

the neighborhood in which they settled. But the relationship was not equal. The “settlers” called themselves “residents” of Hull House. The inhabitants of Chicago’s nineteenth ward were their “neighbors.” As the *Woman’s Journal* described the proposed enterprise: “[These] “young ladies” ... propose to live [in Chicago’s nineteenth ward], to know the most wretched phases of poverty from actual contact; to study the needs of these people, and then to devise means for their elevation.”⁵ Yet, even as the settlement grew to an ensemble of thirteen buildings occupying a full city block Addams refused to see it as an institution, arguing for a sustained “flexibility” to adapt as the environment demanded.

Numerous residents’s writings attest to the need to reside in the neighborhood in order to accomplish the settlement’s work. The house itself was an object within the space of the city. Addams began her article “The Objective Value of a Social Settlement” with a physical description of the house and its context which spoke directly to the urban-industrial conditions which she hoped the settlement would ameliorate. Built in 1856 by Charles J. Hull and eventually deeded to the settlement by his heir Helen Culver, Hull House sat in what was once a suburb of Chicago. By the time the architect Allen B. Pond brought Addams to see the house, Hull and his family had long abandoned it and a tenement district teeming with European immigrants—the foreign colonies—had grown up around it. Addams was taken by the provisional character⁶ of the tenements and the life of their residents, who would become the objects of the settlements’ work: “The site for a settlement was selected in the first instance because of its diversity, and the variety of activity for which it presented an opportunity. It has been the aim of the residents to respond to ... the neighborhood as a whole.”⁷ The objective space was the neighborhood and the city. By 1889 the house was already a relic of an agricultural past eclipsed by industry and tenements. Addams’s own writings speak to the house’s anomalous position within the tenement district, and it is probably the case that had Addams not come to occupy the house, it too would have fallen prey to the industrialization around it.

Hull House served as both residence and institution. Although the objective value of the settlement—its institutional purpose—was to work for the improvement of its neighborhood and its neighbors, the settlement also met important subjective needs for Addams and the residents, for the most part college-educated women, in need of a space in which to put thought into action. Addams’s text “The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements” addresses the purposes that the house served for its residents.⁸ The “settlers” used the house as both a site for collective living and as a means of forming a community that gave them access to public life.⁹ Hull House offered its female residents a way to occupy the public space of the city. They created a place that did not yet exist—both physically, by building Hull House, and institutionally, by creating an alternative to the separate spheres of gendered life in late-nineteenth-century society. To do this the settlement had to remain flexible, engage in reciprocal relations with its neighborhood, and be willing to

act provisionally¹⁰: the settlement for all its domestic comforts was a very unsettling place. It was a space that had not yet been invented; it was both pragmatic and contingent.

Although initially modeled on Toynbee Hall in London, it did not take Addams and the early residents long to realize that the problems of industrial relations and industrialization in *American* cities hinged less on class than on immigration and migration, ethnicity and race. The arrival of Florence Kelley, whose work focused on the problems of urban labor, helped to expand the work of the house from domestic concerns to the larger context of urban reform. No project illustrated this better than the *Hull House Maps and Papers*, published in 1895. This document was created by the residents of Hull House out of data collected in relation to Florence Kelley’s work for the United States Department of Labor. A rich and diverse document, *Hull House Maps and Papers* allows us to see Hull House, its neighborhood (Chicago’s nineteenth ward), and its neighbors at a critical moment, around the years of the World’s Fair of 1893: a celebration of “the coming of age of American industry.”¹¹ The maps offered an image of the geographical distribution of the “foreign colonies,” revealing physical and social interactions in this densely and diversely populated ward. They were an attempt at “a photographic reproduction of Chicago’s poorest quarters...and ... an illustration of a method of research.”¹² They reinforced the transitional quality of the neighborhood, of buildings and residents on the move: “... and almost any day in walking through a half-dozen blocks one will see a frame building, perhaps two or three, being carried away on rollers....”¹³ Concerned that the documents be taken seriously as social science, resident Agnes Holbrook, who wrote the notes that accompanied the maps stated apologetically: “Families also move about constantly, going from tenement to tenement.... ...form[ing] a floating population of some magnitude, and a kodak view of such a shifting scene must necessarily be blurred and imperfect here or there.”¹⁴

