

BETTER THAN THE POORHOUSE?: THE ORIGINS OF MOTHERS' AID IN MAINE

BY REBECCA WHITE

White's article examines the origins of a new state-funded welfare system in Maine through the prism of the 1917 "Act to Provide for Mothers with Dependent Children," also known as mothers' aid or mothers' allowance legislation. This law established a centralized Mothers' Allowance Board in Augusta to oversee applications and administer state funding to eligible Maine families. This represented a shift from traditional town-based poor services to a state-funded system of aid for those considered to be worthy. This article details the sparse landscape of public and private charity available to families in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Maine, in particular the town-based pauper-relief and poor-farm systems common across the state. It then presents the ideological and practical processes that led to Maine's adoption of this new centralized approach to public welfare. Rebecca White earned her PhD in Canadian-American History from the University of Maine in 2015 and her MA in European History from the University of Pittsburgh in 2002. Her research agenda focuses broadly on women, gender, and the impacts of the modernizing state in United States and Canada. Her current project looks at the gendered and class-based ideologies and practices of anti-tuberculosis efforts in the Province of New Brunswick, with a particular focus on the interplay of public welfare and public-health officials in casework and case-finding efforts. White's dissertation examined the social history of mothers' allowances in Maine and New Brunswick. The study explained the power structures and ideological basis of these state welfare programs and highlighted ways that women, families, and communities worked within these rigid systems to assert some level of independence. These same themes of gender, authority, and power infuse her teaching in the Women, Gender, and Sexualities Studies and History Department at the University of Maine.

THIS ARTICLE reconstructs the landscape of public and private aid available to needy women with children in Maine during the early-twentieth century, as well as the outright and implied conditions that accompanied that aid. Much like today, town officials closely scrutinized a

person seeking public aid and asked themselves a series of questions. Is this person or family worthy of monetary investment by the community? Does the town owe them sustenance by reason of their residence and circumstance? Should they be supported in their own home through groceries or small cash payments? Should they be removed to a poor house or poor farm for their own good? All of these questions of eligibility, worthiness, and responsibility mattered in the local endeavor of assisting those unable to provide for themselves. This locally based system merits investigation for two reasons: 1) it provided the ideological and practical template for the later implementation of statewide public-welfare programs aimed at mothers and children; 2) local overseers of the poor and town selectmen were often the same people who later administered state-funded mother's allowances (1917–1935) and then the Aid to Dependent Children provision of the 1935 Social Security Act. These programs, while ostensibly objective, relied on subjective and highly gendered evaluations of men's and women's character and moral worthiness, with particular focus on gender-based norms of behavior.

As the surviving town records and minute books make clear, the local nature of decision-making regarding charitable matters meant that aid was determined on a small-scale, individual basis in most of Maine during this period. While the larger cities of Bangor and Portland developed somewhat more formal structures for aid delivery, the majority of Maine towns used a much simpler system of town selectmen and overseers of the poor, whose job it was to provide small cash or food allowances on a case-by-case basis to town residents.¹ Many towns also administered a poor house or poor farm to house the elderly, infirm, mentally incapacitated, and those who had no other means of support. In general, the town rented land to a caretaker to run the farm and oversee the inmates. The town charged the caretakers—often a husband and wife—with maintaining order and cleanliness; it also periodically supplied clothing, dry goods, and materials for the subsistence of the farm. Up to the 1910s, when the Maine State Board of Charities and Corrections began to send visitors and make reports, these poor farms operated with very little supervision or guidance in standards of care. Once investigations began, however, they were generally vilified as inhumane and out of step with modern standards of hygiene and social welfare.² While the author does not wish to romanticize the earlier, locally based system, the evidence supports a nuanced view of the town-sponsored poor house as a place of potential alternatives for women, families, and the



Biddeford Poor Farm, ca. 1910, from the Richard Carr Postcard from the Richard Carr Postcard Collection at McArthur Public Library, Biddeford.

elderly. It also suggests the existence of an extensive patchwork of town-based poor relief and private charities in Maine before the rise of state-managed welfare programs.³

Progressive reformers universally decried the poor-house system and instead advocated the use of state-employed social workers to work closely with, and supervise, aid recipients in their own homes. This movement was ultimately successful in breaking down the town-farm system and replacing it with state-regulated welfare payments to individual homes. But rather than treat this shift as self-evident progress or evidence of increased modernity, this article critically surveys the nature of welfare availability prior to the institution of mothers' assistance programs in 1917 and seeks to make clear the ideological and practical landscape surrounding decisions about poor relief in Maine during the early-twentieth century.⁴

Nineteenth-century approaches to poor relief in the United States, especially in rural areas, were generally local, episodic, and small-scale.⁵ The details of these processes can be glimpsed in the "Overseer of the Poor" records of the towns of Limington, Detroit, and Orono from the 1860s to the 1920s.⁶ The bulk of the extant records are financial receipts,

small bits of paper that reveal a great deal about norms of town-based aid at the turn of the century. These records reveal the political economy and cultural attitudes directed toward the indigent and also seasonally poor, as well as the ways that gendered expectations of male and female behavior influenced recipients' ability to garner and retain town support. Furthermore, the records reveal the centrality of settlement law, under which towns were responsible only for those with legal residence in their community, in determining town actions.

Poor relief in Maine evolved slowly over the nineteenth century from a purely church-based charity into an understanding that the town itself ought to take a greater role to support its own permanent residents. Town selectmen appointed an overseer of the poor, and tax-based town funds were allocated to support neighbors in need, generally through small cash payments and deliveries of food supplies, or through the public auction of the poor to those willing to house them in exchange for work.⁷ In 1821, the Maine Legislature passed its first statute that required town overseers of the poor to take some responsibility for needy children. The law gave overseers the legal right to remove needy children without parental consent and to bind them into apprenticeships until age twenty-one for boys and eighteen for girls.⁸ By the 1830s, many towns constructed poorhouses as a more humane alternative to the public auction system.⁹ They intended to provide a publicly funded home for the town elderly, feeble, and disabled, as well as temporary housing for entire families in crisis. These services were only free for town residents, and all others had their hometown billed for services rendered.¹⁰ Analysis of local records reveals the contours of this public aid more clearly and demonstrates some of the underlying structures and assumptions that governed day-to-day poor law operations at the turn of the twentieth century, particularly in regard to standards of care and supervision of families. This town-farm system continued essentially unchanged for the next one hundred years, until Progressive Era welfare reform measures pushed for a centralized county and statewide approach to the issue of the insane, the elderly, and delinquent and dependent children.

