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Jane Addams and Charity Organization in Chicago

Erik Schneiderhan¹

Jane Addams has been studied almost to exhaustion. Scores of articles and dissertations attest to the importance of her place in American history and society. Her papers, as well as any documents linked to her, however tenuously, were catalogued as part of the Jane Addams Papers Project and are on microfilm at universities across the world. In the past three years alone, two excellent and substantial biographies of Addams² have been published. It seems reasonable to conclude that in the realm of Addams scholarship, the celebrated words in Ecclesiastes ring true: “There is nothing new under the sun.” Or is there? This article presents some surprising new evidence of Addams’s significant involvement in the early stages of charity organization development in Chicago during the latter part of the 19th century. Specifically, it attempts to draw the attention of researchers to several historical documents that do not appear to be part of the existing literature on Addams. These documents are important, not only because they signify that the Addams research project is not complete, but also because they recast a small but significant part of the Addams narrative. In what follows, the new data, the questions they raise, and their implications for Addams scholarship and Chicago history are discussed.

This article requires a basic knowledge of charity organization, so some background is in order. Most people know that America experienced unprecedented social upheaval at the end of the nineteenth century. Massive immigration, in part a response to increased demand for workers, caused city populations to explode. The city of Chicago, for example, saw a two-fold increase in its population just between 1880 and 1890.³ American manufacturing grew at an amazing rate and, with a growing reliance on the factory system, workers were increasingly vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the market. Economic downturns were devastating to workers, who were paid poorly to begin with and had few of the employment protections found in today’s workplace. Local governments at the town and municipal level provided limited “outdoor” (in-home) and “indoor” (poorhouse) relief, but the brunt of the burden was carried by private institutions such as
churches and relief societies, with limited coordination by State Boards of Charity. These institutions simply did not possess the capacity to respond adequately to the needs of the day, and what response they did provide did not seem to be particularly effective. The result in the early 1870s was a proliferation of charitable entities, part of the birth of “modern American philanthropy.” The charity organization movement was a central part of this new wave of charity provision.

The existing literature holds that the first charitable organization appeared in Buffalo, New York in 1877. It was founded by S. Humphreys Gurteen, an Englishman who literally “wrote the book” on charitable organization activity by publishing the first handbook of charitable organization in the United States. Between 1877 and 1900 there was a proliferation of charitable organizations across the United States, starting in the larger cities and then moving to smaller population centers. The charitable organization “movement,” as it came to be called, was in part a reaction to the widespread belief that “outdoor relief” had failed to alleviate poverty. Inspired by the Manchester school of political economy, Malthusianism, and Social Darwinism, the principles of scientific philanthropy provided the charitable organization with a new approach to the problem of poverty. The charitable organization had strong practical and philosophical ties to business. One movement leader summarized the philosophical link quite succinctly, pointing out that the “same wisdom which has given this generation its wonderful industrial capacity will preside over the administration of charity.” The boards of most charitable organizations included prominent members of the important elements of the economy, including banking, steel, textiles, and railroads.

Boston poet and reformer John Boyle O’Reilly gives a sense of the charitable organization approach with a simple rhyme:

The organized charity scrimped and iced
In the name of a cautious, statistical Christ.

The charitable organization, at least as conceived by Gurteen and other early members of the movement, was in essence the central node of a network of associations, serving as a clearing-house for charity. It kept track of all relief recipients, acting as an information clearing-house with a central registry.
Initially, the charitable organization did not provide direct financial relief, for to do so was antithetical to the whole idea underpinning the effort to provide the helping-hand of a friend rather than a handout. However, the overwhelming realities of urban poverty soon led many charitable organizations in the United States to provide relief directly, with funds often provided by municipal and county governments. The principal method for diagnosing those individuals in need of relief was reliance upon the “friendly visit.” The myriad of associations dealing with urban poverty, including churches and relief societies, sent relief applicants to the appropriate district office of the charitable organization. The district office then sent an employee to call on the applicants at home and subsequently to report back to the organization’s district committee. The district committee then decided whether or not the applicants deserved relief. If so, the visitors, usually wealthy female volunteers, were paired with the applicants (and their families) and tasked with overseeing their progress toward self-sufficiency. Each visitor, according to Gurteen’s pamphlets, was not to judge, but rather to provide advice and make sure that it was followed. This advice could range from how to spend relief money to whether or not to relocate to a more “respectable” neighborhood. In Gurteen’s view, the visitor was to act as “a real friend, whose education, experience, and influence, whose general knowledge of life, or special knowledge of the domestic economy are placed at the service of those who have neither the intelligence, the tact nor the opportunity to extract the maximum of good from their slender resources.” In spite of the reference to friendship, some argue the process was grounded in the premise of inequality of condition. Others are skeptical of how “friendly” the visits actually were, seeing the interactions as more a process of “character reformation.” As Josephine Shaw Lowell, a major national advocate of scientific philanthropy during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century pointed out, “we cannot be charitable to our equals.”