While “...the aim of both maps and notes is to present conditions rather than to advance theories....”¹⁵ they proved indispensable as documents to support the residents’s social activism, particularly on behalf of women and children. Using, as Katherine Kish Sklar notes, the strengths of the nineteenth-century notion of a “women’s sphere” the residents developed a paradigm for women’s participation in progressive reform.¹⁶ Working first on behalf of women and children residents were able to address a series of larger urban and social issues. As Kelley herself pointed out, “detail work” led to social action.¹⁷ *Hull-House Maps and Papers* uncovered a feminine aspect of the city that had previously gone unexplored.¹⁸ *Hull-House Maps and Papers* signifies a change in the idea of the settlement from a form of model home through which to bring culture and civilization to the city wilderness to an organization working to advance urban and industrial change.¹⁹ Speaking of the interaction of radical reform and female relationships Smith-Rosenberg wrote: “Through their efforts to re-form urban America, they created a position of power and legitimacy for themselves”²⁰

To put all historic significance upon city walls and triumphal arches is to teach history from the political and governmental side, which too often presents solely the records of wars and restrictive legislation, emphasizing that which destroys life and property rather than the processes of labor, which really create and conserve civilization.²⁸

Addams is calling for a rethinking of the term “history” and how it is represented in public space. Advanced for its time, this component of the Labor Museum predates the development of the discipline of women’s history with its emphasis of what has been left out of official history, daily life. The Labor Museum can also be measured against the development of “culture” in Chicago at this time, the building of museums, libraries, and new universities, typically in neo-historical styles.²⁹ Addams is trying to get at another definition of culture, that which is present in the neighborhood in which she lived and worked. The Museum was a new way to bring neighbors into the house through their own history, connecting them with the activities of the settlement as well as attempting to connect the settlement to the factories of the neighborhood. Clearly there are several problematic aspects of this project, not least of which is turning the inhabitants of the neighborhood into the “exhibits” of their own history, as if this alone would change their relationship to their work in sweatshops and factories. Addams and the Hull House residents struggled along with their neighbors with the concept of “naturalization.” As Anderson writes: “The son of an Italian immigrant to New York will find ancestors in the Pilgrim Fathers. If nationalness has about it an aura of fatality, it is nonetheless a fatality embedded in *history*.”³⁰ The question remained, as it does today, what place do the actual ancestors of the immigrant’s son have in this history?

In very different ways, the residents of Hull House were trying to find their own way in this new urban context. Individuals who resided at Hull House were consciously choosing to live a very public life; their house was a very public space—the kitchen, dining room, parlor, and upper hall were all used by the neighborhood at various times of the day. As the settlement grew more discrete spaces were created, distinguishing living quarters from public spaces, although there were permeable and interdependent spaces. Except for the living quarters themselves most spaces were used for multiple purposes over the course of a day or week, and many buildings changed function over time. Speaking of the growth of the settlement over the years, Addams wrote: “They [the architects] clothed in brick and mortar and made visible to the world that which we were trying to do....”³¹ Over the years Hull House grew both in relation to the “demands” of the neighborhood, but also as a response to the activities and programs various residents wanted to pursue. The mission and program of the settlement shifted and congealed through accumulation. Like a city or an educational institution experiments were tried out in temporary quarters; often those deemed successful would require a new facility. Addams’s nephew James Weber Linn quoted his aunt as saying toward the