While small poor houses and farms were commonplace in towns throughout Maine, their records are now fragmentary.¹¹ Surviving poor-farm contracts provide useful details about the realities of conditions and the common presence of mothers and children on the farms. The town selectmen records for the central-Maine village of Detroit, located east of Pittsfield in Somerset County, highlight the dynamic nature of lo-

CITY OF LEWISTON.

July 1st 1878.

Overseers of Poor Orono

Gentlemen:

Oflex Morn wife & 2 minor children

Inhabitant of your *town* have now become chargeable in this City as Pauper^s. We give you this notice, that you may order *their* removal or otherwise provide for *them* as you may judge expedient.

We have charged the expense of *their* support, which has already arisen, to your *town* and shall continue so to do, so long as we are obliged to furnish *them* with supplies. The sums expended for *their* support up to this date are *Five* Dollars.

We are, Gentlemen, respectfully yours,

L. Horace Spelman

For
Overseers of Poor,
Lewiston.

N. B.—If not of your place, please to give us what facts you can, showing the legal residence of the above. *Heut John Orono in 1874 - worked for Mr. Brooks in A. S. King Saw Mill for 7 or 8 yrs - also worked for Lewis Baker - Dr. Fisher was his medical attendant.*

Pauper Bill, Lewiston to Orono, 1878.
Charles J. Dunn Papers, Special Collections, Fogler Library.

cal responsibility for the poor. Although Detroit boasted just 527 residents in 1900, the receipts of the overseer of the poor reveal a constant stream of small payments to support the mostly elderly poor-farm residents, as well as monthly deliveries of food supplies and occasional coverage of medical bills and funeral costs for the town paupers.¹² Detroit selectmen also billed other towns for paupers found to be in need without settlement, usually on printed pauper-notice and pauper-denial forms. They also paid bills for their own paupers being cared for elsewhere, at least until they could be retrieved by wagon. In the larger southern Maine town of Limington, records survive for a similar system of settlement correspondence between towns, often for the care of widows or deserted mothers and their children.¹³ When residence was not firmly established, however, towns often engaged in a battle of paperwork to determine who would have to pay. Without legal settlement, generally determined by birthplace of the male head of household, poor people were not entitled to town aid. This patrilineal settlement law was crucially important to the process of determining aid for widows, single women, and unmarried mothers and resulted in flurries of letters between towns over who would accept town-settlement responsibility for a woman whose settlement status was in doubt.

In 1892, for example, three different towns corresponded over the legal settlement of a Mrs. Bowman and her children, specifically, over which town would bear financial responsibility for their welfare. The dispute hinged on whether her second marriage to Mr. Bowman in Palmyra was, in fact, legal. If so, as Detroit contended, Palmyra must pay for her and her children's support. Palmyra's overseer of the poor claimed that she was married to someone named MacDonald at the same time, thus nullifying her marriage to Bowman and locating her legal residence firmly back to her first husband's hometown of Detroit. The St. Albans overseer of the poor later intimated in a letter to the town of Detroit: "Confidentially, let me say that I suspect she is in an interesting condition," implying her pregnancy.¹⁴ In the end, Detroit agreed to pay for bills related only to the children from her first marriage. Clearly, in this era of pauper law, one's legal residence was crucial to determining what, if any, charitable relief might be available to a needy family.

While elderly and infirm residents were more common, children were also present at the almshouses, generally with their mothers, though sometimes alone or with siblings. Evidence of their condition, however, or length of stay, is fragmentary, appearing in the Detroit records as an occasional reference to payment for school supplies or

child-sized clothing.¹⁵ For example, an 1887 receipt for the purchase of almshouse supplies included general goods, such as flannel, soap, and tobacco, but also “Reynolds’s children: 1 speller, 1 2nd reader, and 3rd reader, 1 slate, salt, lard, 1 pr child shoes, 1 pr ladies shoes, 1 pr rubbers.” They also appear in poor-farm contracts and are found named in the bills paid by the town.¹⁶ For example, an 1893 Detroit poor-farm contract stated that the supervisor would board all paupers “in as comfortable a manner as they have heretofore been kept,” in exchange for all farm proceeds, plus one dollar per week for pauper supplies, not including infants cared for by their mothers.¹⁷ In addition, the older apprenticeship or “binding out” system for children continued into at least the early 1900s.¹⁸

Court documents further illustrate local attitudes toward child neglect cases. In 1897, the police arrested John Nason of Old Town for the “wanton and lascivious” neglect of his family and “misspending what he earned.” The Orono trial justice sentenced him to thirty days in the Bangor jail in an attempt to make him live up to his masculine duties as head of household.¹⁹ In other cases, the “vagabond and idle persons” were given a choice of thirty days in jail or immediately leaving town. As in Detroit, however, for those with settlement, the Orono overseers of the poor provided multiple forms of poor relief, including food deliveries, doctor’s care, and boarding and nursing care in the homes of Orono families.

