

A Sense of Place: A Short History of Women's Philanthropy in America

Many people perceive that philanthropy is the provenance of rich, white men like Andrew Carnegie, John Rockefeller, and Bill Gates – highly visible leaders whose activities made headlines. Yet, philanthropy, defined for this course as “voluntary action for the public good,” includes large and small financial contributions *and* contributions of time and talent from all people – men and women alike. When inquisitive students of history ask about comparable experiences for women, we uncover textured and vibrant stories that provide a richer understanding of American philanthropic history.

Philanthropy provides a lustrous, multi-hued backdrop to explore how women, often perceived as invisible throughout periods of the republic's history, helped shape civil society in America, that space between the private and public spheres. When seen through economic, legal, social, cultural, religious, and political lenses, women's rich and varied philanthropic expressions from the very beginnings of this country's history to today, contribute new perspective to our understanding of a “true vision of a democratic society.” (Conway, 171) A single strand cannot tell the whole story historically any more than it can today. To overlook how women in different classes, races, ethnicities, and religious backgrounds sought to effect social change is to miss the rich kaleidoscopic ways in which women engaged in voluntary associations and philanthropic work in America.

The philanthropic work of women must be examined in conjunction with the great themes in American history, especially during the nineteenth century with the Great Awakening, Civil War, rise of industrialization, immigration, urban growth, expansion of education, and suffrage movements. In the first 150 years of the Republic, women addressed such issues as moral reform, care of widows and children, the mentally ill, conditions for women prisoners, abolition, aid for soldiers, temperance, suffrage, libraries as well as the environment, culture, health issues, and medical school training. More recently women have supported equal rights for women, more aggressive drunk driving laws, breast cancer research, economic development and employment opportunities for women, and many other issues.

Several themes reverberate throughout this history. From the earliest days of the Republic, women focused on “social change” as a process to alter the status quo and to improve conditions for individuals and families throughout the community. Consistent, too, are women's collective and individual voices in contributing to a richer understanding of women's expanding roles in society throughout U.S. history. Now as then, women worked for multiple causes and organizations simultaneously. Today, at the same time a woman may support the local women's fund, serve on the board of a social service agency, and volunteer overseas with her faith-based organization. And finally, unifying this story is the sense of “place” that each group of women and individual women claim for their work.

Much has been written about the concept of separate spheres for women and men – the private sphere of domesticity for women and the public sphere of business, government, and organized religion for men. Emanating from that private sphere, women created and ran their own organizations. Despite the confining role that society imposed on women during the formative years of this country, women carved out a distinct “place” as capable fundraisers, staunch

advocates, fearless leaders, dedicated volunteers, powerful forces for social change, and tireless workers for many causes, roles that continued unabated to this day.

This story is about how to exercise power when one is excluded from the halls of power. Women in the last 300 years used creative, clever, and canny means to effect social change during times when they could not vote, hold public office, or manage property they may have brought into a marriage. The history of women in American philanthropy tells the stories of women looking for equality; of women's efforts to assimilate into the political, cultural, and economic society; and of women trying to break free of the role of domesticity that society cast for them. It is a rich, textured story to which chapters are added daily.

The first significant philanthropic exchange by a woman for this country set the tone for a trend among women's giving that continues today. In 1643 Lady Ann Moulson (nee Radcliffe), a childless widow who was a "shrewd and able businesswoman" in London contributed £100 to Harvard College for a scholarship to aid poor scholars. Moulson responded to the appeal of Thomas Weld who had crossed the ocean seeking funds for the young college.

In the 18th century women's religious orders and the emerging voluntary associations run by women concentrated efforts on children and education. Ursuline nuns from France came to New Orleans and founded a convent and a school in 1727 and an orphanage in 1729. By the end of the century Isabella Graham, Elizabeth Ann Seton, and 15 other women founded New York's first female controlled charity, the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children. They focused on educating the children while the mothers worked, in an effort to break the cycle of poverty and encourage self-sufficiency. Organizations like this placed women's and children's issues on the public policy agenda for the first time in America. (McCarthy in Friedman, 183)

In the 1790s women could not vote or hold office. They were excluded from most public institutions and not allowed to fill leadership positions in religious organizations. Yet, in the first years of the Republic's existence, women began to carve a "place" for those who had "peculiar claims on the public's beneficence." (Lerner, 192)

The 19th Century – a growing social consciousness

At a convention in New York in 1837 abolitionist and suffragist Angelina Grimké stated, "the time has come for women to move in that sphere which Providence has assigned her, and no longer remain satisfied in the circumscribed limits..." (Ginzberg 29) Although speaking against slavery, her sentiment voiced the clarion call for women's philanthropic activity in the 19th century, a period of vast economic and legal change for women. Industrialization and the Civil War found women at work in factories and as nurses on the battlefields. As the century progressed, the increasing separation of work and home affected women of different classes in distinct ways.

