a form of philanthropy. In a 1904 essay she wrote that if all public schools followed the educational practice adopted by the Progressive Hull-House:

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<sup>23</sup> Ross, *The Old World in the New*, xi.

<sup>24</sup> Ross, *The Old World in the New*, 112.

<sup>25</sup> Roitman, “The Progressive Movement,” 23.

<sup>26</sup> Roitman, “The Progressive Movement,” 51-55.

We could imagine the businessman teaching the immigrant his much needed English and arithmetic and receiving in return lessons in the handling of tools and materials so that they should assume in his mind a totally different significance from that [which] the factory gives them.<sup>27</sup>

Born into a prosperous family, Addams was among the first generation of women to pursue a higher level of education, and like many of the women that emerged during this period, she dedicated her life to bettering the lives of the less fortunate. Addams's dedication to transforming America's education system grew out of her experience establishing America's first settlement house, the Hull-House in Chicago, Illinois. The Hull-House, situated in a working-class neighborhood, was designed to provide education and recreational facilities for immigrant women and children. Volunteers at the Hull-House, who were known as "residents," were mostly social reformers. The majority of them were women. Their work was often two-fold. Intent on creating a centre of modern education that could improve the lives of immigrant and working-class men and women, they established a curriculum with the aim of preparing immigrants for industrial work. During this process, the residents also closely studied the surrounding neighbourhood so that they might suggest improvements and influence social and legislative reform.<sup>28</sup> As a result, the residents not only helped to define the lives of the

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<sup>27</sup> Jane Addams, "The Humanizing Tendency of Industrial Education," *Chautauquan* vol. 39, no. 3 (May 1904): 271. <http://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t05x2r85h>

<sup>28</sup> See David A. Badillo, "Incorporating Reform and Religion," in *Pots of Promise: Mexicans and Pottery at Hull-House, 1920-40*, ed. Cheryl Ganz and Margaret Strobel (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2004), 31-54.

immigrants around them, but contributed to national and international public policy.<sup>29</sup>

John Dewey was another influential education reformer of the Progressive Era, and a frequent visitor to the Hull-House. Dewey shared Addams' philosophy regarding education. In a number of his theories about education, Dewey voiced the necessity for educators and schools to adapt to the rapidly evolving landscape of America. In 1899 he wrote:

It is radical conditions which have changed, and only an equally radical change in education suffices [...] when we turn to the school, we find that one of the most striking tendencies at present is toward the introduction of so-called manual training, shop work, and the household arts.<sup>30</sup>

Additionally, he argued that education was a social process and, therefore, the school should act as a place of social reform and a beacon of democracy. As a result, he complained that traditional, textbook based methods of education left "great gaps in [the student's] grasp for knowledge [that gave] no place to the part that action plays in the development of intelligence [and did] not develop the practical qualities which are usually weak in the abstract person."<sup>31</sup> In other

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<sup>29</sup> The residents of the Hull-House became involved in a number of social reform programs. See Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House with Autobiographical Notes* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1910), 201-202, 302-308, 323-341. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015005115111>

<sup>30</sup> John Dewey, *The School and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, (1899) 1907), 9-10. <http://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t1zd6g582>

<sup>31</sup> John Dewey and Evelyn Dewey, *Schools of To-Morrow* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, (1915) 1919), 305. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044029545449>

words, he believed that the school should provide students with the instruments to flourish in their community, and thereby positively contribute to society in general. In addition, it should act as an institution in which a social consciousness is welcomed, with the intention of creating an environment in which social reform could take place.

With a Progressive fever to transform social ills without amassing support from the government, schools became more than institutions for mentoring. The school was seen by many Progressives as an institution that could solve social and political issues believed to have stemmed from the arrival of immigrants. Education became a tool to cure all ills of the time, transforming the system into an article of Progressive faith.<sup>32</sup> In other words, the school was to act not only as “a moral agency to curb the motives of evil,” but to also enable “the state to protect itself against the dangers of ignorance and vice.”<sup>33</sup>

NBSIS was, in many ways, a product of such reform efforts. The school’s roots as a settlement house emphasized its charitable beginnings. Moreover, the school’s benefactor, Pauline Agassiz Shaw, played a large role in the implementation of an education philosophy that was modelled on that of progressive education reformers, ultimately transforming the school into a symbol of Progressive faith. As a result, the school emerged from an education movement founded on dual motivations: first, the need to prepare the younger generation for an emerging industrial society, and second to protect

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<sup>32</sup> Roitman, “The Progressive Movement,” 18.

<sup>33</sup> James Grant Wilson, *The Memorial History of the City of New York* (New York: New York History Co., 1893), 602, 612, quoted in Roitman, “The Progressive Movement,” 18-19.

and uphold American middle-class ideals against the social ills believed to be brought about by immigration. These goals, however, were interlinked with another pivotal campaign that escalated from the 1880s to 1920: the women's movement.

### **Pioneers of Reform: Women's roles in Education and Immigration Reform**

The women's movement was important to the education movement and the immigration reform movement, as well as to the development of the NBSIS. The movement emanated from the rapidly changing industrial society and the desire for reform in the late nineteenth century. For the first time, women — the majority of whom were white and middle-class — were granted educational, occupational, and professional opportunities that drove them to become social reformers.<sup>34</sup> Many of these women believed that the most effective way to implement social change was not to amass government support for reform but to transform the government through their efforts. They were often drawn to the settlement movement and education movement for two underlying reasons that stemmed from their middle-class backgrounds.