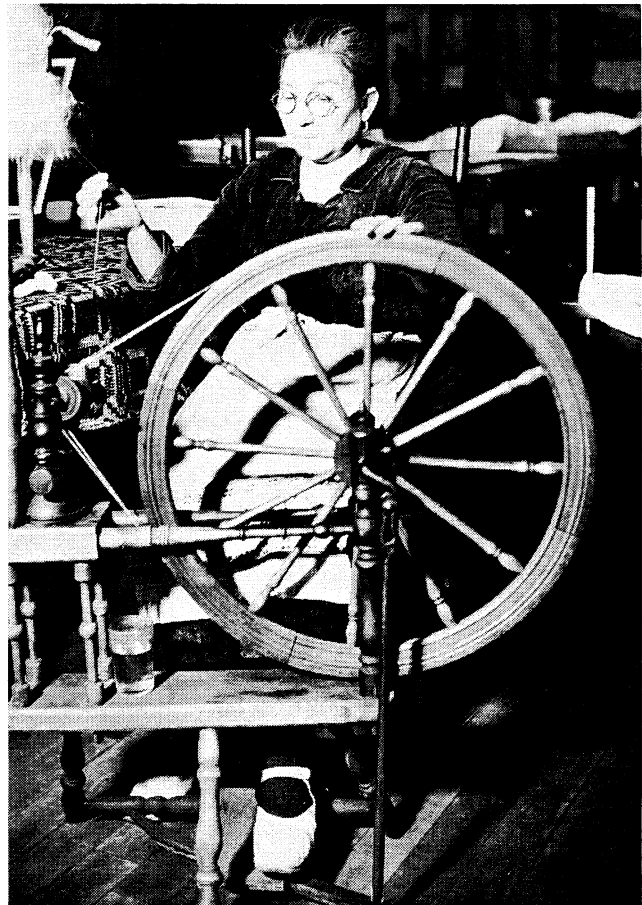


Fig. 4. Spinning in the Labor Museum (University of Illinois at Chicago, The University Library, Jane Addams Memorial Collection, Wallace Kirkland Papers, neg 1324)

end of her life: “We used to think nothing of moving a building twenty-seven feet west, nine feet south, and fourteen feet up.” The Pond brothers did it all, harmonized everything.”³² Addams was probably speaking specifically of the move of the “original” coffee house, one of the early outreach programs for the neighborhood, a space intended as a substitute for the saloon and an opportunity for the intermingling of residents and neighbors. When the original building, located adjacent to the north side of the house, was deemed inadequate for its tasks, it was moved across the alley to the west and reoriented in a north south direction. On its new site it acquired an extension and a third floor and became home to the crafts shops, labor museum, and gymnasium. A new, enlarged coffee house and auditorium was built on the original site. The residential components of the house grew as well to provide housing for the swelling population of women residents and to provide residences for men.

The best source on the architecture of the Hull House settlement and of settlements themselves was provided by Pond, a



Fig. 5. Hull-House and Halsted Street ca. 1928 (University of Illinois at Chicago, The University Library, Jane Addams Memorial Collection, Wallace Kirkland Papers, neg 152)