Maine urban centers such as Bangor and Portland had, not surprisingly, more formal systems of municipal poor relief than their smaller neighbors, and more extant records. The city of Portland established a Board of Health in 1885, and the Overseers of the Poor operated under their supervision.²⁰ Records reveal little about operations besides financial data on spending. In general, private charities and church organizations probably provided the bulk of aid available to poor families, and state and city services did not begin to outpace private efforts until the 1920s. The records for the city of Bangor’s overseers of the poor are somewhat more descriptive. From 1900 to 1926, the city maintained bound ledgers that detail its spending and some demographic data. The pauper notices mainly mention male recipients, but also numerous families aided and some children boarded at town expense. Indeed, Associated Charities of Bangor, led by a Mrs. Alberta G. Scott, was founded in 1910, specifically to address the problem of five child residents living with adults in the city almshouse.²¹ These examples demonstrate the presence of mothers and children in almshouse settings, a situation that

strongly motivated efforts to provide alternative forms of relief and allow children to remain in their own homes. Some reformers were already active in private and religious work directed at poverty and child welfare, and a brief overview of these Maine organizations helps to fill in the picture of poor-relief options.

Private and Religious Charities

The critical involvement of mainly middle-class women volunteers in leading, staffing, and funding social and especially child-welfare projects in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries has been thoroughly established by scholars.²² In Maine, as elsewhere, private and religious charities and ladies' aid societies flourished throughout that time.²³ Scholars have documented the strong temperance movement in Maine and the way the "Maine law" served as an example of prohibition activism to the rest of the country.²⁴ Certainly the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was a driving force in this activism, and it and other temperance organizations were highly popular throughout Maine.²⁵ The history of nineteenth-century Maine women's social activism is not well charted, but it is clear that a significant portion of middle-class Maine women were skilled in social organization, fundraising, and political lobbying, an expertise that likely contributed to Maine's record on social reform in the Progressive Era and beyond.²⁶ Moreover, these temperance supporters, including a long line of Republican legislators and governors, often supported a range of progressive social causes.²⁷ It remains unclear, however, how this long history of organized and politicized club work relates to activism around mothers' allowances, because the archival record appears to be largely silent on this issue. This absence is even more striking when one considers the vigorous year-round fundraising and civic activism evident in club records, including successful campaigns to build and staff playgrounds, improve school buildings, provide hot-lunch programs and free-milk stations, and otherwise engage in their communities. Clearly, Maine club women were a potent political force but chose to put their energies into other pursuits.²⁸

Club women organized social-welfare activities throughout urban and rural Maine, but they concentrated their activity in areas with higher populations. The density of population and relative size of the middle and upper classes enabled some clubs to foster significant net-

works of private charities, and many of them focused on aid to the needy. While unpaid, the club women who created and staffed these programs considered themselves to be well-qualified, efficient, and business-like in their endeavors. Indeed, just as the newly emerging class of professional social workers—often women—tried to distinguish themselves as professionals by their education and credentials, the minutes and annual reports of these clubs testify to considerable devotion to order and business sense. Portland Associated Charities, for example, was established in 1879 to gather information about the city's charitable needs and coordinate a more "scientific" distribution of aid. This organization assigned male and female visitors to survey the city's needs and advocated for an array of useful services for Portland residents, such as a public laundry, a day nursery, recreation for children, and continuing education classes for both sexes.²⁹ In 1904, Mary J. Lily, chair of the Committee on Publication for Associated Charities, wrote about the value of Portland's voluntary organizations and specifically responded to criticism that their work merely encouraged a "pauper spirit."³⁰ Lily argued that these groups, which women dominated, used sound scientific principles and were supported by leading male citizens.³¹ In general, these charitable organizations began to join together by the 1910s and began funneling their time and money into centralized (and professionalized) charitable organizations. However, at least one prominent women's charity, the Portland Female Charity Society, refused to join Associated Charities on the grounds of retaining decision-making control over their donations and operated independently well into the 1960s.³² Most Maine women's clubs, by contrast, turned away from both political activism and direct charity after the Progressive Era, leaving social-reform work to professional social workers and state and local government. Therefore, while private charities sometimes engaged on the political question of mother's-aid legislation in the 1910s, later records demonstrate little further involvement in legislation or activism around poverty. Historians of women and public welfare such as Linda Gordon, Robyn Muncy, and Gwendolyn Mink, have established that opportunities for club women to significantly pursue social-welfare agendas narrowed in the early 1900s and that a professional public-welfare bureaucracy replaced these volunteer club women by the 1920s.³³ In a recent article, Mary Ryan encapsulated this idea:

The formal political system that women entered after 1920 no longer resembled the idealized public sphere. It had become, in the terms of political science, an administrative state. The state was an institution

that exercised power . . . it was the very nemesis of the domain for open public debate accessible to all as honored by political philosophers. In fact, women Progressive reformers, who pioneered state expansion through agencies such as the Children's Bureau or such procedures as welfare case methods, were complicit in their kind of bureaucratization—and privatization—of the public realm.³⁴

Ryan's argument about the erosion of women's civic engagement in public social welfare corresponds to the available evidence about women's club work in Maine. While there is ample evidence of Maine women's clubs' political engagement in the Progressive Era over a wide range of issues, the evidence demonstrates little interest in publically funded mothers' allowances, either before or after they were introduced in Maine. Indeed, the remainder of this article, which charts the rise of a centralized, statewide approach to public and private charity, and the eventual adoption of mothers' aid legislation, demonstrates the meteoric, but very brief, nature of club activism and philanthropic engagement on this issue, a civic activism that faded almost entirely upon enactment of the legislation. Paradoxically, this shriveling of personal engagement may be explained by the success of progressive efforts to make social welfare a public and statewide issue of concern, extinguishing public engagement at the very time they institutionalized their social-welfare goals. Thus, the story of statewide organization of public responsibility for the welfare of poor families charts both the success of progressive legislation as well as the twilight of the club-woman political engagement.