The first was a sense of obligation. As the first generation of college-educated women, many women felt that they had an obligation to prove their right to the privilege of higher education by passing their knowledge on to those less fortunate. These women left

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<sup>34</sup> Lois Rudnick, "The New Woman," in 1915, *The Cultural Moment: The New Politics, the New Woman, the New Psychology, the New Art & the New Theatre in America*, ed. Adele Heller and Lois Rudnick (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 70. <http://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t0kt6853m>

college “with a longing to know life at its barest and hardest, to grapple with cold physical facts, to stand on a common footing with those who have had no special advantages.”<sup>35</sup> Moreover, their education — often in anthropology and sociology — drew them into professional fields that they then helped shape: “social work, consumer and juvenile protection, industrial health, progressive education, and day care.”<sup>36</sup> Despite the social and economic advantages that came with their bourgeois backgrounds, these women “nonetheless identified more with labor than with capital and hoped for the elimination of exploitation by capital and the interventions of a democratically controlled state.”<sup>37</sup> Addams described the sentiment behind the settlement movement and the women’s sense of obligation in an essay titled “The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements,” writing that, “There is a heritage of noble obligation which young people accept and long to perpetuate. The desire for action, the wish to right wrongs, and alleviate suffering haunts them daily.”<sup>38</sup>

The second reason was more closely related to cultural pressures. Middle-class Progressive women were expected to conform to Victorian-era social constructs that forced onto them “the guardianship of American morals and manners.”<sup>39</sup> These women were also influenced by the Protestant social gospel movement that argued, “Christianity has to be revealed and embodied in the line of

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<sup>35</sup> Mary B. Sayles, “The Work of a Woman Tenement-House Inspector,” *Outlook* vol. 75, no. 2 (12 September 1903): 121.

<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.32101075972347>

<sup>36</sup> Rudnick, “The New Woman,” 71.

<sup>37</sup> Rudnick, “The New Woman,” 71.

<sup>38</sup> Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, 118.

<sup>39</sup> Rudnick, “The New Woman,” 74.

social progress.”<sup>40</sup> As many upper and middle-class women believed that they possessed an inherent morality and regarded it as essential to live up to such cultural expectations, they also considered it necessary to pass on these societal standards to others. Many female reformers, “spurred by the revolt against the ‘harsh pedagogy’ of the existing schools and by the ferment of change and new thought in the first two decades of the twentieth century,” established Progressive educational institutions.<sup>41</sup> According to historians Alan Sadovnik and Susan Semel, the “distinct philosophy and practice of each school” were contingent on the “particular vision of its founder.”<sup>42</sup>

### **North Bennet Street Industrial School and its “Founding Mother”**

The NBSIS, established in June 1881, grew out of a benevolent institution known as the North Bennet Street Industrial Home. This settlement house, was founded in 1879 and run by volunteers from the Associated Charities, which worked with recent immigrants in the North End. The school, therefore, acted in some ways as an additional program of an already established organization. The individual responsible for founding the school was Pauline Agassiz Shaw. Born in Switzerland on February 6, 1841, Shaw moved to the United States in 1850 when her father, Louis Agassiz, became a professor at Harvard University. Shaw’s step-mother, Elizabeth

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<sup>40</sup> Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, 122.

<sup>41</sup> Otto F. Kraushaar, *American Nonpublic Schools: Patterns of Diversity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 81.

<sup>42</sup> Alan R. Sadovnik and Susan F. Semel, “Introduction,” in *Founding Mothers and Others: Women Educational Leaders During the Progressive Era*, ed. Alan R. Sadovnik and Susan F. Semel (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 1.

Cabot Cary, was involved in the founding of Harvard's Radcliffe College for women in 1879, and later became its president. The influence of her parents' involvement in education resulted, as one friend later remembered, in Shaw working to develop "in public and private schools the kind of teaching which she had seen her father give."<sup>43</sup>

Although her family was prominent in Boston's upper-class society, Shaw's wealth dramatically increased when she married Quincy Adams Shaw, a successful businessman in the copper mining industry. Pauline Shaw used her new financial resources "not for any purpose of private luxury but altogether for purposes of public usefulness and beneficence."<sup>44</sup> Although she put money into various charitable endeavors, most of her support went toward educational institutions. Championed as the "angel to [the] poor children of Boston," Shaw established some of the first kindergartens and nurseries for them in the United States.<sup>45</sup> After seeing the benefits of Shaw's generous funding of kindergartens over a period of ten years, the Boston's school board recognized their value and decided to include kindergartens in the public school system.<sup>46</sup> Like other educated women of her generation, Shaw felt that her standing and wealth as obliged her to help those who she witnessed suffering, and Boston's North End was certainly a suitable location for Shaw to apply her philanthropic spirit.

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<sup>43</sup> *Pauline Agassiz Shaw: Tributes Paid in Her Memory* [...] (Boston: Privately Printed, 1917), 30. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t8qb9xx90>

<sup>44</sup> *Pauline Agassiz Shaw: Tributes*, 29.

<sup>45</sup> "Angel to Poor Children of Boston," *Boston Globe*, 14 May 1905, 59.