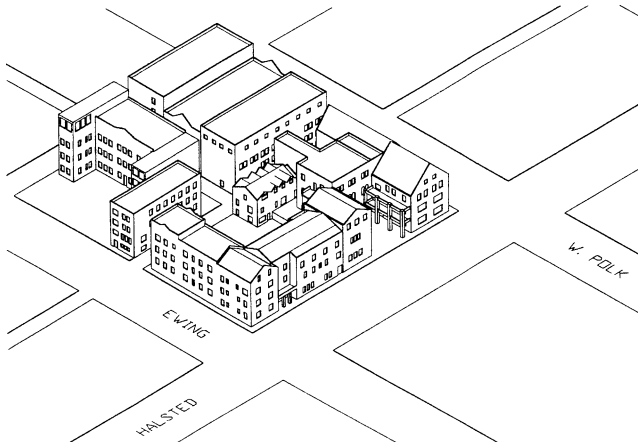


Fig. 6. Hull House in 1909

Hull House trustee and architect of all but its original building, in a three part series in the *Brickbuilder* in 1902. In these articles he described the program of a settlement: recreation, social spaces, artistic spaces, public needs, civic needs, and finally residential spaces. Since the settlement movement grew quickly and through experimentation it should not be surprising that these elements are precisely those that were found at Hull House in its final form, as it served as a model for many later settlements. Pond noted that it was not uncommon for a settlement to first utilize an existing building, before adding new facilities or building a new building, adapting to the contingencies of a site and a particular neighborhood.³³ The final article in the series was devoted almost exclusively to Hull House. Providing a narrative of the physical development of Hull House, Pond describes the house compared to examples of settlement houses built de novo: "...Hull House is plainly rather an aggregation of partially related units than a logical organism."³⁴ Hull

House underwent an urbanization. From a singular object in the prairie to an object in a dense urban fabric it then grew in a manner that articulated a series of changing relationships to its urban context, ultimately becoming part of the physical fabric of the neighborhood. In 1893 many activities were sited in buildings within the neighborhood. By the turn of the century the original building was surrounded by new constructions and as a whole they formed a small courtyard addressing the street. After the turn of the century with the addition of an apartment building, a music school, and the dining room the complex became a quad. By this time the settlement was sorted into functional units that nonetheless retained a great deal of interdependency. While public functions retained their entrances on the street, residences were entered from the interior courtyard. Hull House challenged the way in which the house—the domestic sphere—was sited within the city. The interior spaces and the exterior form of the container were literally and figuratively porous and permeable. The architecture and urbanity of Hull House reconfigured the relationship between the public and private spheres, allowing them to cohabitate, yet protecting their distinctions.

The last building to be built in the Hull House complex, the Dining Hall, was completed in 1907. Jane Addams died in 1935, but the work of the Hull House Association continued at the settlement until the early 1960s when much of the land to the west of the buildings was cleared to make way for the new University of Illinois at Chicago campus.³⁵ Conscious of the value of their buildings as a historic monument, the Hull House Trustees, nonetheless, sold their land to the city for the building of the campus stating: "About 1959 we realized that, when the slums around us were cleared and rebuilt, there would be only one slum left and that would be Hull-House."³⁶ The Association then dispersed its programs to several regional facilities "following" the dispersal of the communities they served. The question remained, what to do with the buildings themselves? As the vast majority of the buildings were in the way of the already designed student center, the decision was made to destroy eleven of the original thirteen buildings, retaining both the original building and the dining hall.³⁷ As the new Dean of the College of Architecture and the Arts, Leonard Currie, wrote to the Chicago Landmarks Commission: "The old house will stand out in all its architectural splendor, seemingly as though freshly emerged from its chrysalis. A symbol of tradition in a university dedicated to the future, Hull House may well be regarded as the soul of the new campus." Unsure as to how to treat the fragments that had become imbedded in the complex, the decision was made to return the house "to approximately the state in which Miss Addams discovered it in 1889" to serve as a Jane Addams Memorial.³⁸

What is Hull House today? According to the Historic American Building Survey:

"The house operates as a museum, a library and a monument to Jane Addams and the settlement movement."

It continues:

The Charles J. Hull mansion, an architecturally interesting example of Italianate Victorian architecture constructed in 1856, did not actually take on significance until 1889, when Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr began using it as a settlement house. Here they established one of the earliest and certainly the best known of all social settlements. The house is a National Historic Landmark.