Efforts at Statewide Organization

In line with national trends, Maine men and women actively engaged in Progressive Era social causes by forming local and state-level voluntary boards to investigate conditions related to poverty, violence, and criminality. In 1904, the National Board of Charities and Corrections held its annual conference in Portland, which was well attended by Maine social and business leaders.³⁵ The following year, the legislature made its first gesture toward state responsibility for child protection with an act to create a system of county agents for the protection of children. These agents possessed some police powers to remove children from homes and place them in private homes or an almshouse, but the law made no allowances for staff training, record-keeping, or standardi-

zation of practice.³⁶ Two years later, in 1907, Maine held its first statewide conference on charities and corrections at the High St. Congregational Church in Auburn. This two-day event drew representatives from all of the major social-reform groups, including the WCTU, Associated Charities, Children's Aid Societies, the Young Women's Christian Association as well as several Maine legislators, ministers, and physicians.³⁷ Future governor Percival Baxter and future long-time chair of the Maine Board of Charities and Corrections, attorney Robert Treat Whitehouse, also attended. This conference is the earliest evidence of mothers' assistance programs being discussed in Maine.³⁸

A chief goal of the conference was the enactment of a state board of charities and corrections that would investigate and report on the conditions and financial management of public-welfare efforts throughout the state. This conference also advocated for mothers' allowances, and some women's clubs and charities across Maine took the issue up in their discussions and club work. In early 1907, Republican governor William T. Cobb approved the idea, and in June of that year the Legislature approved the creation of a five-person committee, chaired by Robert Treat Whitehouse, to investigate and report back within one year.³⁹ The committee members researched successful models in other states, such as New York, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, and surveyed Maine's current methods of public and private poor relief. In addition, they held three public meetings in June, October, and November 1908 in which they explained and discussed the concept, purpose, and benefits of the proposed board. Their 1908 report's central argument focused on the unsupervised and uncontrolled nature of current state spending on institutional care and poor relief. It noted ways in which a supervisory board would increase both cost efficiency and humane results.⁴⁰ Indeed, they presented cost efficiency as the number-one reason to establish an impartial, unbiased, and unpaid advisory board that would raise standards of care by "mere criticisms and suggestions, and the force of public opinion," and also provide a centralized clearinghouse of information "from which to enlighten public sentiment."⁴¹ They emphasized the need to include at least one woman on the board, especially because, in their words, "by far the greater part of charitable work of the state, public and private, is performed by women." In the end, however, the legislature failed to pass legislation to create the state board, mainly on the grounds that it violated and superseded local controls over spending.⁴² The idea continued to receive Republican support, however. Republican Governor Bert M. Fernald (1909–1911) included support for a state

board in his 1910 reelection campaign and blamed Democrats for the bill's previous failure.⁴³ The chair of the Maine Republican convention, H.B. Austin of Phillips, also argued for the creation of a state board to oversee spending and investigate areas of need and blamed Democrats for failing to enact the board.⁴⁴

In 1913, a bill establishing a state advisory board finally passed through the Maine Legislature.⁴⁵ According to Chapter 196, the governor appointed a five-member unpaid advisory board and one paid secretary to investigate and report personally on all charities and institutions that received state funding.⁴⁶ The law stated:

The board shall investigate and inspect the whole system of public charities and correctional institutions in the State and the work of any department of the same, examine into the condition and management of all prisons, jails, reform schools, industrial schools of a charitable or correctional nature, children's homes, hospitals, sanitariums, almshouses, orphanages, hospitals for the insane, schools or homes for feeble-minded and any and all other institutions of such nature which derive their support wholly or in part from the State, county, or municipal appropriations, but not including any institution of a purely educational or industrial nature.

The state tasked this expansive mandate to four men and one woman who were already highly involved in careers and public life. Robert Treat Whitehouse, then-current United States District Attorney for Maine, was appointed board president, a position he held until ill health forced him to step down in 1922. He and his wife, Florence Brooks Whitehouse, had long been involved in social welfare, women's equality, and education issues.⁴⁷ Indeed, both earned spots in *Mother Goose Comes to Portland* by Frederic Freeman (1918), a book of caricatures and limericks about leading Maine personalities.⁴⁸

Besides Whitehouse, the board included two other long-serving members, Roman Catholic priest Thomas J. Nelligan of Augusta (served 1913–1923) and Mrs. Grace A. Wing (served 1913–1923).⁴⁹ Wing, a Lewiston widow with one son, was well known as a newspaper columnist under the penname “Madame Myself” and served as president of the Maine Federation of Women's Clubs (MFWC) from 1915 to 1917.⁵⁰ Intriguingly, although Wing was president of Maine's largest federation of women's clubs during the time period of mother's aid legislation, the MFWC ledgers and meeting minutes for those years make no mention of mothers' allowances.⁵¹ A possible explanation is that Wing was tepid about or opposed to this legislation, because she felt it was best left to

private charities, or perhaps to trained social workers, rather than to state government.⁵² The only paid member of the board, Secretary James F. Bagley of Argyle, served from 1913 until his death in 1922.

The board began regular meetings in 1913 and produced quarterly informational bulletins and yearly annual reports for many years.⁵³ The early reports reflected the spirit of the board at that time—straightforward, plain spoken, and opinionated—and are therefore more illuminating than the standardized and bureaucratic department reports that emerged by the late 1920s.⁵⁴ The early annual reports, written by Bagley and approved by the board, focused heavily on a detailed review of town poor-house arrangements, as well as provisions (if any) for care of those in need—the elderly, children in state care, and poverty-stricken families. The key concerns in these detailed accounts were the cleanliness of facilities, the degree of comfort provided (if any), and the degree to which men, women, and children were allowed to intermingle at night. Indeed, the reports dwelled at length on the need for proper separation of the sexes, both in prisons and on poor farms, even in the case of married couples and families living together in almshouses.⁵⁵ The 1913 report firmly advocated for the removal of fathers from needy families, because the potential costs of more children being born far outweighed the value of their fatherly influence.⁵⁶ Secretary Bagley also confirmed the continued presence of children in the almshouses, usually with their mothers, and repeatedly recommended that these children be removed to orphan homes.