In 1884, there was no official charity organization in Chicago. Because of its leadership role in dispensing Great Fire relief funds, the Chicago Relief and Aid Society (CRAS) had cemented its position as the charity heavyweight in Chicago. It had a new building and enough money on hand that it did not need to engage in fundraising. But it had not fully established its authority as the central organization in charity provision, as evidenced by the creation of the Chicago Charity Organization Society
The CRAS, founded by S. Humphreys Gurteen in 1883 but truly inaugurated under the leadership of Alexander Johnson. Its founders saw the CCOS as part of the new movement of charity organization in the United States, and in spite of the CRAS, a needed entity in the effort to combat poverty. The CRAS was clearly threatened by the encroachment of the CCOS, and it did not take long for the first signs of friction between the two associations to appear. An examination of the meeting minutes of the CRAS reveals a deep distrust of the CCOS and its methods. On 8 November 1884, the CRAS's Board of Directors appointed a committee to "have an interview with some members of the Charity Organization Society and report to this board at a future meeting." The next week the committee was formally discharged and no action taken. In February 1885, a report on the CCOS was made to the CRAS's Board, but again, no overtures were made. The CRAS ignored requests from the CCOS, which was struggling to raise funds, to place one of their representatives on the CCOS's Board in 1887; the matter was referred to committee and never acted upon. The publishing of a monthly newsletter by the CCOS in May 1887 no doubt concerned the CRAS's Board, as their competition gained more public exposure. At the 3 December 1887 meeting of the CRAS's Board of Directors, there was discussion about a new letter from the CCOS, which seems to have been about a possible merger. The discussion may have been stimulated by "two young business men [sic] of the best type, one a director of the C.O.S. the other of the Relief and Aid, who were close friends and next door neighbors spent a Sunday afternoon discussing the two societies." In November 1888 the CRAS formally voted to merge with the CCOS, but it was clearly not a merger of equals. While Alexander Johnson was named Assistant Superintendent for the CRAS and part of the merger deal required the CRAS to continue to operate the district offices established by the COS in various parts of the city, the name of the CRAS, as well as its Board of Directors, endured. Six months later, Johnson resigned and the CRAS continued with its work.

Shortly after this merger, in September 1889, Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr opened Hull-House. By most accounts, Addams was uncomfortable with contemporary charity organization methods. However, most of the data for such a conclusion is taken from Addams's later writings, and this is clearly problematic, as some Addams scholars, such as
Louise Knight, point out. If one looks at Democracy and Social Ethics (based on a series of lectures delivered in 1899) and 20 Years at Hull-House (written in 1910), one concludes that Addams was never truly comfortable with charity organization and at best held her nose as she cooperated with charity organization efforts. But the historical record shows that in 1891, less than two years after the founding of Hull-House, Addams was actively engaged in trying to create a charity organization society in Chicago. For several years after absorbing the CCOS in 1888, the CRAS had faced no serious challenges to its dominance in the field of charity organization. This changed in early 1892. As part of a newly formed Committee on Charity Organization (COCO), Addams and thirteen other Chicago citizens (some of whom had supported the CCOS in the 1880s), as well as press from the Inter Ocean and Herald, attended the CRAS’s Board meeting on 4 January 1892 to deliver both verbal presentations and a written statement that was read aloud:

Gentlemen:
In order to definitely lay before your Board the suggestions made by our Committee, the following propositions are respectfully submitted for your consideration:

The committee on Charity Organization recognizes to the fullest degree the immense services which the Relief and Aid Society has rendered to the City of Chicago and desires to express to you its regard for an institution so long established, so ably conducted, and so thoroughly and justly respected in the community.

Because of the position of your Society as the foremost of the charitable agencies of the City, our Committee acknowledges the paramount importance of proceeding in the work before us only after the most faithful endeavor to secure your earnest sympathy and co-operation.

We desire, therefore, to propose:

First: That your Society co-operate in the formation of a Charity Organization Society to the extent of allowing the latter to assume the burden of investigation and registration, and of reserving for your own Society the actual administration of relief.
This will obviate the maintenance by the Relief and Aid Society of more than one office, and will completely relieve it of the expense of paid investigators.

In case we cannot gain your consent to the above, we would like to propose:

Second: That the Relief and Aid Society itself become a Society for organizing the charity of Chicago, placing at the head of this work, some one who thoroughly understands the theory and practice of charity organization, who is fully in sympathy with the movement, and who has both the tact and determination to make it a success.

In behalf of the Committee
W. J. Onahan, Chairman

Turlington Harvey, a prominent member of the CRAS's Board of Directors, moved that "the first proposition be not considered as it was impracticable and not feasible." This motion passed and the board then decided to think carefully on the second option.

The dialogue that ensued illustrates the struggle for control over Chicago charity. First, Turlington Harvey went to the press on behalf of the CRAS's Board to try and bolster the image of the CRAS as a bonafide charity organization. He compared the CRAS to various charitable organizations, including the New York COS, and tried to portray the CRAS as a dynamic organization that had adapted to the unique needs of Chicago. Then, in February 1892, the CRAS's Board as a whole sent COCO a strongly worded letter:

Chicago, Feb. 1, 1892
William J. Onahan, Esq., Chairman

Dear Sir: In reply to your communication the directors of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society desire to say to you and to the ladies and gentlemen of your committee, that they have given the subject presented by you careful consideration, and that such consideration will be gladly continued if necessary to a complete understanding on all sides of the purposes and methods, either now practiced or
proposed for adoption, which look to a complete accomplishment of that which your committee and this Society have alike at heart, namely prompt alleviation of actual distress, and wise direction of, and co-operation in, efforts to meet legitimate demands, and to prevent fraud and imposture.

In justice to itself, and to promote such an understanding, this society calls attention to some facts which, unfortunately, it has apparently failed to make plain to the community. It is often said that the Chicago Relief & Aid Society is opposed to what is known as charity organization. This is a great mistake. This society, instead of opposing, heartily approves the leading ideas, and many of the methods, which that name has come to represent.

In fact, this society was the earliest exponent of these principles, and the first actual charity organization society.