As a “museum” it houses artifacts of the settlement: pictures, texts, various exhibits of “daily life” as lived at the settlement. As a “house-museum” it is a monument to the pre-fire era, before the “settlers” inhabited it. The Chicago Landmarks Commission considers it “the best remaining example of Chicago of the fine residential architecture of its period.”³⁹ But Hull-House is also a woman’s monument. A prominent feature of *Walking with Women Through Chicago History*, we are asked to imagine, through the remaining artifacts, Jane Addams, the radical work and community of the settlement residents, and the lives of the women of the immigrant communities that surrounded the house.⁴⁰ A vastly overdetermined building, “Jane Addams’ Hull-House”—as it is known today—has been reduced to the image that many want to retain of Addams and colleagues’s work: a community of Victorian women who set about to domesticate Chicago’s immigrant masses. Anderson writes of colonial monuments:

...reconstructed monuments [of old sacred sites] often had smartly laid-out lawns around them, and always explanatory tablets, complete with datings, planted here and there. Moreover, they were to be kept empty of people, except for perambulatory tourists (no religious ceremonies or pilgrimages, so far as possible). Museumized this way, they were repositioned as regalia for a secular colonial state.⁴¹

Ironically, Hull House, a secular working community has become a museum and in the process a sacred site within the context of a secular culture that has not yet discovered how to celebrate diversity and change.

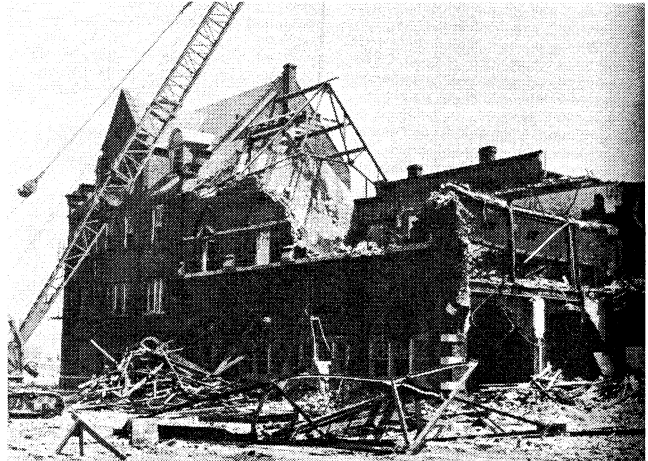


Fig. 7. Hull House Demolition (University of Illinois at Chicago, The University Library, Jane Addams Memorial Collection, Wallace Kirkland Papers, neg 1012)



Fig. 8. “Restored” Jane Addams’ Hull-House (University of Illinois at Chicago, The University Library, Jane Addams Memorial Collection, neg. 190)