In addition to these attitudes toward poor families, analysis of the 127 individual town reports reveals a snapshot of life on a Maine poor farm at this time. In most cases, the farm residents (sometimes called inmates) were described as feeble-minded, disabled, and/or elderly, and except for large municipalities, lived together in groups of ten or fewer people. Though the supposed purpose of the farm model was to provide a workhouse for the destitute, very few were physically able to do labor of any kind, much less rigorous farm chores. Instead, the farm managers hired day workers to assist with production, at town expense. In several cases, for example at the Portland City Home and Bangor City Farm, the poor farm also served as a city jail, with little real difference in treatment or conditions between the two institutions. Indeed, most residents appear to have been treated as inmates; they were required to obtain permission to leave the farm and were sometimes followed and returned to the farm against their will. Occasionally, visitors reported on the kindness of a manager or the cleanliness and comfort of a facility, though

this kind of praise was rare. Instead, most criticized the untrained and undifferentiated care provided by the male superintendent or female matron, as well as the limited funding and supervision of town officials.

Beyond these qualitative comments, the compiled data reveals the demographics of Maine's poor-house residents. According to board investigations and returned questionnaires from town officials, in 1913, Maine 127 almshouses housed a total of 540 males and 284 females.⁵⁷ These numbers include only those living in almshouse facilities, not other wards of the state. Of these residents, the board noted seven children under age two and fifty-three more children under the age of sixteen currently living in a poor house or farm. The largest single group of residents, 344 people, was men aged thirty-six to seventy years old, followed by 167 women in the same age category. Unfortunately, these numbers were presented by age only and did not differentiate between family groups, single mothers with children, or unaccompanied children.

Overall, this 1913 report served as an important survey of dismal poor-house conditions and led to a call for public action. The forward to the report, written by board president Robert Whitehouse, emphasized the need for progressive reform, but also the need to "go slowly, investigate carefully, and act tactfully" in addressing these traditionally town-controlled institutions.⁵⁸ Indeed, Whitehouse framed the board as a service to the entire state of Maine, a "central bureau of information" about current institutions, programs, and statistics that would enable Maine citizens to make informed decisions about their spending priorities.⁵⁹

By 1914, the board's annual report to the legislature was markedly more formal and numerical than the first report and less obvious in its opinions and recommendations. Indeed, it was mainly a catalog of expenses, specifically, statistical overviews of state and town spending on all forms of charities and corrections, and included a long list of recommended improvements by the board. This report had a strong economic thrust to its arguments, particularly in justifying the usefulness of the board in financial oversight and prevention of corruption in the use of public funds. Secretary Bagley undertook the majority of the investigations himself, making 187 original visits and forty-seven special visits and travelling 6,692 miles by public transport or horse all across Maine.⁶⁰ The report articulated a series of recommendations that would be repeated numerous times in future reports, such as to create a state system of penal farms, juvenile courts, a parole system, and a female reformatory. It also called for the increased supervision and training of

child and adult welfare workers and an increased supervisory capacity for the board itself. The chief recommendations for the town farms were to immediately remove all children (not only orphans) and to consolidate town farms into centralized county facilities with salaried employees and more humane conditions.⁶¹

This 1914 report is the first printed recommendation for mothers with children to be treated as a category separate from other state dependents. In doing so, the board directly addressed then-current Maine law that stipulated that a child be removed into state care before a city or town could be chargeable for its support. The report astutely noted, “the present law puts a premium upon the breaking up of the family,” and the board strongly recommended that this be changed.⁶² While most state hospitals, child welfare organizations, and private charities received favorable reviews, the board remained highly critical of conditions at the Maine State Prison, the county jails, and the entire almshouse system. The prison and jails were uniformly reported to contain substandard living conditions, little in the way of instruction or guidance, and no women’s matron to ensure proper separation and protection of female prisoners.

Despite all of their efforts at investigation and reporting to the legislature, the board likely remained disheartened by the lack of state response or public outcry over its findings. Its one legislative victory was the 1915 passage of the Law on Child Removal that required children to be removed from all almshouses.⁶³ The annual reports clearly show, however, the continuing presence of children in poorhouses and a distinct lack of funds or options to remove them into either temporary or permanent state care. The Board of Charities and Corrections remained hopeful; however, its legal mandate lacked any authority to do more than simply gather information and advise the public about charities and correction issues. To effect actual changes in the child welfare system, they needed to move beyond recommendations and instead lobby for passage of concrete legislation aimed squarely at needy mothers and children.

In 1915, mothers’ aid legislation made its first appearance in the Maine Legislature, and, though the bill ultimately failed, it is useful as a record of public opinion and debate on the issue at the time.⁶⁴ This bill directed town overseers of the poor to render aid to all fit mothers with a child or children under age fifteen, up to a maximum of \$12 per week. The application process bypassed local overseers and directed applicants to apply directly to the State Board of Charities and Corrections, which

then dispatched an agent to interview the mother and her references and ascertain the truthfulness of the application and her fitness as a mother. After this investigation, the agent submitted a case report to the central board for final approval and recommended the amount of aid. The state bore all agent or visitor expenses, plus \$2.50 per day per diem. The municipality then maintained regular contact with the mother and report on the continued advisability of the award at regular intervals. Although subject to a great deal of oversight, the proposed law stressed that the mother was at no time to be considered a pauper, but instead be separated into a more dignified category of dependence. The bill earmarked \$15,000 in state funds to be set aside to fund this new program over the next two years. This proposed system of administration and eligibility most closely mirrored an existing program in Massachusetts.⁶⁵

Republican Senator Aaron B. Cole of York first introduced the bill in February 1915, and the Republican chair of the Legal Affairs Committee, the Hon. William L. Walker of Somerset, opened full discussion on March 19, 1915. He acknowledged that mothers' pensions "are something unknown" in Maine despite twenty-one states already enacting them.⁶⁶ Walker argued that the proposed bill would protect the interests of both the towns and the state by dividing oversight between local overseers of the poor and county-based child protection agents, and by using the impartial Board of Charities and Corrections to arbitrate between the two. Immediate needs, Walker stressed, would be met by private charities, because the proposed system required more thorough investigation than regular municipal aid.