The passage of the Married Women's Property Act in 1848 in New York and its subsequent revisions reversed the common law doctrine of *femme covert* in which a wife had no legal control over property, even that which was brought into the marriage. Prior to 1848 female

associational life and the charters the leaders obtained, enabled women to own and control property. Associational life, then, was a way for women to “push against the boundaries of their prescribed roles while broadening the meaning of democratic action.” (McCarthy, *Creed*, 41) These economic and legal changes irreversibly altered women’s self-perceptions of their “place” in society and contributed to the great expansion of associational life in which women of all classes, race, and religious affiliation endeavored in the 1800s.

A common description of the 19th century woman describes her as “passive, dependent, content, dedicated to home and family. (Dubois, 30) The oft-cited images of “Republican Motherhood,” the “cult of domesticity,” the “cult of true womanhood,” a “sisterhood,” and later, “municipal housekeeping” reinforce the notion of women in a separate sphere. By the end of the century, as a result of their work in associations women had learned fundraising and organizational skills, had influenced public policy, and operated more fully in the public sphere. Many women did so still under the guise of feminine attributes.

In the last 30 years historians have presented varying interpretations of the notion of separate spheres. One suggests that the separate sphere was the only viable political strategy for women in the 19th century. Some say that associational work was class based. Another says that associational work was a tool by which middle class women elevated their status. Some see that as the 19th century progressed, there was an extension of the women’s sphere rather than a rejection of it. Another interpretation says that associational activity was a place to exercise public influence otherwise denied to women. Some historians suggest that women’s work with voluntary associations is a direct connection to the emerging feminist consciousness at this time. (See the works of Freedman, Lerner, Scott, and Kerber.)

Despite the many interpretations of women’s philanthropic activity in the 19th century, one fact is certain. Virtually all of contemporary women’s philanthropic expression is grounded in the history of women’s collective and individual activities of the 19th century.

Consistent throughout this history is the focus on the needs of women and children, among the most vulnerable in society. In 1800, Hannah Stillman, reacting to a letter in a Boston newspaper, invited friends to meet in her home to discuss the issue of orphans. Electing “to step beyond what was then considered the limit of female duty,” the women created the Boston Female Asylum for the care of female orphan children, the first public charity organized by women in Boston. (Wales) Women’s benevolent societies which grew in the fervor of the Second Great Awakening, focused first on the needs of women, widows, and children, and then on indigent members of the population. Friendly visiting, an integral aspect of 19th century women’s associational work, placed the female volunteers in closer proximity than male civic leaders to the impoverished. What started as a moral imperative grew to have public policy implications as the volunteers began to realize that much poverty was economic in cause.

One historical study compared the influence of gender and class on the policies of two charities in Fall River and Lynn, Massachusetts around 1850. The results suggest that women’s influence and control of policies redirected the charity’s focus from the unworthy poor to programs that would help the poor, especially poor women. Once women assumed leadership roles at the charities, they recruited a female matron for women prisoners in the jail, set up day nurseries for

working women's children, advocated for vocational training for young girls, and established a cooking school, employment bureaus and sick loan closets. (Cumbler, 106) This study concludes that women's experiences with the poor in their communities contributed to an understanding of poverty and its root causes, leading the women to seek solutions for the systemic issues.

With the rise of industrialization, women in the upper classes helped working class women find jobs. In the spirit of today's nonprofit entrepreneurial enterprises, Sarah Josepha Hale, the head of the Boston Seaman's Aid Society, hired women to make clothes for the organization, and paid them more than the prevailing wage.