<sup>46</sup> "Angel to Poor Children of Boston," *Boston Globe*, 14 May 1905, 59.



Once a center of Boston's commercial and intellectual activity, and later home to a homogeneous Irish community, by the late nineteenth century the North End had become a poor and densely populated home to unskilled laborers from Italy, Russia, and Germany.<sup>47</sup> Like many industrial cities on the East Coast, the conditions immigrants were expected to live in were extremely harsh. A story published in the *Boston Globe* describes the North End as having "the odor of decaying vegetables and other filth."<sup>48</sup> The author goes on to describe how, due to overcrowding and a lack of ventilation, immigrants who lived in the area were "driven out upon the streets and crouch in the doorways or against the brick walls, upon the shady side of the street [...] even the children, who die like flies in this section of the city, are listless from the heat."<sup>49</sup> Another newspaper wrote that the overcrowded North End tenement houses were a "serious menace to public health."<sup>50</sup> While many Progressives viewed such conditions as justification for the implementation of further immigration restrictions, others saw the environment as an opportunity for reform.

Prominent members of the community, such as Unitarian Clergyman, Reverend Christopher R. Eliot, defended the Italian population, arguing that "they welcome education [...] and seek it for their children. Herein lies our safety. They are a docile people. Passionate, but not lawless; ignorant, but not unintelligent; superstitious, but not immoral." Importantly, Eliot concludes that

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<sup>47</sup> Linda C. Morice, *Flora White: In the Vanguard of Gender Equity* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), 105.

<sup>48</sup> W. Bert Foster, "Counter Currents," *Boston Globe*, 3 December 1898, 8.

<sup>49</sup> Foster, "Counter Currents," 8.

<sup>50</sup> "Clean Slums," *Boston Post*, 21 June 1895, 2.

“they are capable of becoming good citizens.” In his opinion, the “danger lies in our not doing all that is possible to protect them from their own ignorance and inexperience.”<sup>51</sup> Between 1880 and 1920, Progressive reformers, like Shaw, flooded into the North End seeking to not only improve the conditions of the slums but to do as Eliot suggests: to teach the immigrants the values of American citizenship as a means of ensuring that they adapted to American society. It is important to note that this sentiment represents the kind of class and ethnic condescension assumed by some, though not all, reformers.

Shaw did not believe that the immigrants were to blame for the conditions that surrounded them. After her death, she was described as having disliked the word “foreigner,” which she found “repugnant to [her] democratic instincts.”<sup>52</sup> She clearly felt, as Eliot did, that the North End’s community and condition could be improved by teaching good citizenship to immigrant children. In other words, as one individual wrote, Shaw held that “the cause of good government and patriotism is halting because the rear detachments of our citizenship are not brought forward into the contest.”<sup>53</sup> She therefore applied her philanthropic ambitions to educating children at the NBSIS in American citizenship and democracy, transforming the school into a pioneer in this field of Americanization.

The vision of Shaw and the NBSIS’s other founding members — who were nearly all women — can be discerned from the changes that occurred once they had full control over the building that housed the school. The NBSIS originally took the building on a three-year

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<sup>51</sup> “Are the Italians a Menace?” *Boston Globe*, 26 April 1896, 28.

<sup>52</sup> *Pauline Agassiz Shaw: Tributes*, 80.

<sup>53</sup> *Pauline Agassiz Shaw: Tributes*, 78.

lease, purchasing it in 1885.<sup>54</sup> During the lease, the school taught a few manual education classes as it adopted the charitable programs of the North Bennet Street Industrial Home. These programs included an industrial home, sewing-rooms, a cooking school, a day nursery, and a kindergarten.<sup>55</sup> Upon the creation of a new Board of Managers in 1885 — which included Shaw and other female members of Boston's upper-class, such as Harriet Hemenway, the socialite who founded the Massachusetts Audubon Society — the school began to “emphasize the matter of industrial and manual training, and they soon eliminated some of the purely charitable features of the earlier work.”<sup>56</sup> The school's Annual Report proudly boasts that for the “first time in the history of education in Boston, manual training was systematically and scientifically directed toward its legitimate objects.”<sup>57</sup> This statement shows that the school placed the practical and social motives of its establishment higher regard than its pedagogical or strictly educational ones.

The Report emphasized the necessity of this shift by voicing its concerns about the rapidly shifting population in the North End and explaining that its mission was to “instruct this alien procession in the best American ideals, and to hold steadily before the young high standards of skill, taste, and citizenship.”<sup>58</sup> One scholar studying the

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<sup>54</sup> Annual Report for the Year 1904-1905, *The Work of the North Bennet Street Industrial School, 1881-1906*, Gutman Education Library Special Collections, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States, 4.

<sup>55</sup> Annual Report for the Year 1881-1887, *The Work of the North Bennet Street Industrial School, 1881-1906*, Gutman Education Library Special Collections, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States, 2.

<sup>56</sup> Annual Report for the Year 1904-1905, 3.

<sup>57</sup> Annual Report for the Year 1904-1905, 3.

<sup>58</sup> Annual Report for the Year 1904-1905, 5.

North End at the turn of the century praised the school for its “flexibility, its power of quick adaption, [and its ability] to change its methods as its environment may demand.”<sup>59</sup> While the school expanded to offer a number of interesting programs, this study will focus on three and assess the extent to which the school’s efforts were philanthropic or directed by a desire to control and shape the immigrant population in a certain way.