The records of Maine charitable organizations indicate strong support for the legislation among some groups and a high degree of skepticism in others. For example, in 1914, the General Secretary of Bangor Associated Charities, Marion Porter, wrote of her fears that mothers' allowances would make aid far too easy to access. She cited a case of a deserted mother in Bangor: "In some states mothers' pensions would be given in such a case, but too often this may simply become another form of dependence. For aid carelessly administered is like morphine—a little given to relieve a great pain is a good thing, but if given after the need is passed...."⁶⁷ By the following year, however, the same annual report listed mothers' pension legislation, along with a club for area social workers, as the two greatest needs in Bangor to improve social conditions.⁶⁸ Extensive review of the records of the Maine Federation of Women's Clubs, an umbrella organization for hundreds of women's clubs throughout the state, reveals political activism and debate over suf-

frage issues, but makes no mention of mother's allowances. This is perplexing, because Mrs. Grace A. Wing, member of the Charities and Corrections Board, was the state president of the MFWC from 1915 to 1917. Yet no mention of mothers' aid appears in the minutes of their biannual meetings.⁶⁹ If the Maine Federation of Women's Clubs, or any of the more than forty women's clubs in Maine, were actively involved in the 1915 law, records of this activity have not survived.

When Walker opened debate in the senate, the 1915 bill had already been passed by the Legal Affairs Committee.⁷⁰ Frederick A. Hobbes, representing the Improved Order of Red Men, a group he claimed numbered 6,600 in Maine, spoke in favor of the bill, as did Florence Whitehouse.⁷¹ Whitehouse, the wife of board president Robert Treat Whitehouse, spoke eloquently of the pensions in terms of the great service that widows rendered the nation by raising healthy new citizens. Rather than pity or charity, she focused on the language of rights and responsibilities between government and its citizens:

When a woman enters marriage she presumably intends to hold up one side of the family contract, namely, running the house, rearing the children and dispensing the funds. For this work she has a right to expect food, shelter and clothing. When her husband dies both sides of the contract falls upon her shoulders, a double duty which it is impossible oftentimes for her to assume with any degree of success. It is here that the State should step in and guarantee her the financial support she has lost in her husband's death, that she may still be able to fulfill her part of the contract.⁷²

She drew a character sketch of the type of deserving mother that the bill was meant to address: a thirty-four-year-old widow with six small children, "a convent bred girl, a fine sewer, a good laundress, an intensive mother" who struggled greatly since the death of her husband.⁷³ She further described the mother's fruitless efforts at finding aid for herself through municipal authorities, churches, and Associated Charities. This mother aimed to avoid immorality, but was running out of options and would soon fall prey to prostitution and vice, while her children would become juvenile offenders. William Hard also spoke for the bill and echoed the language of mothers' dignity and influence in ensuring their children's future: "We have gambled too heavily on the character and fortune of one person, the father. We have gambled the child's chances of having a home on the father's chances of having an income. We have even gambled the child's chances of having a home on the father's

chances of being alive.”⁷⁴ Walker then argued that Maine children were all guaranteed a basic education that is paid through universal taxes and argued that this law merely extended those basic rights to children in danger of losing their homes. He called on all Mainers to “do their share” to enable Maine children to grow into successful and productive citizens. That, he argued, was useful investment, not charity.⁷⁵

Echoing his party’s general opposition to Republican progressive reforms, Democratic Senator Edward W. Murphy of Cumberland spoke in opposition to the bill because it encouraged waste and idleness. The city of Cumberland, he stated, already spent \$70,000 per year on its almshouse, plus other types of aid and the work of private groups. Murphy believed that this additional appropriation was “going to encourage anything but thrift.”⁷⁶ He argued that “many women would take advantage of this,” and “won’t be willing to work” if they are handed twelve dollars per week.⁷⁷ Moreover, some men would be encouraged to leave their wives and “depart for other states, and other men’s wives, perhaps.”⁷⁸ Moreover, he warned that this bill was sponsored by the same party that “foisted” the State Board of Charities and Corrections on them in 1913 and also wanted the state to pay for a new women’s reformatory.⁷⁹

Senator Cole, also a member of the Improved Order of Red Men, then spoke in rebuttal to Murphy.⁸⁰ He argued that mother’s pensions were part of a nationwide movement to improve human welfare, in line with the fifty-four-hour work-week laws and workmen’s compensation. Indeed, he viewed mother’s pensions and workmen’s compensation as inherently linked and actually an extension of each other. He described his own family of eight children and wondered what would happen to them if his circumstances were different. He argued that this bill would benefit “the great class of honest men” who are less wealthy than the members of the legislature but have nevertheless worked hard and contributed to Maine and their families throughout their lives.⁸¹ Finally, he returned to the “social investment” narrative to argue that investment in mothers’ pensions would allow mothers to stay home with their children, thus dramatically cutting down on the future inmates of the proposed women’s reformatory.⁸²

The *Lewiston Evening Journal* covered Senator Walker’s speech in detail and wrote that the bill was “very certain” to pass with “practically no opposition.”⁸³ On March 26, however, the bill was indefinitely postponed.⁸⁴ Democrat Leonard Pierce of Houlton explained that his reason for proposing the postponement was largely rooted in finances, pointing

out that they had already approved a bill to support the blind that session and that the wording of the law allowed for unchecked spending beyond the \$15,000 appropriation. His chief objection, however, echoed Murphy's statements that the pension would eliminate thrift and planning and would be susceptible to overuse and government corruption. It should remain, Pierce argued, a town issue, as "at present . . . the dependent mothers are not allowed to starve or their children to starve," and town officials were in the best position to supervise aid and prevent chronic dependence.⁸⁵

Republican George W. Thombs of Lincoln, a member of the original committee, spoke passionately in rebuttal. He argued that the name "pension" was inappropriate and off-putting, and suggested that a better name for the bill would have been helpful. He reviewed the bill again point-by-point, emphasizing its supervisory and investigative aspects, as well as the town oversight of fund recipients and built-in safeguards to prevent fraud. Finally, he stressed the twin virtues of humanity and efficiency in preventing future delinquency, ignorance, and crime. Mr. Pierce responded by stating that aid to deserving people is best accomplished at a local level and that he had great faith in the local selectmen to do their Christian duty.⁸⁶ In contrast, he disparaged state employees who he described as "oftentimes much more interested in their monthly paychecks than they are in the relief of the needy and dependent."⁸⁷ In the end, Mr. Pierce's side prevailed, and the bill failed to pass.