Nothing New Under the Sun

Nineteenth century "cent societies" are in some ways precursors to today's giving circles. Flourishing during the Second Great Awakening in the early years of the century, Protestant women went door to door and collected pennies, pooling their funds to support missionary and charitable activities. Missionary leader Samuel Worcester applauded the small gift as well as the large gift, emphasizing that it was important for all people to give something, a theme that echoes in fund raising today. Worcester stated, "it is necessary for a well ordered and harmonious state...that members should...act together, that they should feel their common interests, and be moved, as in a common impulse, to the promotion of a common end." (McCarthy, *Creed*, 82)

Education Expands the Sense of Place

Women's pursuit of higher education in the 19th century contributed in significant ways to the expansion of associational and civic life among white middle and upper class women. The higher education opportunities led to the political activism in the latter part of the century. Funding for women's higher education institutions ran the gamut from subscription drives to bequests. Mary Lyon traversed the country in 1837 raising \$27,000 from 1800 donors to begin Mt. Holyoke Seminary and Sophia Smith left nearly \$400,000 in her will in 1870 to create Smith College. Emma Willard established Troy Seminary in 1821, originally a publicly endowed school supported by subscription and by tax revenue. In her founding treatise she argued sensitively in favor of education for women as well as for men without upsetting the delicate balance between the genders:

But reason and religion teach that we too are primary existences...the companions, not the satellites of men... Education should seek to bring its subject to the perfection of their moral, intellectual, and physical nature ... in order that they may be the means of the greatest possible happiness of which they are capable, both as to what they enjoy and what they communicate. (Emma Willard School website)

She funded scholarships so all deserving young women, regardless of family income, could attend the school. Today, women across the country do the same.

Sophia Smith provided in her will for the founding of Smith College which opened its doors to 14 female students in 1875. Smith had inherited a substantial family fortune and was the first woman in America to endow a college for women. She argued more forcefully than Emma Willard had fifty years earlier for the importance of education to help women become equal

partners in social change. “It is my opinion that by the education of women, what are called their ‘wrongs’ will be redressed, their wages adjusted, their weight of influence in reforming the evils of society will be greatly increased, as teachers, as writers, as mothers, as members of society, their power for good will be incalculably enlarged...” (Smith College website)

The doors to higher education for black women opened wider in 1881 when two school teachers and Baptist missionaries from the north moved to Atlanta and started the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary, supported by the Women's American Baptist Home Mission Society. Three years later, in appreciation of John D. Rockefeller's contributions, the school name changed to Spelman Seminary in honor of Rockefeller's wife Laura Spelman Rockefeller. Spelman is the nation's oldest historically black college for women.

During the last quarter of the 19th century dozens of schools were founded for women in the northeast and south, expanding women's opportunities. Not only did individual women fund the new institutions, they leveraged their gifts for social change. As example, Mary Elizabeth Garrett donated the remainder of funds needed, about \$306,000, for the new medical school at Johns Hopkins University in 1893 conditional upon the university agreeing to admit women on the same basis as men.

In addition to the foresighted women of education, individual women also made history in the areas of social reform, temperance, care for the mentally ill, humanitarian aid, and the settlement movement. Much has been written about Dorothea Dix and her crusade for the mentally ill which resulted in opening of the first asylum in 1847. Frances Willard, who led the Women's Christian Temperance Union from 1879 to her death in 1898, believed fervently in the power of women to effect transformative social change. “The blossoming of women into deeds of philanthropy gives us a hint of the truer forms of society that are to come.” (Cullen-DuPont, 182). Clara Barton's experiences as the “angel on the battlefield” during the Civil War led to her founding the American Red Cross in 1881. Jane Addams founded Hull House in Chicago in 1889 to help immigrants and the working poor adapt to life in the urban environment. The accomplishments of these singular women have been recorded in history books. Lesser known are the accomplishments of thousands of women who worked collectively in the burgeoning association movement, raising the visibility and influence of women in the public arena.

Institution Building

The 19th century saw the rise of associations for middle-class and for working class women. White and black women organized, mostly separately, and the bevy of activities varied regionally. The emerging middle class towards the end of the 19th century found women with more discretionary or leisure time as a result of urbanization, mass production, availability of inexpensive domestic labor, and new inventions designed to ease women's household responsibilities. Along with women's growing access to education, these developments provided the foundation for throngs of women to join associations.

Throughout the 19th century African American women organized mutual aid societies, abolition societies, literary clubs, and general women's clubs. Volunteer service was encouraged, often focused on a desire for racial uplift. In 1832 the first African American women's club was founded, Boston's African American Female Intelligence Society. Often, African American

women created their own organizations when excluded by white women as in the case of the Manhattan Abolition Society in New York City.