### **Sloyd Training School**

Shaw introduced the Sloyd training method to the North Bennet Street Industrial School in 1888. This method was proposed by Otto Salomon, a Swedish educator and writer, in 1894. It was designed to “secure the constant and proportionate development of mind and body.”<sup>60</sup> The North Bennet Industrial School explained that the “aim of Sloyd is to train hand, eye, and brain, and to stimulate the moral sense by teaching the use of tools, a nicety in measurements, and strong feeling for order.”<sup>61</sup> By teaching a structured program involving tool processes and construction methods, the school believed that the Sloyd method helped students prepare for their futures, not only physically but mentally.<sup>62</sup> In other words, Sloyd educators were certain that this teaching method ensured that students developed marketable skills that relied on manual dexterity

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<sup>59</sup> T.S. Rockwell, “North End Settlements and the Foreigner,” (Unpublished essay, Harvard College, 1912), 5. [http://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:3847745\\$1i](http://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:3847745$1i)

<sup>60</sup> Theodore F. Chapin, “The Educational Value of Manual Training,” *Charities Review* vol. 6 (March-August 1897): 337.

<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.32101068339462>

<sup>61</sup> Annual Report for the Year 1904-1905, 6.

<sup>62</sup> Annual Report for the Year 1904-1905, 6.

and fitness while they simultaneously developed their mental abilities.

Shaw appointed Gustaf Larsson as director of the Sloyd Training School in 1890. Larsson emigrated from Sweden in 1888 with the intention of promoting the Sloyd method in industrial America and adapting it to meet the needs of American pupils.<sup>63</sup> He came into contact with Shaw during his visit and was impressed by her promotion of the principles of Foebel's education theory in her kindergartens, as well as her knowledge of Sloyd training.<sup>64</sup> Larsson remained director of the training school, working continuously to modify the Sloyd system to meet the needs of American school children, until his death in 1919. The teaching of Sloyd, Larsson wrote, encouraged "manual training for the sake of general development, physical, mental, and moral" by promoting the "kind of hand-work which will best stimulate the right kind of head-work."<sup>65</sup> Bertha Johnston, editor of *Kindergarten Primary Magazine*, pointed out that Larsson distinguished the Swedish variant of Sloyd taught at the North Bennet school from Finnish and Russian training methods. Johnston agrees that Sloyd "was superior" and quotes an article written by Larsson in which he argues that "the Swedish system [...] is based upon the Froebelian idea of the harmonious development of all powers of the child, tools, and exercises being chosen with

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<sup>63</sup> Morice, *Flora White*, 103-104.

<sup>64</sup> *Pauline Agassiz Shaw: Tributes*, 43-44.

<sup>65</sup> Gustaf Larsson, *Sloyd* (Boston: Sloyd Training School, 1902), 20.  
<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t3320b29m>

reference to this end, and all merely mechanical methods being carefully avoided.”<sup>66</sup>

While the Sloyd Training School became an important addition to help the teaching at NBSIS meet the demands of the industrial era, it was also considered valuable to the school because it encouraged the immigrant: “to require and promote orderliness and exactness”; “to develop cleanliness and neatness”; and “to provide an opportunity to exercise and develop the sense of form.”<sup>67</sup> These elements made up the “mental” teachings of Sloyd. Progressive reformers, such as Shaw, came to believe that the practicality of Sloyd contributed heavily to the healthy development of a child’s morality, which helped create “good American citizenship.” Given the lack of faith that existing government structures could produce moral Americans, it was hoped that new, Progressive programs like that of Sloyd that taught self-restraint and discipline could instill morality in the common citizen. As Larsson wrote in 1902:

the moral effect of manual training is often apparent in the child’s behavior and in his respect for his skillful schoolmates [...] he loves good work, likes to be useful, prefers occupation to idleness; and thus the germs of good citizenship are planted at the time most favorable to growth and development.<sup>68</sup>

As one editor observed, teaching immigrant children practical skills provided an “opportunity to catch the little Russian, the little Italian,

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<sup>66</sup> Bertha Johnston, “Manual Training Up to Date,” *Kindergarten Primary Magazine* vol. 20 (September 1907 – June 1908): 99. <http://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t7hq4st69>

<sup>67</sup> Annual Report for the Year 1888-1889, *The Work of the North Bennet Street Industrial School, 1881-1906*, Gutman Education Library Special Collections, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States, 5.

<sup>68</sup> Larsson, *Sloyd*, 13.

the little German, Pole, Syrian, and the rest and being to make good American citizens of them.”<sup>69</sup>

The adoption of the practices of Sloyd education at the Industrial School adds an interesting layer to the analysis of the extent to which the school pursued practices of Americanization. It is clear that Shaw believed in the effectiveness of Sloyd training for ensuring that the immigrant was ready for the industrial workforce, regardless of whether the mind of the student was Americanized. The educational program that Larsson describes focused on the mental and moral growth of the student and allowed the school to mold students into American citizens.