These debates, over the rights and responsibilities of aid to the poor and the particular rights of the state toward mothers and children, were reflective of national discourse about the proper role and responsibility of state government in private lives.⁸⁸ The debate surfaced again at the 1915 meeting of the Maine Conference of Charities and Corrections, which included a session on mothers' aid. In this debate, Florence Brooks Whitehouse spoke warmly of "The Need for Mother's Pensions in Maine," and was opposed by C.C. Carstens, the secretary of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in "Mother's Pensions: An [sic] New Form of Relief, is New Legislation Needed?" Carstens spoke in opposition to mothers' pensions being handled by public agencies, echoing common objections that experienced social workers ought to be in charge, not politically-minded bureaucrats.⁸⁹

The Board of Charities and Corrections responded at length to the failed bill in its July 1915 bulletin, which included a full transcript of the senate debates and board reactions.⁹⁰ In addition, the bulletin stressed the educational value of the mothers' allowance in rewarding proper be-

havior, arguing that recipients would “inevitably adapt their lives to the conditions under which they can receive help” and that aid is a “powerful level to lift and keep mothers to a high standard of home care.”⁹¹ Indeed, “with such a reward in view, it is a poor sort of woman who will not do well.”⁹²

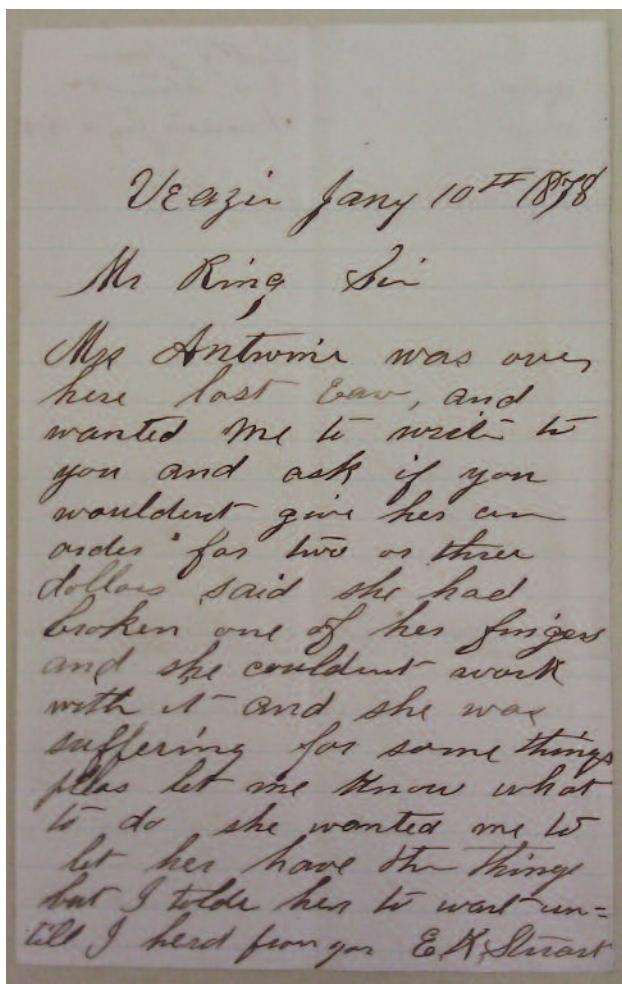
In response to criticism that the bill fostered idleness and dependence, the Board of Charities and Corrections argued that the law provided “relief and not pensions” and intended to last only until the children reach working age. In contrast to earlier rhetoric about the virtue of mothers being home with their children, they stated that mothers would be encouraged to continue working as much as possible, since “there are undoubtedly relatives or other reliable persons living with many of these families who can give the dependent children proper attention during the mother’s absence.”⁹³ This statement reveals an obvious class bias, or basic lack of understanding and experience by board members, about the formidable challenges inherent in securing reliable childcare for working families. Interestingly, the senate record did not mention recipient morality or immorality as a reason for the bill’s failure. However, the board addressed these concerns as well, making clear that mothers with illegitimate children would not be included, because “to do so would offend the moral feeling of respectable mothers...and do violence to a traditional sentiment that is inseparable from a respect for virtue.”⁹⁴

In sum, the board’s response signaled a pragmatic shift in tactics in its campaign for mothers’ allowances. Its earlier rhetoric championed the dignity and inherent goodness of mothers trying to raise children in difficult circumstances as well as the future benefits to society of that mother-work. The entire point of the law, according to the 1915 senate hearing, was to keep mothers out of the workforce and at home supervising their children. The board assumed an innate moral goodness in mothers and also asserted that these mothers had a civic right to be supported by the state while they reared children. After the bill’s failure, however, the rhetoric shifted away from the inherent value of mothers to their children and the nation. Rather than stress the way the bill provided dignity to mother-work at home, it emphasized a far more supervisory and even coercive interpretation of the aid. This new framing of dependent mothers expected and encouraged them to work as much as possible outside the home and assumed that a substitute caregiver would be readily available to fill her role at home. Moreover, they explicitly de-

fined the exclusion of unmarried mothers and went into more detail about the meaning of the law's vague references to "fitness." The assumption was no longer that all mothers were inherently worthy and naturally the best positioned to raise their children. Instead, they needed to be carefully evaluated to gauge their fitness to mother. The allowance was no longer a right of citizenship due to the widow, much like workmen's compensation, but rather, had to be continually earned. Furthermore, it was used by state agents for the protection of children as an incentive to reshape recipients' habits into acceptable forms.⁹⁵

The mothers' allowance bill returned to the legislature in very similar form in 1917; this time, it passed with very little recorded debate. The bill was publically spearheaded, not by the all-male Improved Order of Red Men, but rather by the 1,200-member National Congress of Mothers/Parent-Teachers Association of Maine.⁹⁶ In 1911, the National PTA voted to support mothers' allowance legislation in every state and was highly successful in sponsoring successful legislation around the United States.⁹⁷ Indeed, the Maine PTA was likely founded expressly to pursue this issue and dispersed quite quickly after its successful passage.