The Civil War formed the backdrop for a significant “uprising of the women of the land.” Within a week after the firing on Fort Sumter, women organized soldier’s aid societies throughout the North (Scott, *On Seeing and Not Seeing*, 12). Women organized to aid soldiers and their families. By the end of the war, some 15,000 soldiers aid societies had been founded throughout the North and the South. In addition to the aid societies, women organized large Sanitary Fairs, first in Chicago and then in New York City and Philadelphia as well as other cities. The fairs in New York and Philadelphia raised \$1 million each, a tribute to the women’s strong organizational and leadership skills. Women raised more than \$15 million for troops during the war, about half of the revenues of the Sanitary Commission. The Civil War was a watershed moment for women in American, raising their profile outside the domestic sphere and offering them more visibility in the public sphere.

Two organizations, founded in 1858 and 1868, were quickly replicated around the country. The YWCA, the largest and oldest women’s association in the United States, originated from a similar organization in London and opened first in New York City. Ten years later Jane Cunningham Croly, a journalist, founded Sorosis in the same city as a professional women’s association after she was denied entrance to the New York Press Club to attend a lecture by Charles Dickens. After Sorosis chapters had blossomed around the country, Croly founded the General Federation of Women’s Clubs in 1890 with a focus on community improvement through volunteerism. In 1898 Croly wrote, “When the history of the nineteenth century comes to be written, women will appear as organizers, and as leaders of the great organized movements among their own sex for the first time in the history of the world.” (Scott, *Making the Invisible*, 279) By 1910 the GFWC membership had swelled to more than 1 million women, representing slightly more than one percent of the nation’s population.

The African American women’s clubs that developed in the last half of the 19th century provided services throughout their communities when it became clear that government would not. They absorbed much of the work of the Freedmen’s Bureau, a federal agency created after the Civil War to help freed blacks in the South, which closed in the early 1870s. The women worked unceasingly to help the aged and infirmed and to combat poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment. Many of the clubs combined in 1896 to create the National Association of Colored Women whose motto was “Lifting as We Climb,” and which continues its mission today.

The years 1870 to 1920 were the “high water mark of women’s public influence” up to that time in America. The women’s club movement expanded to all regions of the country with clubs forming to address a wide range of issues. By the end of the 19th century, for example, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union counted more than one million women around the country as members. The thirst for education prompted many women to form literary clubs from which grew a desire to create public libraries in large and small communities throughout the republic.

Women and the Rise of Public Libraries

After the Civil War women organized groups to expand their education. Book clubs and literary societies proliferated with some small towns boasting of more than five distinct groups. The women's commitment led to creation of lending libraries and eventually to community libraries. Many people know of Andrew Carnegie's philanthropy towards building libraries across American at the turn of the 20th century. Less well known is the dual role women across the nation played in developing public libraries. First, independent of Carnegie, they created public libraries. By June 1904 women's clubs had established 474 free public libraries (Watson, 235). Second, they were instrumental in most towns in raising the ten percent match Carnegie required of each town. In 1933 the American Library Association stated that women's clubs started 75 percent of the public libraries in existence.

At this time women still did not have the vote although the suffrage movement was gaining momentum. Women were still constrained by the 19th century "cult of domesticity" which relegated them to the more private sphere. Yet, thousands of women in communities around the country raised funds for libraries through creative special events such as bake sales, festivals, cookbook sales, variety shows, and tag sales – projects that are familiar to women through the generations. Their commitment to the cause led them to be vocal advocates to local and state governments for tax support and legislation related to the fledgling libraries. In many communities, women served as the first librarians and maintained sophisticated traveling library systems.

In some cases, advocacy led to governmental positions on library commissions. In Boise, Idaho the women of the Columbian Club were so sophisticated in campaigning to the legislature that when the law passed, it stated that two of the five commission members had to be women. In reality, four of the first five members were women. All of them belonged to clubs around the state. (Watson, 244).