ENDNOTES

- ¹ There is little written about the architecture of Hull House. The two best known texts are Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, "Hull-House as Women's Space," *Chicago History XII* (Winter 1983-1984):40-55 and Guy Szuberla, "Three Chicago Settlements: Their Architectural Form and Social Meaning," *Journal of the Illinois Historical Society LXX*(May 1977):114-129. The most complete discussion of the architecture of the house through 1902 was provided by its architect, Allen B. Pond. His articles will be considered further later in this essay.
- ² Jane Addams, "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements," in *Philanthropy and Social Progress* (Maryland: McGrath Publishing Company, 1969 [1893]), p. 1.
- ³ Addams, "Subjective Necessity," p. 11.
- ⁴ The concept of the city as a "frontier," a "wilderness," a place of "disorder," is crucial to the rhetoric of urban growth at the end of the nineteenth century and had a significant impact on both how settlements developed and were perceived by the American public. See for example Sam Bass Warner, *The Urban Wilderness: A History of the American City*, Robert A. Woods, ed. *The City Wilderness: A Settlement Study by Residents and Associates of the South End House*, and Carl Smith, *Urban Disorder and the Shape of Belief: The Great Chicago Fire, The Haymarket Bomb, and the Model Town of Pullman*.
- ⁵ Leila G. Bedell, "A Chicago Toynbee Hall," *The Woman's Journal* (Boston, May 25, 1889):162.
- ⁶ Jane Addams, "The Objective Value of a Social Settlement," in *Philanthropy and Social Progress* (Maryland: McGrath Publishing Company, 1969 [1893]), p. 30.
- ⁷ Addams, "Objective Value," p. 32.
- ⁸ Addams, "The Subjective Necessity," pp. 6, 22-23.
- ⁹ Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981), p. 174.
- ¹⁰ Addams, "The Subjective Necessity," pp. 22-26.
- ¹¹ Katherine Kish Sklar, "Hull-House Maps and Papers: Social Science as Women's Work in the 1890s," in Martin Bulmer et. al., *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- ¹² Agnes Sinclair Holbrook, "Map Notes and Comments," in Residents of Hull-House, *Hull-House Maps and Papers* (NY: Arno Press, Inc., 1970 [1895]), p. 11.
- ¹³ Holbrook, "Map Notes," p. 12.
- ¹⁴ Holbrook, "Map Notes," p. 13.
- ¹⁵ Holbrook, "Map Notes," p. 14.
- ¹⁶ Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Hull House in the 1890s: A Community of Women Reformers," *Signs* 10 (Summer 1985), p. 677.
- ¹⁷ Florence Kelley, "Hull House," *New England Magazine XVII*(July 1898), p. 559.
- ¹⁸ As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has written, in a different context: "Women's discussions of the normal events of every day permitted us to endow census data with the warmth of emotional reality. Now we could test the accuracy of prescriptive materials against the reality of what people actually did." Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 29.
- ¹⁹ Indeed, the tone of their writings is considerably different than that in *The City Wilderness*, a similar document produced out of the South End House settlement in Boston in 1898.
- ²⁰ Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, p. 256.
- ²¹ "Settlers in the City Wilderness," *Atlantic Monthly* 77(January 1896), p. 120
- ²² Katherine Kish Sklar, "Hull-House Maps and Papers," p. 123.
- ²³ Sklar, "Hull-House Maps and Papers," p. 123.
- ²⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (NY: Verso, 1991 [1983]), pp. 163-4.
- ²⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 165-6.
- ²⁶ Jane Addams, *First Report of a Labor Museum at Hull-House* (1901-1902?).
- ²⁷ Jane Addams, *First Outline of a Labor Museum at Hull-House*, Chicago (1900?).
- ²⁸ Jane Addams, *First Outline*.
- ²⁹ Examples include: the Art Institute of Chicago, the Chicago Public Library, the University of Chicago, as well, and the displays at the Worlds' Columbian Exposition.
- ³⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 145.
- ³¹ Addams, *Twenty Years*, p. 114.
- ³² James Weber Linn, *Jane Addams: A Biography* (NY: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1935), p. 209.
- ³³ Allen B. Pond, "The Settlement House I," *Brickbuilder* 11(July 1902), p. 142.
- ³⁴ Allen B. Pond, "The Settlement House III," *Brickbuilder* 11(Sept. 1902), p. 183.
- ³⁵ The history of the struggles over the land and the Hull House Association's role in that struggle are lengthy to elaborate upon here.
- ³⁶ "The Future of Hull-House: Proceedings of a Board Meeting," *Social Science Review* 36(June 1962), p. 125. The symposium to discuss the future of the Hull House Association in light of the changing conditions in their neighborhood took place in June 1961. The meeting went beyond the discussion of what to do with the buildings, which was accepted as a fait accompli, to address the role of the social settlement in changing urban and global environments.
- ³⁷ The decision to in any way "save" the buildings of the Settlement was made only after extensive local and national protests.
- ³⁸ Leonard J. Currie, Dean "Some Notes on the Restoration of Hull House," Letter dated 7 August 1963 to Mr. Harry J. Scharres, Commissioner, Commission on Chicago Architectural Landmarks (Art Institute Chicago, P-25793).
- ³⁹ Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks, *Jane Addams' Hull-House and Dining Hall*.
- ⁴⁰ Mary Ann Johnson, "The Near West Side and Hull-House," in Babette Inglehart, ed. *Walking With Women Through Chicago History* (Chicago: Chicago Area Women's History Conference, 1981), pp. 22-39.
- ⁴¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 181.