### **Military Drill**

A program of military drill was established at the NBSIS in 1885 when the Board of Managers began replacing the school’s purely charitable features with programs that were considered more practical for reforming the North End. The NBSIS, echoing the objectives of the Sloyd program, argued that physical activity helped develop both the child’s mental ability and their moral sensibility. This was believed to be particularly necessary for the North End due to the high crime rates among young boys in the area — often prompted by ethnic disputes. One scholar argued that the boys “were at one time or another pickpockets and thieves until they came in touch with [the school].”<sup>70</sup> The NBSIS characterized military drill as the “best thing that can be done for the rough boys, who gather on

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<sup>69</sup> Addresses and Proceedings, *National Education Association of the United States 1866-69*, Vol 42, Boston: Massachusetts, 1903, 390.

<sup>70</sup> Rockwell, “North End Settlements,” 21.

our street corners every evening.”<sup>71</sup> Military drill was intended to teach these boys discipline and provide a moral compass that was otherwise lacking in their life. The school aimed to “transform undisciplined boys into erect young fellows with quite a soldierly bearing, attentive, quick to obey, eager to learn.”<sup>72</sup>

The NBSIS was not the only institution to incorporate military drill into its curriculum. In fact, it became a popular program in a number of schools across America. The programs were relatively similar in what they taught. Patriotism and good citizenship, including daily routines such as a pledge of allegiance to the flag, were at the forefront of the lessons. What is striking is the difference in the rhetoric used by reformers when discussing the implementation of the military drill in schools for immigrants as compared to schools for Anglo-Americans.

The military drill was considered a significant contribution to the continued strength of the Anglo-American race in white schools. Educators vouched for this form of education as a way to strengthen the moral center of boys through “general order and discipline” techniques and, at the same time, “develop the muscular system, quicken the circulation, and arouse those physical energies” in children.<sup>73</sup> Many believed it was even a helpful program for the upper-classes due to their “impractical fashions, overindulgent lifestyles, and mania for nightlife [that had] abused their bodies, a

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<sup>71</sup> Annual Report for the Year 1888-1889, 22.

<sup>72</sup> Annual Report for the Year 1888-1889, 22.

<sup>73</sup> “Military Education,” *New York Times*, 9 March 1862, 6.



voluntary physical neglect tantamount to sin.”<sup>74</sup> It was the Progressive’s goal to ensure that a moral society remained intact and was not diminished by the immoral effects of industrialism. John D. Philbrick, Boston’s School Superintendent, wrote that the “Anglo-American race in the United States [was] the model race — the highest specimen of humanity yet known,” but warned that a great proportion of society lacked “a sound mind in a sound body.”<sup>75</sup> As a result, reformers did not view the military drill in Anglo-American schools as completely essential to the development of the boy’s moral obedience but instead as a subsidiary tool to ensure that the strength of the Anglo-American race remained intact.

In contrast, the Progressive reformers’ rhetoric toward advocating the implementation of the drill in immigrant schools focused on the program’s function as a tool to mold immigrant children into subjects of “good citizenship” and “patriotic thought.”<sup>76</sup> One reformer wrote: “It is believed that no other system of physical training affords superior advantages...than the military drill...it forms habits of obedience the most prompt and exact, and thus greatly aids in giving to the moral nature its rightful and just control.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Peter J. Wosh, “Sound Minds and Unsound Bodies: Massachusetts Schools and Mandatory Physical Training,” *New England Quarterly* vol. 55, no. 1 (March 1982): 40. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/365702>

<sup>75</sup> John D. Philbrick, quoted in Wosh, “Sound Minds and Unsound Bodies,” 45; John D. Philbrick, “Report,” in *Semi-Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Boston* (Boston: Geo. C. Rand & Avery, 1860), 7. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/chi.59730133>

<sup>76</sup> John D. Philbrick, quoted in Wosh, “Sound Minds and Unsound Bodies,” 45; Philbrick, “Report,” 7.

<sup>77</sup> Joseph White, quoted in Wosh, “Sound Minds and Unsound Bodies,” 52.

Women were major advocates for the implementation of the military drill in schools. Consistent with values held by middle and upper-class Progressive women, reformers believed that the drill was particularly useful in transforming immigrant children into morally oriented beings. In other words, transforming them into individuals compatible with America's middle-class values. The Women's Relief Corps (WRC), the auxiliary to the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), was particularly essential to the implementation of military drills in American schools. Although much of the Corps' work involved promoting militarism in Anglo-American schools, it recognized military education as a beneficial form of Americanization. The GAR devised a number of programs designed to reach immigrant students with hopes of instilling in them American patriotic values. Historian Cecilia O'Leary argues that the "GAR made special efforts to reach immigrant students, convinced that military instruction would bind the children to their new country and its institutions."<sup>78</sup> Women of the WRC, due to their mistrust of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, believed that these immigrants were opposed to the American government. The women understood that it was unlikely for immigrants to learn American core values in their homes and, therefore, saw school as a beacon of transformation for the younger generation immigrants.<sup>79</sup>

The rhetoric used by the NBSIS was consistent with that of other reformers. One volunteer remembered the strict rules that immigrant students were forced to follow at the school. They were

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<sup>78</sup> Cecilia O'Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1999), 183.