Another example from Geneva, Illinois documented that the library project gained momentum only when the women in the community volunteered to help. In 1873 a group of men formed the Geneva Library Association as a subscription library. It failed and in 1884 a second group of men initiated efforts to start a library. This time, women offered to join with the men and under the auspices of the Young Mother's Club of the Geneva Improvement Association, lobbied for a tax for a reading room, collected books, and began a capital campaign for a library. By 1894 they had raised \$1,700 but could not raise enough to complete the building. In 1907 they petitioned Carnegie for funds. Carnegie granted them \$7,500. (Watson, 252)

The women involved with library organizing, decidedly middle and upper-middle class, learned new skills apart from their domestic sphere. They gained expertise in the value of money, lobbying, the art of persuasion, and how to manage real estate. Many of the clubwomen served as the first librarians at the public library. Ultimately, the goal they worked towards was accomplished but they were pushed to the sidelines because of the need for negotiations with elected officials of the municipal governments and of the shift to professional expertise.

The 19th century emphasized the tradition of women as "civilizing and moralizing forces in society." (Conway, 174) As the examples above document, some women began to identify with a sense of place outside the realm of domesticity and developed or honed skills to help them

claim a more public role in the public sphere. Factors that contributed to more opportunities for women towards the end of the 19th century included the increased need for teachers in public schools, the formation of literary clubs, the growing number of working women, the need for nurses, and the movement for equal rights for women. The momentum that built around women's right to vote was unequalled by any other movement to that time.

Claiming a More Visible Role in the Public Sphere

The early decades of the 20th century are filled with stories of individual women who claimed visible roles in the public sphere. Lugenia Burns Hope (1871-1947) carried the message of hope and social reform to thousands of individuals and families in Atlanta, Georgia. As a young woman she worked with the women at Hull House in Chicago. After marrying John Hope who became the president of Atlanta University, in 1908 Lugenia Hope founded the Neighborhood Union in Atlanta, a center modeled after the famous settlement house. The Neighborhood Union is distinguished as the first woman-run social welfare agency for African Americans in Atlanta. She wanted to improve education for black children, demanded better health and housing programs, advocated for better streets and more streetlights to deter crime. Hope also served as a leader with the National Council of Negro Women that had been founded in 1935 by Mary McLeod Bethune. She is one among many examples of determined women who worked for social change in a very public arena in the early 20th century.

In 1920 the 19th Amendment was ratified and women in the United States had the right to vote. Many thousands of women and their indefatigable leaders Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Alice Paul, and Carrie Chapman Catt worked tirelessly ensure this right. Mrs. Frank Leslie, not regarded at the time especially as a feminist or suffragist, left her estate at her death in 1914 to Carrie Chapman Catt. The will was contested and after two years of litigation, the bequest had been reduced nearly in half to one million dollars. Yet this money was sufficient to launch a national public relations campaign in 1917 to advance the suffrage cause and carry it to its successful conclusion.

Mrs. Frank Leslie, born Miriam Follen (1836-1914), married Frank Leslie, a successful magazine publisher. She helped grow the business and sustained it after his death, even taking his name as her first name to prevent one of Frank's sons from taking over the business. A perceptive and immensely successful businesswoman, Mrs. Leslie kept one foot ensconced in the romantic idealism of 19th century and the other foot firmly planted in the rising feminist movement. She said women must "emancipate themselves in the best meaning of the word from the swaddling bands and chains of roses that have fettered their limbs hitherto." (Cheney)

The early 20th century is noteworthy for the narratives of individual wealthy women whose philanthropy enriched the arts and cultural landscape and contributed to building the field of social science research. Industrialization had created a new breed of philanthropic giants such as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller. With more limited resources and not content to emulate these men, women such as Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney creatively used their wealth to create new cultural institutions. Abby Rockefeller (1874-1948) used money inherited from her own Aldrich family to amass an exceptional modern art collection that became the foundation for the museum she created in 1929, the Museum of

Modern Art. At the time her husband, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. was collecting antiquities and Old Masters, artifacts she could not afford. Instead she collected works by the new “modern” artists so that she could stretch her wealth further.

Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1876-1942), the great-granddaughter of the legendary 19th century railroad tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt, married Harry Payne Whitney, scion of another wealthy New York family. Unfulfilled by the Gilded Age lifestyle, Gertrude began to sculpt and developed a keen interest in art. In 1904 she crafted her philanthropic plan, providing vision not only for herself but sound advice for future generations of philanthropists as well. She said she would focus on “what you could be permanently interested in” and to “be sure that it is something in which all of your advantages count.” (McCarthy, *Women’s Culture*, 222) Whitney advocated concentrating on new initiatives that the patron or donor could start, getting advice from a broad range of people, and using both her money and her position in society to achieve her goals.