All who represent advanced thought in philanthropic work among the poor, recognize and maintain the following propositions:

That indiscriminate giving to persons asking for aid is dangerous and wasteful, and that the tendency is to encourage fraud and increase pauperism: that, in order to prevent this, there should be a central organization to which all persons asking aid should be referred by the numerous societies, churches, and agencies which furnish help to the needy in a variety of ways; that there should be a full and hearty interchange of information and courtesies whereby the good work can be made more effective and duplication prevented: that all applications for relief should be thoroughly investigated, and the facts, together with the amount of aid furnished in each case be preserved in writing: that all cases be registered, and any changes in the address of subjects of relief from year to year be carefully noted, and the records be open for inspection to all who desire information; that aid should be given only in
extreme cases so as to prevent or relieve suffering and not so as to encourage people to live upon charity, keeping in view always that the great object of charity is to help unfortunate worthy people to help themselves; that the poor are to be encouraged in habits of industry, economy, cleanliness and sobriety; that those that will not make the best effort at self-support of which they are capable and all cases of chronic pauperism where there is no purpose or prospect of their becoming self-supporting, should be referred to appropriate institutions or to the courts and the legally constituted authorities for the final disposition of paupers, vagrants and criminals.

These are fundamental principles in the work of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society.

Charity organization holds that relief should not be extended from itself directly, but that it should be provided through its paid or volunteer agencies by bringing applicants into direct contact with the philanthropic, and that all actual dispensing of relief should be by the latter. Its argument in favor of this course is that by bringing the benefactor and beneficiary into personal contact both are morally benefited.

The practice of contributing in bulk to a society, to be officially administered, is condemned.

Charity organization also holds to the principle of friendly visitors and district committees.

The Relief and Aid Society is aware that in some older communities where there are large leisure classes, notably in London, valuable results have come from this methods [sic]. Of our large cities, Boston, where similar conditions exist, has seemed to reach the most complete success.

This society, as often as the subject has been considered, has been forced by its own experience and by observation of attempts by others in our city, to hold to the plan of depending only on trained visitors, suitably paid for
their services by the society and who could be held to a strict performance of their duty. A large corps of friendly visitors, whose duty is not to give relief, but purely as friends to call frequently upon specified families, whom they agree to watch over and encourage by every means in their power to better modes of life, to aid employment, and to the best use of benefits if extended, is certainly commendable and desirable where applicants are of the character to need it, and devoted and capable women or men can be found to not only assume such duty, but to patiently and persistently perform it.

The practical question in this connection is this: Has the time come in our city for complete district and friendly organization and work of the character performed in London? That city is divided into forty districts. Each has its committee, and in nearly every one there is a paid secretary. The annual expense account of the society is approximately $80,000. New York is divided into ten districts, its expense account is over $30,000 annually. The expense of the recent Charity Organization Society in Chicago in its last year was about $10,000 and no reflection is intended upon any one in the recognition of the fact that the scope of its work was exceedingly limited. With its present immense territory the complete application of the system in Chicago would require at least ten district organizations, an expense account of $25,000 to $30,000, and a relief fund of, say $60,000. The London society, in addition to the $80,000 for expenses, collected about $120,000 for relief purposes.

Notwithstanding the work of the C.O.S. in New York, it seems still necessary to support the old “Society for Improving the Conditions of the Poor,” and in Boston “The Provident Association.” The Boston “Overseers of the Poor,” with an invested fund of over $600,000, still have about $100,000 per annum appropriated by the city. It should be noted that in the relations between these
societies and the charity organization societies of those cities, there is a fair degree of harmony.

Should a new society be organized here, this board will do all in its power towards effective co-operation.

It is, however, our firm conviction that a new organization, with its necessary machinery and expense, is not a necessity and that in general the principles and methods of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society are the best that can be devised and maintained under existing conditions. We recognize the fact, and with regret, that these are not so generally understood as we desire they should be, and as they must be to insure the greatest possible usefulness.

Much may be hoped from the present renewed interest in philanthropic problems.

The members of this board are giving time and thought to better the condition of the poor. The Chicago Relief and Aid Society belongs to you and to the community as much as to them. While under their care it is their duty to guard its interests and guide it along safe lines but it is as much their duty to listen to wise suggestions as to hold to tried methods.

In the hope that it may lead to a clearer understanding by you, and through you to the community at large, we beg to restate the purposes of this society and its methods of work.

Along lines of relief it is primarily a society to “aid such of the poor as through sickness or other misfortune require temporary assistance.” In general, it is to “provide a permanent, efficient and practical mode of administering and distributing the private charities of the city.” And it is to “put into practical and efficient operation the best system of relieving and preventing want and pauperism therein.”

In the performance of these duties it maintains a central office and three branches or district offices, and it is only deterred by the cost from increasing largely the numbers of the latter and the hours of keeping them open.
It employs careful and experienced visitors. It intends that every case referred to either office shall have prompt attention – immediate, if there are emergent conditions apparent. If information concerning any case is desired by any citizen who may have reported such case to the society it is always furnished. The society has repeatedly tendered the community the information on file in its office, and it is ready to enlarge this “central bureau of information” to any extent and in any manner and to co-operate with any and all charitable institutions, churches or persons in any effort to put a stop to fraud and imposture. If any person desires to dispense his charity directly the society will gladly furnish such information as it may have concerning the applicant, and will make any further investigation that may be required. If more frequent publications concerning the efforts of the society will tend to enlist the co-operation of all who desire to give thought, money or time to the great work, we shall be glad to have it done, within reasonable limits as to expense.

This society is entirely dependent upon voluntary contributions by our citizens. No solicitors are employed. The work of soliciting funds has always been voluntarily assumed by the directors.

It seems to this board that the society thus represents all of charity organization that is at present practicable in our city, and we believe that with your co-operation and that of those whom you represent, better results can be obtained than through the organization of another association.

By order of the Board of Directors
(signed) very respectfully,
John McLaren President
Henry W. King
AA Sprague
TW Harvey
CHs Mixer
(Executive Committee)
The CRAS soon received another letter signed by thirty-three members (including Jane Addams) of COCO, and it was read aloud at the 7 March 1892 CRAS’s Board of Directors meeting:

To the President and Executive Committee of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society.