<sup>79</sup> O'Leary, *To Die For*, 97.

not allowed to “get excited, chew gum, spit, swear, cheat or talk Italian.”<sup>80</sup> For reformers who blamed the North End’s sanitary conditions and crime rates on the immigrant population, the military drill was revolutionary as it reinforced American middle-class morals and manners. The teachings of citizenship in this program were consistent with the work of Reverend Eliot and other reformers based in the North End. The NBSIS praised the military drill for its capacity to transform children who possessed a “vulgar bravado” and were “lawless follies” into “details of quiet, decent, straight youths.”<sup>81</sup> Not only did these children learn “habits of order, neatness, punctuality, honesty, gentler ways of speaking and acting,” but they were assimilated into American society — and their families were expected to benefit from their example.<sup>82</sup> Unlike the Sloyd Training School, there was no intention for the military drill to help ensure the young immigrant boy secured a job in the industrial economy. Instead, the program was established to ensure that the immigrant behaved in a way that American society deemed acceptable.

### **Saturday Evening Girls’ Club**

The Saturday Evening Girls’ Club, established by the school in 1899, was an agent of socialization in the North End Community. The purpose of the club was to give young, poor Italian girls access

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<sup>80</sup> Eric C. Schneider, *In the Web of Class: Delinquents and Reformers in Boston, 1810s-1930s* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 135.

<http://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t9p34j629>

<sup>81</sup> Annual Report for the Year 1888-1889, 22.

<sup>82</sup> Annual Report for the Year 1897-1898, *The Work of the North Bennet Street Industrial School, 1881-1906*, Gutman Education Library Special Collections, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States, 11.

to educational and cultural resources through a library club program.<sup>83</sup> The young women met on Saturdays to accommodate those who worked during the week. The club offered members a platform to engage in intellectual conversation as well as courses on literature, music, art, and social and economic problems.<sup>84</sup> The club grew out of the expansion of the school's library and reading rooms. Before the expansion, the club focused on teaching cooking, sewing, and other domestic skills. With access to around 600 volumes of juvenile works in the Girls Library, the club created an alternative atmosphere — outside of the sewing and various domestic circles — where intellectual conversation flourished.<sup>85</sup> Thus, the Saturday Evening Girls' Club stood out from the other clubs by providing young women with an educational program dedicated to the intellectual life of women. The group also performed plays and concerts, visited places of historical interest, and held theatre parties and dances.<sup>86</sup>

The girls' club was established by three women in particular: Edith Guerrier, Edith Brown, and Helen Storrow. These three women expanded the club to include 250 members by 1914 and even published a newspaper, *S.E.G. News*.<sup>87</sup> Essential to the group's running was the financial support offered by Helen Storrow, a prominent upper-class philanthropist who had joined the NBSIS's Board of

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<sup>83</sup> Annual Report for the Year 1904-1905, 14.

<sup>84</sup> Edith Guerrier, "A Brief Survey of the L.C.H. Groups," *S.E.G. News* vol. 3, no. 1 (14 November 1914): 5. <http://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t72v3w217>

<sup>85</sup> Guerrier, "A Brief Survey of the L.C.H. Groups," 5.

<sup>86</sup> Guerrier, "A Brief Survey of the L.C.H. Groups," 5.

<sup>87</sup> Guerrier, "A Brief Survey of the L.C.H. Groups," 5; Fanny Goldstein, "The Story of the S.E.G. in Storytelling," *S.E.G. News* vol. 3, no. 7 (8 May 1915): 3. <http://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t72v3w217>

Managers in 1898. Storrow, who was married to a wealthy Brahmin lawyer, James Jackson Storrow Jr., came from a long line of liberal reformers. Like Shaw, she was financially secure and dedicated her life to reform and charitable efforts. Edith Guerrier and Edith Brown met while enrolled in an evening course at the Museum School of Boston's Museum of Fine Arts and became lifelong partners. According to The History Project's *Improper Bostonians: Lesbian and Gay History from the Puritans to Playland*, Guerrier secured a position in the nursery at the NBSIS in 1892, while Brown "taught drawing at North Bennet Street and in 1908 became director of the pottery studio."<sup>88</sup>

After the NBSIS's Board of Managers was established in 1885, newly graduated college professionals replaced volunteers at the school. Guerrier and Brown were part of this new generation and their middle and upper-class backgrounds shaped the kinds of programs in which they introduced to the club. The women worked to ensure that the club promoted white Protestant middle-class values. The *S.E.G. News* reprinted an unattributed quotation which argued that democracy did not solely "depend on ballot boxes or franchise laws or constitutional machinery. These [were] but its trappings."<sup>89</sup> Instead, democracy was a "spirit, and an atmosphere, and its essence is trust in the moral instinct of people."<sup>90</sup> Many reformers believed that such a "moral instinct" was not apparent in the immigrant body and therefore needed to be taught. The editor of

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<sup>88</sup> History Project, *Improper Bostonians: Lesbian and Gay History from the Puritans to Playland* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 79. <http://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t1qg2mq7d>

<sup>89</sup> *S.E.G. News* vol. 4, no. 1 (13 November 1915): 11.