A patron of living American artists, Whitney encouraged them, paid their rent from time to time, funded travels to Europe, and purchased their artworks. Beginning in 1914 she opened several studios for artists who were not able to exhibit their work elsewhere and in 1931 opened the Whitney Museum of Art after the august Metropolitan Museum of Art declined her collection of American paintings. An individualist on the cutting edge of a new era for women, Whitney used her money and her position to create a lasting legacy for American art.

Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage (1828-1918) founded the Russell Sage Foundation in 1907, a year after her parsimonious husband died, leaving her a vast fortune. As one of the first of a new breed of organizations dedicated to “scientific philanthropy,” the foundation focused on research and programs to foster “the improvement of social and living conditions in the United States of America.” A graduate of Emma Willard’s Troy Seminary, Sage became a teacher and did not marry Russell Sage until she was in her early 40s. Sage’s “philanthropic vision was shaped by a tradition of Christian stewardship and her early practice was the genteel activism of the Victorian woman of wealth, consisting of donations of volunteer time, material goods, and small amounts of money.” (Crocker, in Friedman, 199)

Mr. Sage did not contribute time or money to charity. As “Mrs. Russell Sage,” his wife “constructed an identity around benevolence,” a role she maintained until his death in 1906 and expanded until her death twelve years later. The reason she named the foundation in her husband’s name rather than in her own is clouded in mystery. Perhaps it was a way to honor the marriage that enabled her to become one of the country’s leading female philanthropists but more likely it was a vestige of her “sense of place.” Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage lived during a transition for women from a more private to a more public persona, especially in terms of philanthropy and activism.

Until the end of the suffrage campaign, the history of women’s philanthropy is replete with examples of the collective and individual voices that contributed to the vibrant chorus. After women achieved suffrage to the early 1960s the chorus gets weaker, even to the point of not being heard at all. Scholars offer several theories to explain the gap. One suggests that the women’s network broke down at the same time as middle class women tried to “assimilate into

male dominated institutions” rejecting women’s culture in favor of men’s promise of equality. (Freedman, 514) Women’s strength and power had come from the visible, vocal following. When suffrage was achieved and the clamor subsided, women were relegated once again to subordinates.

Another states that no “transcendent ideological vision existed after 1920 to give cohesion to the women’s movement.” (Chafe) A third identifies the advent of professionalism, the rise of mass culture, and suburban flight as contributors to the decline in women’s activities after 1920. She also cites as a factor that the notion of philanthropy was less of an obligation and more of a hobby. (McCarthy) Yet another refers to the reemergence of the “ethic of domesticity” after women gained the vote, particularly as key to preserving the family. The family had become the nucleus of society leading to the “commercialization of the romantic female.” (Conway)

Whether one of the theories or a mix of them is viable, more research is needed to understand what happened to women’s collective activism immediately after the ratification of the 19th amendment.

From Civil Rights to Women’s Rights to the Contemporary Women’s Philanthropy Movement

Women took an active role in the Civil Rights movement. Wednesdays in Mississippi is an example of civil rights as women’s work. Busloads of northern women descended on Mississippi throughout the summer of 1964 in an interfaith and interracial effort to bring supplies and much needed support to the rural communities. Sponsored by the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), Wednesdays in Mississippi (WIMS) was the only civil rights program organized by women, for women, as part of a national women’s organization.

The rise of feminism in the 1960s is attributed to publication of Freidan’s *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, the civil rights movement, and the increasing number of women in the workforce. Feminism also contributed to the emergence of a new wave of women’s philanthropy.

The next major phase of women’s philanthropy began in 1972 with the creation of the Ms. Foundation, the first women’s fund in the United States. The founders were committed to the idea of women’s collective power to ignite change. The model they chose was to raise funds and grant it to programs that supported women and girls. Other communities followed the lead of the Ms. Foundation. The Dallas Women’s Foundation was created in 1985, New York Women’s Foundation in 1987, and the Global Fund for Women in 1987. Family foundations such as the Daphne Fund, created by Abigail Disney in 1991, and the Sister Fund, created by Helen LaKelly Hunt in 1993, directed inherited wealth to this cause. In 1985 the Women’s Funding Network was formed as a membership association of the women’s funds. At that time there were more than 60 women’s funds across the country.