Dear Sirs:

Your open letter of February 1st addressed to Mr. W.J. Onahan, Chairman of our Committee of Conference, has been carefully considered and in reply we desire to express the great disappointment which its perusal has given to us and to all the friends of our movement. Instead of an answer to the proposition made by our committee we are met by statements which appear to be directed to the public by way of a defense of your Society’s methods of work. Our rejoinder must necessarily call question assertions made in your letter which allowed to stand unchallenged would in the eyes of those uninformed in this matter seem to negative [sic] and discountenance the very undertaking which we have at heart.

In the letter before us you say “This Society was the earliest exponent of these principles (of Charity Organization) and the first actual Charity Organization Society.”

In making this claim we feel that you must confound the specific term “Charity Organization” with the generic idea of an organization, an organized institution, for charitable purposes. We grant that your Society has been organized to do charity work and thus is a charity organization though not the first, but that it is today or ever had been in any sense a Charity Organization Society we must deny.

In the name Charity Organization Society the second word is to be taken in the active not passive sense. It is a society whose business is to organize the various agencies that dispense charity into one co-operating
This work the Relief and Aid Society has never accomplished. You have a central office of your own for your own business only; you keep an admirable record of cases aided and investigated by yourselves but no adequate record of cases covered by other societies save as you now have those of the former Charity Organization Society. You give information concerning cases whenever asked, but you are not making any effort to induce other societies, churches or individuals to report to you their cases in order to secure complete registration. There is nothing in your work that will insure to any one seeking information at your office concerning any case that the applicant for aid is not receiving relief from any number of sources. You are simply one of the several hundred agencies that must be consulted in every case of application for aid, if duplication is to be avoided with certainty, instead of being the repository for all the possible information concerning each case that is possessed by every charity agency in the community. So far as we can ascertain your idea of co-operation consists in a willingness to give any information you may have; and in the possession of certain privileges in other charitable institutions, derived originally through your having been the agency employed for the distribution of relief funds at the time of the fire. Co-operation implies mutual activity, a seeking or receiving as well as giving.

There is nothing of the first in your work for the charities of Chicago are in no way co-ordinated or systematized. Does the present chaotic condition substantiate your claim—that you have been active for 31 years as an organizer?

Again, the true Charity Organization Society as recognized in your letter maintains that indiscriminate giving is "dangerous" and wasteful" but it does more than maintain such a wise opinion. By mass meetings, by frequent publications carefully drafted by experts in charity work, by untiring exertions, it strives to instill this necessary
lesson into the minds of the people. Furthermore, it provides means of such thorough and undoubted efficiency that every citizen who gives to applicants for aid tickets of reference to the Central Office, knows that he may depend upon the Society to make the right disposal of the case. Chicago is cursed with an untold amount of the worst kind of indiscriminate giving simply because its citizens have no guarantee that a reference to the Relief and Aid Society will secure the right treatment of the case. Your facilities are such that you can not employ the remedy required. Instead of maintaining branch offices open from early morning until late at night as might be done if the house in which the district agent lives were used as his office; the hours as printed on your latest slips are from 10 to 12 only and even your Central Office has been known to be practically closed much of the time in Summer. There is not the slightest approach in your work to any attempt at finding employment nor is there in your methods anything that can by any courtesy be denominated “helping people to help themselves” outside of the Provident Woodyard which you reluctantly assumed from the old Charity Organization Society, or that by any possibility can be construed into encouraging “habits of industry, economy, cleanliness & sobriety.”

You are correct in assuming that true Charity Organization however does these very things.

But perhaps the most glaring inconsistency between bona fide organized charity and your claim to have been the earliest exponent of the principles so dear to us, and to have constituted the first actual Charity Organization Society, lies in your explicit renunciation of the underlying principles in this noble movement expressed in its motto “not alms but a friend.” In spite of repeated explanation you seem to labor still under the misapprehension that the Friendly Visitor is to take the place of the paid agent. The supplying of a friendly visitor to certain
families to stimulate to thrift and to infuse moral earnestness is simply one form of aid, and the kind which Charity Organization has found to be most efficacious and for which its name stands. To plead that Chicago is too new, too busy, too materialistic or too poor to begin this work is to stamp the seal of truth upon the charge that our fair city cares more for wealth getting than for the humanities. Against such a plea and such a charge we protest with all our hearts. Reports from Denver and Baltimore and Brooklyn and New York and Boston all show how invaluable are the services of the Friendly Visitor and certainly what Denver has done, Chicago does not intend to confess to the world she cannot do. The former Charity Organization Society may have been limited in its scope but all unbiased charity workers in our city acknowledge its sphere of action to have been wider and its effectiveness greater than anything which preceded it or followed it.

Your comparison of expense is certainly unfair, for you neglect to mention that societies elsewhere and the C.O.S. here had rent to pay while owing to your being the fortunate possessor of a building bought with the money given to Chicago at the time of the fire, you have none. Deduct rent from their expense account and the showing will be quite different.

Perhaps the gravest charge to be laid at the door of our charitable machinery is its exclusiveness. The public are not admitted to its councils or invited to share in its work save as money givers. Charity Organization is a faithful attempt to bring the needy, those in want of education and wisdom and thrift and courage and skill as well as money, into contact with those who possess all these advantages, that the latter may share their blessings with the former. The people in Chicago who ought to have their sympathies enlarged by personal intercourse with their unfortunate brothers and sisters are frozen out of the work. Chicago needs a Society to help bring about this mutual contact of
those who have and those who want and it is our determination that this need shall be supplied.

