Addams, Jane

- Born: Sept. 6, 1860, Cedarville, Ill.
- Education: Rockford Female Seminary, Rockford, Ill., graduated 1881, awarded B.A., 1882
- Accomplishments: founder, Hull House settlement (1889); first woman president, National Conference of Charities and Corrections (1909–10); founder, International Congress of Women, The Hague, and first president of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (1919); Nobel Peace Prize (1931)
- Died: May 21, 1935, Chicago, Ill.

JANE ADDAMS, the founder of Hull House settlement, a neighborhood center that served immigrant urban residents of Chicago, led many Progressive-Era social reform movements. She grew up in the care of her widowed father, a businessman and local political leader, who encouraged her education. She wanted to study medicine, but problems with her spine caused her to abandon this plan. After graduating from college, she toured Europe, where English efforts to alleviate the misery of the poor in London impressed her. On her return in 1889, she and her friend Ellen Gates Starr settled into the former suburban home of Charles J. Hull on Chicago’s Near West Side, a district that had become filled with thousands of immigrant families.

The young women’s goal was to learn the needs of the poor from the poor themselves. Slowly, they developed innovative activities and programs to serve them, such as day nurseries, clubs, and lectures. The admiration these programs won from social commentators and philanthropists enabled Addams to expand them over the following years. Helen Culver, Charles Hull’s heir, ultimately bequeathed the mansion to Addams and donated $50,000 for a boys’ building. Mary Rozet Smith, Addams’ close friend, was the settlement’s largest financial contributor, but local professionals, such as University of Chicago philosophy professor John Dewey and reform lawyer Clarence Darrow, also contributed. Other help for salaries, buildings, and programs came from the wealthy members of the Chicago Woman’s Club and Chicago’s Kindergarten Association. In his 1902 book, The Battle with the Slum, Jacob Riis, an investigative reporter and photographer based in New York City, said of Addams, “They have good sense in Chicago. Jane Addams is there.”

As Hull House’s chief resident, Addams eventually administered a complex of 13 structures that included a playground, art gallery, gymnasium, swimming pool, library, employment bureau, labor museum, handicraft shops, and an apartment house for working girls. Hull House’s facilities and programs became models for other settlements across the country.

Addams’s accomplishments at Hull House earned her worldwide fame. The professional field of social work credits...
her as one of its founders. She inspired efforts to pass progressive labor laws in the United States, including those for workmen’s compensation, improved hours and wages for working women, and an end to child labor. She also became involved in politics, formulating much of the Progressive party’s social justice platform on equal suffrage and working conditions, and campaigning for the election of Theodore Roosevelt as President in 1912. She campaigned for woman suffrage and, when World War I loomed, for world peace. She helped found the Woman’s Peace Party. She also published many articles and books, which included her autobiography, interpretations of immigrant life, and philosophical works on the nature of democracy.

In the 1910s and 1920s, many Americans criticized Addams’s pacifism as unpatriotic. When she won the first Nobel Peace Prize given to an American woman, she found her reputation was restored. The Nobel committee praised her for “trying to raise the ideal of peace in [the American] people and in the whole world” for 25 years. They continued, “we also pay homage to the work which women can do for the cause of peace and fraternity among nations.”

SEE ALSO
Child labor; Hull House; Peace movement; Progressive party; Riis, Jacob; Settlement-house movement; Woman’s Peace Party

FURTHER READING


African Americans

THREE CONSTITUTIONAL amendments had a profound effect on African Americans after the Civil War. The 13th Amendment (1865) freed the slaves, the 14th (1868) granted them and their descendents full civil rights and protections as U.S. citizens, and the 15th (1870) guaranteed black men the right to vote. These new rights met bitter resentment among white southerners who hated losing the superiority they had held in the pre-war South. Northern troops occupying southern states had done much to protect the rights of the newly freed African Americans, but, as the last of these occupation troops pulled out in 1877, white supremacists intensified their efforts to defeat the purposes of the three “Reconstruction Amendments.” Stepping up their use of intimidation and terror, including lynching, they kept African Americans from voting and holding elected offices. The few black men who managed to hold public office did so only at the lowest levels, and only at the pleasure of powerful white Democratic party leaders.

In addition to their tacit acceptance of racist violence, white lawmakers in most southern states exerted further control over African Americans by passing “Black Codes.” These codes restricted African Americans’ mobility and property ownership, curtailed their civil and political rights, and required the segregation of public facilities, such as schools and transportation systems. The federal government later declared that the harshest