<http://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t72v3w217>

<sup>90</sup> *S.E.G. News* vol. 4, no. 1 (13 November 1915): 11.

the *S.E.G. News*, Fanny Goldstein, wrote that “the ideal of American womanhood which you good friends have helped to place before us, we, the S.E.G., will aim to exemplify by our living, and to pass the ideal on to others.”<sup>91</sup> By adopting the values of American womanhood taught by the club, the young women strove “to be better friends, better daughters, better wives, better mothers; and always pure and simple women.”<sup>92</sup>

Because many immigrant families in the North End relied on the young women in the family to contribute to the family income, reformers recognized that young women missed out on many educational opportunities. Historian Kate Clifford Larson argues that, due to this financial pressure, “the threat of prostitution and entrapment in white slavery was real for some vulnerable, single, poor, and immigrant women.”<sup>93</sup> For many middle-class reformers, this translated into the need to teach immigrant women the value of morality and the need to be physically protected. In the same way that the NBSIS felt a responsibility to ensure that morality was taught to young immigrant boys, the club believed it had a “deep responsibility” to “promote [its] moral and intellectual ideals” to immigrant women to ensure that “a big city like Boston is [...] kind.”<sup>94</sup> They found it “astonishing to see how rapidly the immigrant learns the English

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<sup>91</sup> Fanny Goldstein, “The Voice of Appreciation,” *S.E.G. News* vol. 3, no. 2 (12 December 1914): 2. <http://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t72v3w217>

<sup>92</sup> Goldstein, “The Voice of Appreciation,” 2.

<sup>93</sup> Kate Clifford Larson, “The Saturday Evening Girls: A Progressive Era Library Club and the Intellectual Life of working Class and Immigrant Girls in Turn-of-the-Century Boston,” *Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* vol. 71, no. 2 (April 2001): 208. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4309506>

<sup>94</sup> Maurice M. Shore, “Our Attitude Towards the Immigrant,” *S.E.G. News* vol. 4, no. 4 (12 February 1916): 10. <http://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t72v3w217>

language and adapts [...] to the ways of this country.”<sup>95</sup> Quite clearly, these reformers sincerely believed that they were saving the immigrant from being “sneered and ridiculed” by teaching them American morals.<sup>96</sup>

A long-lasting contribution that the Saturday Evening Girls’ Club has made to our understanding of the era is the glimpse it offers into the opinions of the immigrant members themselves. The majority of members speak to the club’s success. In an interview with the *Boston Globe*, Barbara Maysles Kramer recalled the impact that the club had on her mother, who was the first of her family to go to college. Originally from Russia, Kramer’s grandparents arrived in Boston in 1895 and lived on Salem Street in the North End. Kramer described how, “like many of the Saturday Evening Girls, [her mother] became a teacher.”<sup>97</sup> More importantly, however, she notes that, “it was not only determination for education that influenced members of the group. Like others, [my mother] stood straight and tall. And because they learned as girls to understand the social system, as women, they knew how to help others to get things done.”<sup>98</sup> Kramer did not describe these acts of assimilation in a negative light. Instead, she believed that “it gave [my mother] an education in the broadest sense...a knowledge of art, literature, acting, singing, and dancing. It gave her grace [and] taught her to be selfless.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Shore, “Our Attitude Towards the Immigrant,” 10.

<sup>96</sup> Shore, “Our Attitude Towards the Immigrant,” 10.

<sup>97</sup> Jean Dietz, “Extending the bond of the Saturday Evening Girls,” *Boston Globe*, 12 May 1991, B12.

<sup>98</sup> Dietz, “Extending the bond,” B12.

<sup>99</sup> Dietz, “Extending the bond,” B12.

Another successful member of the club was a Russian immigrant, Fanny Goldstein, who, in 1922 became the director of the West End branch of the Boston Public Library, making history as the first Jew to direct a public literary branch in Boston.<sup>100</sup> In a 1914 editorial in the *S.E.G. News*, Goldstein wrote of her appreciation for the club, stating that “our hearts overflow with the highest type of love for, and gratitude to, those kind friends who have afforded us so many wonderful opportunities and pleasures in the past, and which we have all most democratically shared.”<sup>101</sup> Goldstein also makes it clear that immigrant women involved in the school and the club were well aware of the assimilationist agenda pursued by both. She writes that “we have throughout the process of American assimilation, retained our originality and racial traditions, and helped to maintain and to prosper the integrity of our homes.”<sup>102</sup> Goldstein indicates that while the school was perhaps not worried about the damaging aspects of Americanization, the immigrants themselves were and made an effort not to abandon their cultural heritage. At the same time, however, Goldstein seems to take pride in the fact that she and other members of the group “[grew] from foreign little girls into American young women.”<sup>103</sup> So while these girls may have tried hard to keep intact elements of their heritage, they willingly — guided by the programs offered at the school — gave up parts of their cultural identity in order to assimilate.

It is unclear from either the school’s, or the club’s, reports how parents responded to the schools assimilating programs. Although

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<sup>100</sup> Larson, “The Saturday Evening Girls,” 221.

<sup>101</sup> Goldstein, “The Voice of Appreciation,” 1.

<sup>102</sup> Goldstein, “The Voice of Appreciation,” 2.