We appealed to you to place your Society at the head of this movement because of your unique position in our City’s history. Your building was the gift of the world to our City in the dark of a terrible calamity. That gift should be utilized to afford a great central office for Chicago’s charities, a lasting memorial of the noble use to which we have put this applied love of the world. The same generosity enabled your Society to secure privileges in hospitals and other institutions. Perhaps no city was ever more fortunately situated for carrying out the Charity Organization idea than is Chicago at this time. In fact the Relief and Aid Society belongs to the People of Chicago and as such should be brought into sympathy with the progressive spirit and character of our institutions. We have written plainly but without the slightest feeling of unkindness. We urge once more upon you the propositions presented to your Committee of Conference and press for a speedy unequivocal reply. For if your Society will not accept the responsibility of joining in the inauguration of Charity Organization in Chicago, we hold ourselves ready to move in this direction fortified as we are by the earnest sympathy and co-operation of nearly two hundred churches and charitable agencies.

Our Committee still hoping that the proposed Charity Organization movement may be incorporated with the present Relief and Aid Society, deprecate the publication of your recent letter and in order not to divide public opinion further will in expectation of your reply refrain from any statement in the Press during the succeeding week.

Very Respectfully Submitted,
The CRAS's reply is as follows:

Chicago, March 7th 1892
A.F. Seeberger, Esq.
Chairman
Dear Sir:

We beg to acknowledge the communication without date, signed by the members of your committee. If the letter from the Directors of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society was a disappointment to you, some surprise as well as disappointment may be allowed us over your slight appreciation of its spirit and purpose.

The Directors had before them your two formulated propositions: also the addresses made by the members of your Committee who presented the propositions. While these were being considered there came the outburst in the daily papers against a number of Chicago's Charitable Institutions, which for the moment threatened to paralyze even the most worthy of them, since suspicion and distrust are easily bred and not easily overcome; to say nothing of the willingness sometimes met to find excuses for not lending the helping hand.

So it seemed not only proper, but essential that a statement should be prepared which should aim to dispel controversy, and if possible promote that thorough and practical co-operation among charitable institutions, and individuals, which we assume is the chief purpose of the present discussion.

It is quite true that ten or twenty lines of categorical reply to the two propositions might have been sent, but it seemed to us that a Society that has been so long endeavoring to be of some service among the unfortunate owed it to itself, to those who have contributed to its support and to the community, to set out plainly the aims, purposes and principles which govern it.

This was certainly attempted. No infallibility was
claimed. This Society does not pretend to know all that may be known of charitable methods or theories. Possibilities as to improvement leaving details for future discussion and consideration were fully recognized and your co-operation was earnestly solicited.

Incidentally it was said that the Society was the first actual Charity Organization Society. Previous to November 11th, 1867, the “Christian Union,” the “Citizens Relief” and the “Y.M.C.A.” were active in charitable work, with of course, more or less of duplication. At that date steps were taken to consolidate the work on the basis of harmonious co-operation of all parties in interest. The name of the new organization would appropriately have been “Associated Charities,” but for the wish to use the then existing charter of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society. We know of no earlier step in the direction of charity organization.

Incidentally also, and quite in connection with the financial topic, and without criticism, it was said of the recent Charity Organization Society, “and no reflection upon any one is intended in a recognition of the fact that its work was exceedingly limited.” Probably no well informed person will think this an unfair or unkind statement.

The difference between original investigation by the Friendly Visitor, which has been proved by our experience entirely unreliable and the possible good from supplementary friendly visiting was intended to be set forth. “Not alms but a friend” is by no means repudiated. The doubt expressed was whether Chicago has the needful leisure class for any considerable work of this nature in addition to that already undertaken by the churches and other charitable organizations. We fear that most of our active, earnest people will share the doubt, simply from finding duties already assumed quite over-running average powers of body and mind.

Your remark concerning District offices is perhaps
sufficiently met by our original statement. Likewise the insistence that this Society belongs to the people of Chicago. You say “you give information concerning cases whenever asked” and again “your idea of co-operation consists in the willingness to give any information you may have.”

Surely this is a fair step towards co-operation, and we certainly intended to be explicit in saying that the Society “is ready to enlarge this ‘Central Bureau of Information’ to any extent and in any manner, and to co-operate with any and all institutions in any effort to put a stop to fraud and imposture.”

Charitableness in thought, word and deed must ever be an essential in securing effective co-operation and harmony: with which remark we pass the threats in your reply.

It is to be desired that this Society shall be a greater educating force, and it has doubtless failed to make the best possible use of its opportunities in the way of frequent publications and the like. Still the charge of exclusiveness is not very grave, when the sum of $5.00 will give any person who may desire it clear legal standing within the organization, and when it is considered that the Mayor of the City is by law made a member of the Board of Directors and the Society is compelled to make annually to the representatives of the people a full report of its doings.

The letter from the Directors of this Society does not perhaps suggest revolution, but it does mean progress. Let us see if with the co-operation of the hundreds of organizations whose interests you say you have enlisted some positive advance may be made along lines which will commend themselves to the conservative as well as to the enthusiastic mind.

We believe this to be better than to attempt to create and sustain for any long period a new organization. As already suggested details may be arranged after a full comparison of ideas. Several have already been carefully considered by us.
We appreciate your refraining, for the present, from further statements in the Press. With these explanations we trust that our original letter may have a more kindly reading, and in behalf of the Society, we again ask for your interest and co-operation.