Today, more that 140 women’s funds around the globe belong to the Women’s Funding Network with collective working assets of \$465 million. Philanthropist sisters Helen LaKelly Hunt and Swanee Hunt are partnering with the Women’s Funding Network on the Women Moving

Millions project. Initiated in 2007 to raise the profile of women's giving, Women Moving Millions focused on raising million dollar gifts from individual women around the world. By May 2009, the project reached \$174 million, exceeding its initial goal of \$150 million by 16 percent.

In the 1990s, community foundations began to create donor-advised or affiliated funds to provide women the opportunity to engage in grantmaking around causes for women and girls. Many models appear in cities and communities around the country engaging thousands of women across race, culture, religion and generation in strategic grantmaking.

During the late 20th century a multitude of women's philanthropic activities dotted the landscape. Unique features of this contemporary movement were the use of distinct models of giving such as women's funds and giving circles. Women created the organizations, women funded the organizations, and women disbursed the funds. A strength of the contemporary women's philanthropy movement is its *multi-faceted, kaleidoscopic approach* to changing how women actualize philanthropy. The myriad ways for women to be engaged in philanthropy expands exponentially the number of women across generations who seek the niche best suited to them to put their values into action. In the case of the women's philanthropy movement, one size does not fit all nor are there absolutely pure models to follow.

Examples abound of contemporary women's desires to effect social change. Two causes that affect the lives of thousands of people daily are drunk driving and breast cancer. In 1980 Candy Lightner founded Mothers Against Drunk Driving after her 13-year old daughter was killed by a drunk driver. Today, MADD has a \$50 million budget and chapters in every state. Nancy Brinker founded Komen Race for the Cure in 1982 in memory of her sister, Susan G. Komen, who died from breast cancer.

Although the contemporary women's philanthropy movement started primarily through the efforts of white middle and upper class women, today women all over the world and across all races, religions, ages, and causes enrich the movement. One example, among many, is the African American women's social service organization, The Links, Inc. Founded in 1946 to "link friends in service," today the Links has more than 11,000 members in 275 chapters around the United States and in the Bahamas, Germany, and South Africa. Women across race and culture are active in giving circles such as the African American Women's Giving Circle at the Washington Area Women's Foundation and the Asian Women's Giving Circle in New York City. For more information about the rise of giving circles see the booklet *Women's Giving Circles: Reflections from the Founders* in the Resource section for this course.

Today women are everywhere in the public sphere. Women are in space and on the battlefields. Women serve in Congress leading to the quip that "a woman's place is in the House...and the Senate." The division of spheres may have been a 19th century conceit but women today carry a "sense of place" that is a catalyst for pursuing a "true vision of a democratic society." Women today are concerned about the less fortunate, especially women and girls. Women today continue to fund scholarships for the needy as Lady Ann Moulson did more than 350 years ago. Women today advocate, lobby, and press for reform; urge us to be good stewards of the environment; volunteer at schools; and contribute to hundreds of causes around the globe.

This narrative addresses some of the recurring themes that permeate the history of women's philanthropy in America. First, consistent throughout the scholarly discourse is use of the phrase "social change" to reflect women's intent to change the status quo. Women in America joined together to make lives better, first for women and girls, and then for the entire community. This "pervasive commitment to social change, usually in the form of concrete problem solving" is one of women's continuing contributions to American life. (Scott, *On Seeing and Not Seeing*, 15)

Second, both women's collective and individual pursuit of philanthropy to strengthen society is documented throughout the history. Prior to 1848 and the passage of the married women's property act, there are fewer known examples of individual women's philanthropic activity. This is fertile ground for future scholarly research. Finally, women have never been content to pursue just one avenue of philanthropic activity. The history is abundant with examples of women creating organizations to help women and girls as well as founding institutions of higher education, supporting the environment, libraries, the mentally ill, and labor issues.

A comprehensive history of women's philanthropy in America has yet to be written. This overview highlights American women's domestic agenda and only mentions in passing their involvement in overseas missions and educational efforts. Most of the literature reviewed for this project concentrated on "progressive" activities, prompting the need to examine the individuals and organizations that arose in opposition to these activities such as Phyllis Schlafly's "Stop the ERA" movement. Deeper understanding about this field comes, too, from exploration of women's philanthropy around the globe.

As women continue to have access to more education and more income, they are likely to be more visible on the philanthropic landscape. As the internet becomes a more accepted vehicle for giving, more women around the globe will experience the joy of philanthropy. Perhaps the best chapter in this rich, complex, and vibrant history is yet to be written.

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