<sup>103</sup> Goldstein, “The Voice of Appreciation,” 2.



the *S.E.G. News* published articles written by club members, it is unlikely that it would have given parents the opportunity to voice any misgivings. Nevertheless, some editorials speak to the tone of what some parents may have been feeling. Writing in 1916, Goldstein describes the “tragic gap [that existed] between the first and second generation [of immigrants]” and asserts that this was the “high price of assimilation.”<sup>104</sup>

Despite this, most articles in the *S.E.G. News* spoke of the assimilation process positively and as a necessary component for the immigrant’s success in America. Rose Casassa wrote that “the Italian mothers and fathers who come here seldom change their ideas of life or their ways of living.”<sup>105</sup> While immigrant parents “[did] not venture boldly forth into the world,” many ensured that their children received further education through the club and “applied themselves very diligently to the studies for which they seemed best fitted with the result that they are an excellent example of American assimilation and progress.”<sup>106</sup>

Historian Kate Larson, who conducted interviews with descendants of the club in the 1990s, would argue, however, that this is not an accurate perception of the majority of immigrant parents. Larson suggests that there was clear resistance from parents who feared the process of Americanization for their daughters as a threat to their cultural and religious traditions. This was especially true for women, who traditionally remained in the control of their families

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<sup>104</sup> Fanny Goldstein, “Editorial,” *S.E.G. News* vol. 4, no. 3 (8 January 1916): 2. <http://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t72v3w217>

<sup>105</sup> Rose Casassa, “Immigration: The Italian Family,” *S.E.G. News* vol. 4, no. 2 (11 December 1915), 6. <http://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t72v3w217>

<sup>106</sup> Casassa, “Immigration: The Italian Family,” 6, 7.

until they married. One daughter described how many of the girls had to hide their books from their parents, who tried to prevent them from visiting the school.<sup>107</sup> Another woman, Dora Cohen, spoke of having to sneak out of her house on Friday evenings so that she could attend the Friday Evening Girls' Club, "a junior group of the Saturday Evening Girls' Club."<sup>108</sup> "I had to be one step ahead of my father to get out on the Sabbath," she remembered, "but to me, it was worth it."<sup>109</sup>

## Conclusion

Shaw's philanthropic perspective is expressed in a statement she wrote to her children in 1913: "I had too much. You will have too much — and it will require great effort, with God's help, to determine 'to give' rather than 'to hold,' and to think deeply as you spend to spread for progress and welfare rather than for 'pleasure.'"<sup>110</sup> Shaw spent an "aggregate expense per year" to ensure that others less fortunate than her were given the opportunities she felt they deserved.<sup>111</sup> The NBSIS was an outgrowth of Shaw's philanthropic efforts, and much of her work was a "labor of love."<sup>112</sup> In the same way that Storrow invested her money into the Saturday Evening Girls' Club, and Guerrier and Brown dedicated their time and lives to the cause.

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<sup>107</sup> Larson, "The Saturday Evening Girls," 209.

<sup>108</sup> Larson, "The Saturday Evening Girls," 195.

<sup>109</sup> Larson, "The Saturday Evening Girls," 196.

<sup>110</sup> Morice, *Flora White*, 103.

<sup>111</sup> "Angel to Poor Children of Boston," *Boston Globe*, 14 May 1905, 59.

<sup>112</sup> "Angel to Poor Children of Boston," *Boston Globe*, 14 May 1905, 59.

These women, however, were also a product of their era. They clearly had some fears about the state of immigration and the poor living conditions that they witnessed in the North End. More importantly, they believed in the power of American citizenship and that its teaching was what was needed for the immigrant to succeed in American society.<sup>113</sup> For Shaw, education was the most powerful tool to prepare the immigrant for the “highest citizenship,” even if it came at the cost of maintaining the immigrant’s culture.<sup>114</sup>

The three programs adopted at the school, the Sloyd Training School, the Military Drill, and the Saturday Evening Girls’ Club, emerged despite a social and political climate that did not value the education of the immigrant or the working-class populations. By attending and graduating from such programs, immigrants were challenging late nineteenth-century characterizations that depicted them as intellectually flawed. Although the NBSIS provided industrial training for immigrants to go into factory work, the training allowed them to enter the workforce at a higher level. In the same way, young women who attended the Saturday Evening Girls’ Club defied American society’s low expectations of them by suggesting that they wanted more from life than to work in a factory or become a domestic homemaker or housemaid.

However, this is not to say that these reformers saw the immigrants as equals. The benefactors and middle-class teachers viewed immigrants as people who needed to be taught morals and skills in order to improve American society as a whole. They clearly believed that by teaching the ideals of American morals and culture,

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<sup>113</sup> *Pauline Agassiz Shaw: Tributes*, 78.

<sup>114</sup> *Pauline Agassiz Shaw: Tributes*, 48.

they were providing immigrants with the opportunity to make an honest living. From all three programs highlighted above, it is clear that no effort was made to avoid stripping immigrants of their ethnicity, including their language and religion. Instead, the programs were implemented to teach the immigrants useful skills to succeed in American society by completely transforming them into American citizens.

In many ways, then, the reformers at the school acted with similar intentions to the reformers in the settlement houses and carried out their reform efforts “with brave but contradictory purposes.”<sup>115</sup> The reformers clearly dedicated much of their wealth, time, and lives to help and to mentor immigrant children at the school. They wanted immigrants to succeed as best they could and guide them away from the terrible conditions of the North End slums. At the same time, however, the reformers used this mentorship to control and shape the immigrant community that they served. Reformist programs were based on the belief that the immigrant needed moral and mental enrichment. Thus, the benevolent nature of these reformers, who wished to ensure that the immigrant was prepared not only for the realities of industrial work but for American adult life, was undermined by a belief in the need to assimilate the immigrant into American culture.

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<sup>115</sup> Crocker, *Social Work, and Social Order*, 225.

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