By order of the Board of Directors
Very respectfully submitted,
John McClaren
President

Minutes of subsequent meetings in Spring 1892 show that CRAS’s Board of Directors did not devote any significant time to addressing any of the concerns and criticisms brought up during the exchange and the issue lay dormant until the following winter, when the Depression of 1893-94 re-energized discussion in Chicago regarding the need for a “true” charity organization. Across the nation, there were dramatic declines in the manufacture of everything from consumer durables to food, and “savage unemployment and demoralizing wage reductions” ensued. Addams was one of fifteen trustees listed on the corporate charter; the other trustees, as well as those involved as part of the larger committee of supporters were a veritable “who’s who” of Chicago elites, including Marshall Field, Cyrus McCormick (the inventor of the mechanical reaper), T.W. Harvey (a prominent lumberman and CRAS’s Board member), Franklin MacVeagh (a Director of the Commercial National Bank of Chicago who would serve as Secretary of the Treasury in the Taft Administration), and Lyman Gage (President of the First National Bank of Chicago).

While rooting out corruption was a major focus of the CCF, another key element was the desire to systematize charity in the city. At a 9 December 1893 meeting at the Palmer House, Addams was appointed to a committee charged with devising “ways and means to render more effective the various relief and aid organizations in the city.” The committee’s most significant act was the formation of the Central Relief Association (CRA) that winter. The CRA, in a meeting on 19 December 1893, provided
a statement of its overall purpose that clearly reveals the market logic underpinning its efforts:

1. To ascertain in the most expeditious, practicable way, the nature and extent of want and distress existing among us at the present time, and to raise funds for its relief.
2. To relieve this want and distress as far as may be through existing organizations, and where these are wanting in efficiency, to do it directly, or through other agencies to be created.
3. To bring about systematic co-operation among charitable societies, churches, individuals and agencies of every kind giving relief, so far as this can be done, thereby preventing waste, duplication and imposition, and thus uniting economy with efficiency in the great work of relieving distress among the worthy poor. It is one of the leading purposes of the Association to help the needy by enabling them to help themselves through employment, wherever that is practicable, thus elevating instead of pauperizing the recipient.

Again, the literature holds that Addams had serious reservations about the methods associated with the relief and charity efforts of the Civic Federation. The main evidence for this position is a celebrated passage in 20 Years at Hull-House in which Addams expresses reservations concerning use of what she called “scientific methods” associated with charity organization. Addams, following “carefully received instructions” from those in the fledgling Bureau of Charities (an offshoot of CCF), denied relief to a shipping clerk whom she had known for quite some time:

I told him one day of the opportunity for work on the drainage canal and intimated that if any employment were obtainable, he ought to exhaust that possibility before asking for help. The man replied that he had always worked indoors and that he could not endure outside work in winter. I am grateful to remember that I was too uncertain to be severe, although I held to my instructions. He did not...
come again for relief, but worked for two days digging on the canal, where he contracted pneumonia and died a week later. I have never lost trace of the two little children he left behind him, although I cannot see them without a bitter consciousness that it was at their expense I learned that life cannot be administered by definite rules and regulations; that wisdom to deal with a man’s difficulties comes only through some knowledge of his life and habits as a whole; and that to treat an isolated episode is almost sure to invite blundering.

Addams was clearly heartbroken by the effect of her application of charity organization principles and rules. And yet, it will become clear in what follows that Addams supported the continuation of CRA charity organization efforts under a new name: the Chicago Bureau of Charities (CBC).

After the winter of 1893-94, the CRA closed down but the CCF decided to keep the Department of Registration in operation as part of a new charity organization. Turlington Harvey of the CRA and the CRAS convinced Lucy Flower (a friend of Addams), against her repeated protestations, to serve as Chairman of the new organization and offered space at the CRAS building rent-free to help defray expenses. To avoid confusion, the organization was given a new name—the Chicago Bureau of Charities (CBC). Harvey, using relief funds left over in the CRA coffers, paid the salaries of the clerks who had previously worked for the CRA’s Bureau of Registration and had these workers installed, along with all records and furniture, as employees of the CBC. But Harvey and the CRAS did not long cooperate with the fledgling charity organization, as evidenced by the fact that in early 1895, the Board voted to “discontinue sending reports to the Bureau of Charities [CBC].” Addams, a member of the CBC’s Executive Committee from its founding and a regular attendee at organization meetings, was not pleased with the CRAS’s decision. A letter to CRAS’s Board (read aloud at their 4 March 1895 meeting) and signed by Jane Addams, Sarah Hackett Stevenson, and Lucy Flower illuminate the events following this vote:
To the Board of Directors of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society

Gentlemen,

When the Central Relief Association of last Winter adjourned the last of April 1894, they voted to continue the Department of Registration, and a Committee consisting of Mrs. Flower, Mr. Mixer, Mrs. Kean, Prof Henderson, Miss Addams and Mr. Mack were appointed to carry on. Mrs. Flower declared it was impossible for her to serve as Chairman, and it was decided to ask Mrs. Kean to act. April 29th a conference of the chairmen of all the district organizations was called to consider the advisability of continuing these district organizations in connection with the Registration Bureau.

Mr. Mixer presided, thirty five [sic] representatives of district organizations were present, and it was unanimously voted that the district work should be continued, leaving to the discretion of each district the question whether suspension was desirable during the summer months.

The minutes of the meeting were forwarded to Mrs. Flower who was then in Philadelphia, and she was informed that Mrs. Kean had positively refused to act as chairman and so the position was hers by act of the Central Relief. She at once wrote Mr. Harvey a positive refusal to act, on the ground that to make such a bureau successful, not only money, but the time of one person would be necessary, and she had not the time to give it.

In reply Mr. Harvey stated the Bureau was at the Relief and Aid rooms for the Summer, there was little to be done and it was too late to take different action, but that he and Mr. Mixer could do what was necessary until fall, as they had the necessary office force and money.

In September Mr. Harvey called a meeting of all those who had been connected with the Central Relief, to consider the need of a re-organization for work this winter.
At this meeting Mr. Harvey stated he could not serve again, but suggested two persons to take his place, and Mrs. Flower was requested to ask the Civic Federation to suggest persons to take the place of those unable to serve again this year. This she did and the matter was referred to the Philanthropy Committee of the Civic Federation, the members of district organizations, and old members of Central Relief to consider what action should be taken.

Opinions were various, but the final decision was that the Registration Bureau and the district organization should be continued and extended as voted by the representatives of these organizations at the meeting of April 27th, but that no attempt to raise a general fund should be made unless an emergency should be found to exist, with which existing relief agencies could not cope.

An Executive Committee was elected at a meeting held at the Palmer House with a chairman (Mr. Gross) and a treasurer (Mr. McLaren) suggested by Mr. Harvey himself. Mr. Harvey further expressed himself as fully in sympathy with the work and promised the co-operation of the Relief and Aid and on Nov 20th turned over to the committee, which in order to avoid any complications as to relief work, had taken the name of “Chicago Bureau of Charities”, the records, furniture, and clerks of the Bureau of Registration, which he had paid for up to that time, from the relief funds of the previous year.

On January 15th just eight weeks after, without a word of explanation to any one of the committee, the Relief and Aid stopped sending any reports, and withdrew their visitor from the 19th Ward district.

Mr. Gross was requested by the Executive Committee to see Mr. Harvey and ascertain the reason of this sudden change of policy.

No satisfactory explanation was given.

On Feby 15th one month later, Miss Lathrop then acting as Secretary of the Bureau of Charities, received a
letter from Mr. Harvey stating that the Relief and Aid at their monthly meeting in Feby. had decided to have no further connection with the Bureau and that if the parties in interest desired to know the reason for this action, they could obtain it by calling on Mr. Trusdell. In response to that letter, two of our number, Miss Flower and Miss Addams (Dr. Stevenson being out of town) called at the Relief and Aid office as requested by Mr. Harvey.

We were informed that Mr. Trusdell would not be at the office that day, we went the next day and were absolutely refused any information by Mr. Trusdell, he saying the communications on which the Board had acted were confidential.

We mentioned that we had come by request of Mr. Harvey. Mr. Trusdell then went to telephone Mr. Harvey and returned saying Mr. Harvey upheld his action and desired the whole matter referred to the Executive Committee.

Now gentlemen, we feel we have a right to demand that these communications, affecting us to the extent of inducing you to vote to have no further communications with our Bureau, be submitted to us. As men of honor you cannot allow any person, much less any woman to be thus secretly attacked and given no opportunity either of defense or of knowing the assailant.

If any clergyman has done what Mr. Trusdell says, sent in a communication he is unwilling to stand by openly, he is unworthy of credence and certainly honorable men cannot afford to countenance any such underhanded methods.

We therefore ask that these reports be submitted to our inspection and we be allowed to judge of their truth or falsity.

Yours Respectfully,
Lucy L. Flower, Sarah Hackett Stevenson,
Jane Addams"
The CRAS's response was brief:

April 8th 1895
To
Mrs. Flower and others:

Your communication without date was received this date by hand of Mr. Chalmers and was submitted to our Board of Directors.

We find upon an interview with Mr. Harvey, whose name frequently appears in your communication, that you are mistaken in some of the statements made in your paper. On motion, the whole subject was referred to Mr. Chalmers to have an interview with you, in which we believe that you will easily be convinced that this Society has in no way been guilty of any want of courtesy towards your Bureau, or to you ladies personally.

Very Truly yours," (251).32

This letter exchange makes a strong case for the depth of Addams's involvement on behalf of the CBC. But beyond this, the data shows that Addams was instrumental in its formal chartering. At the 19 April 1895 meeting of the CBC's Executive Committee, those present voted to "delegate all powers of the Association to Mesdames Flower, Stevenson and Addams, who are requested to act as Commissioners to procure a charter guaranteeing them power to organize a Corporation under the laws of the State of Illinois, to carry out the purposes of this Association and to this end the present Executive committee hereby transfer to said Commissioners all properties and moneys belonging to the Bureau for the purposes named."33 Sometime in April, the filing documents34 were notarized by Flower's husband, a prominent Chicago attorney, and they were delivered to the Secretary of State's office in Springfield, Illinois on 7 May 1895. Addams, along with John McLaren, signed the CBC's formal charter.35

Beyond the content of the data presented above, its timing is also noteworthy. In the days surrounding Addams's vehement defense of the CBC, she was also busy writing the mission statement for Hull-House, which she formally incorporated as the Hull-House Association (HHA) in
March 1895. Addams was thus instrumental in incorporating two organizations with expressly different philosophies. The purpose of HHA, Addams wrote in the mission statement, was “to provide a center for a higher civic and social life; to initiate and maintain education and philanthropic enterprises; and to investigate and improve the conditions in the industrial districts of Chicago.”

Contrast this with the mission of CBC, as detailed in its own charter: “to register and co-ordinate the work of the public and private charities of Chicago; to rid its streets of tramps and beggars; to protect the public from imposters and to stimulate to orderly effort the philanthropic impulses of the citizens of Chicago and to discover and efficiently aid the worthy poor throughout said city.”

At a minimum, the data presented above should give one pause. There is still significant data on Jane Addams to be found. This fact should energize the study of Addams and other notable figures in Illinois history. Researchers, don’t give up! But beyond this, there is the additional substantive issue of what this data means. What was Addams doing? What was going on? It is beyond the purview of this article to address these questions here, but the above presentation should be understood as a call for ideas from those interested in Addams and the development of charity in Chicago. The author of this article is currently working on an analysis of the symbolic dimensions of charity work, one that tries to explore Addams’s relationship to the dominant logic of Chicago elites. Some may choose a less sociological approach. While the data above is not entirely inconsistent with Louise Knight’s “co-operation” frame, that is, the view that Addams did what she did because she adhered to a philosophy based on cooperation, it does stretch that frame considerably. Addams may well have held her nose as she worked cooperatively to develop a charity organization in Chicago. She may simply have been following the lead of her good friend, Julia Lathrop, who was an early and staunch advocate of charity organization methods. But neither of these possibilities seems like an entirely sufficient explanation. Whatever the answer, there is a good chance it resides in the archives of the Chicago Historical Society.
Notes

1 The author would like to thank Mustafa Emirbayer for his help during the research and writing of this article. The research librarians at the Chicago Historical Society also deserve recognition and thanks for their assistance and patience. All correspondence can be directed to the author at eschwind@ssc.wisc.edu.
6 Trattner, 97.
9 Katz.
10 This is not to say that the CRAS was the only game in town. There were a number of other civic and religious organizations doing charity at this time but the CRAS was the best funded and most influential.
12 Johnson, 68.
13 See the CRAS Meeting Minutes, Volume 1, 1871 to 1887, pages 368-77 and the CRAS Meeting Minutes, Volume 2, 1887 to 1901, 5-41, United Charities of Chicago Collection, Chicago Historical Society.
14 The origins of COCO are not completely clear. Knight, 227, 475 n. 87 locates the genesis at a November 1891 meeting of the Chicago Women’s Club. My examination of the Chicago Women’s Club meeting minutes does not support this claim.
15 The delegation consisted of the following: WJ Onahan, Chairman, AF Seeberger, F Kiss, H.L. Frank, W.M. Salter, W.R. Stirling, Bishop C.E. Cheney, Rev. Floyd Tomkins, JW Scott (Herald), JW Thindell (Inter Ocean), Dr. Scudder, Mrs. J.D. Harvey, Mrs. J.M. Flower, Mrs. A.V.H. Wakeman (Post), Miss Jane Addams. [Note that Stirling was not present, just listed].
17 CRAS Meeting Minutes, 1887-1909, United Charities of Chicago Collection, Chicago Historical Society, 109. See The Daily Inter Ocean, Tuesday morning, 5 January 1892 for a report on the meeting. Addams’s name is not mentioned as part of the delegation, but the meeting minutes indicate that she did attend.
18 The letters in this dialogue are not included in the Jane Addams Papers collection and (to my knowledge) have not been published to date. The only mention of these letters is in an unpublished dissertation on Chicago charity, but Addams is only mentioned in
passing as having been involved in the issue. The author does not indicate that she attended any CRAS meetings, nor does the dissertation list Addams as a signatory on any of the letters. John Albert Mayer, "Private Charities in Chicago from 1871 to 1915," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1978, 109-15, 602.

19 See Chicago Daily, 19 January 1892, 10.
20 The letter in its entirety can be found in CRAS Meeting Minutes, Volume 2, 1871-1887, United Charities of Chicago Collection, Chicago Historical Society, 110-15.
23 There were thirty-three signatories on this letter, all on behalf of the "Committee on Charity Organization": Mrs. J.D. Harvey, Mrs. JM Flower, Mrs. JR Effinger, Mrs. CM Higginson, Mrs. FS Heywood, Mrs. JR Prindle, Mrs. GD Brommel, Mrs. FW Parker, Mrs. RP Farson, Mrs. Mary Wilmarth, Mrs. John Wilkinson, Mrs. WN Rand, (sp?) Mrs. AVH Wakeman, Mr. AF Seeberger Chairman, WJ Onahan, EG Keith, James H. Gilbert, Chas Edward Cheney, Floyd Tomkins, Joseph Sears, John Henry Fallows, John W. Tindall, Jenkin Lloyd Jones, LP Mercer, Willard Scott, F Kiss, Mrs. J. Flindy, Miss Jane Addams, Dr. Julia Ross Low, JW Errant, Harold N Moyer, MD, D Scudder (Sec'y), PS Henson.
24 CRAS Board Meeting Minutes, 1887-1909, United Charities of Chicago Collection, Chicago Historical Society, 130-33.
27 Chicago Civic Federation Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Minutes, 23 November 1893 to 9 June 1898, Chicago Historical Society.
28 Chicago Civic Federation Papers, Box 1, "General Papers 1894-1941 and Articles of Incorporation January 31, 1894," Chicago Historical Society.
29 CRAS's Board Meeting, 7 January 1895, CRAS Meeting Minutes, 1887-1909, United Charities of Chicago Collection, Chicago Historical Society, 240-3.
30 CRAS Meeting Minutes, 1887-1909, United Charities of Chicago Collection, Chicago Historical Society, 248-51. The letter from Addams, Stevenson, and Flower does not seem to have ever been published.
31 This letter is remarkable in its tone for, as Knight points out, Addams "was rarely seen to be angry when older" and was a firm believer in Tolstoy's approach to life as expressed in My Religion, in the pages of which he urges people to avoid both physical violence and anger, 145.
32 CRAS Meeting Minutes, 1887-1909, United Charities of Chicago Collection, Chicago Historical Society, 251.
33 Chicago Bureau of Charities Executive Committee Minutes, Box 5, 1894-1903, Volume of Minutes from 20 November 1894 to 11 May 1895, United Charities of Chicago Collection, Chicago Historical Society, 13.
34 Sec corporation file number 07062397, Illinois Department of State.
35 The fact that Addams signed the incorporation documents for the Chicago Bureau of Charities has thus far appeared to escape the notice of Addams scholars.
36 Quoted in Knight.
37 Corporation file number 07062397, Illinois Department of State.