The campaign in Maine was led by the first Maine PTA president, Mrs. Delbert W. (Alice) Adams, of Augusta. Born Alice Cornelia Faulkner in 1870, she married Delbert Weston Adams, owner of several successful department stores in Augusta, Maine, and had three children.⁹⁸ In February 1916, Adams was elected president at the first meeting of the statewide association of the Maine PTA, which put her in charge of twenty-eight local PTAs and approximately 1,200 members.⁹⁹ In October 1916, they held a state conference in Portland in conjunction with the Maine Teachers Association, which had 4,000 members, where attendees discussed the National PTA's resolution to establish mothers' pensions nationwide. In a letter to the National PTA magazine, *Child-Welfare*, Adams declared that they had the "hearty support" of the State Board of Education, State Board of Health, the State Library, and the "leading educators of Maine" on this issue.¹⁰⁰ In December 1916, they held a large organizing meeting in Portland that brought together members from sixteen women's clubs and charities, including the WCTU, the Maine Federation of Women's Clubs, the YWCA, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the District Nurses Association, the "suffrage and anti-suffrage organizations," and many smaller charities.¹⁰¹ On January 3, 1917, the movement received a significant boost from the inaugural speech of Maine's new Republican governor, Carl Milliken, who praised the law in other states and supported its passage in Maine.¹⁰²



Veazie Jan'y 10th 1878

Mr Ring Sir

Mrs Antwine was over here last eve, and wanted me to write to you and ask if you wouldnt give her an order for two or three dollars said she had broken one of her fingers and she couldnt work with it - and she was suffering for some things please let me know what to do she wanted me to let her have the things but I told her to wait - until I heard from you E. H. Stuart

Letter asking for \$3.00, Veazie, 1878.

Charles J. Dunn Papers, Special Collections, Fogler Library, University of Maine.

On January 9, 1917, the board of the Maine Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations officially endorsed "An Act to Provide for Mothers with Dependent Children," which was drafted by Hon. Lewis A. Burleigh at President Adams's request.¹⁰³ Later that evening, 250 interested people attended the Maine PTA's public meeting, and the state librarian, the Reverend Henry Dunnack, addressed the crowd on the topic of "Mother's Pensions in the United States."¹⁰⁴ Dunnack

termed the aid, not a pension, but an efficient “reward for services” to the nation in preserving families and thus strengthening national unity. The speech cited glowing reports from other states about the positive effects of the measure on juvenile delinquency and school attendance. Two days later, the bill was first introduced into the legislature. Interestingly, this time it merited no recorded discussion in the legislative record and proceeded swiftly through the house and senate before being signed into law by Governor Milliken on April 7, 1917.¹⁰⁵

A comparison of the failed 1915 bill with the successful 1917 law reveals some important differences between the two, especially the general tightening of eligibility requirements. For instance, the threshold for qualifying children dropped from fifteen to fourteen years old, and the mother was required to be not simply “fit,” but judged by town selectmen to be “fit and capable, mentally, morally, and physically to bring up her children.”¹⁰⁶ In regard to the actual aid, in the first version, a mother with one child was allotted five dollars per week, plus two dollars a week for each additional child, up to twelve dollars per week or forty-eight dollars per month. The 1917 bill cut that amount sharply, allowing a mother of one only ten dollars a month, plus four dollars per month for each additional child. While the legislative record makes no mention of this reduced liability, and the records of the Maine PTA no longer exist, this substantial reduction likely made the bill easier to pass through the legislature. In terms of supervision, the 1917 law removed the idea of county-wide child-protection agents that would have reported directly to the State Board of Charities and Corrections. Instead, each town was directed to form an *ex officio* municipal board of mothers’ aid from its existing overseers of the poor to serve without additional compensation. This municipal board was directed to oversee all investigation and subsequent supervision of applicants in their town. After completing the required forms with the applicant, the town overseers sent the application to the State Board of Charities and Corrections, also now *ex-officio* the State Board of Mothers’ Aid, for final approval of the application and the amount of the award. In effect, the bulk of decision making was removed from state agents under Board of Charities and Corrections supervision and instead reverted to the town overseers of the poor. While the towns retained their traditional control over poor relief, they also gained state funds to cover half of the new program. Indeed, the 1917 bill authorized state appropriations of \$35,000 to fund the first two years of the program, a \$20,000 increase over the proposed 1915 appropriation.

This bill was undoubtedly a great victory for its supporters, although

newspaper and other records reveal scant evidence of that excitement. Mrs. D. W. Adams's next report to the national PTA regretted her inability to do fieldwork because of her young children, but she had been engaged with letter writing to Maine's various chapters.¹⁰⁷ By May 1917, Adams resigned her post, stating in her August 1917 letter to the National PTA that all had been accomplished and asking "to be released from her office."¹⁰⁸ A new president, Mrs. W.F. Jones, was elected in her place, but she too had resigned by November 1917 for unspecified reasons.¹⁰⁹ By January 1921, the state organization was officially inactive, though local groups continued to operate.¹¹⁰ The records of the Maine PTA in this period would perhaps illuminate the political strategies that made this woman-led group so effective in its lobbying and the extent to which the national PTA—financially or otherwise—influenced the legislation.¹¹¹ The silence of the legislative and newspaper record leaves numerous unsatisfactory blanks in the story. It appears likely that the Maine branch was organized chiefly as a platform to push for mothers' aid legislation throughout the state. Once that was accomplished, the political ambitions of the group seem to have been satisfied; and, after 1917, the Maine reports in *PTA Magazine* focused solely on education and school curriculum. As was the case in other states, once mothers' aid was passed as law, women's clubs and other groups that had championed it as a right of citizenship seemed to turn their attention elsewhere, and administrators and local boards were left to put the legislation into practice. Despite the original enthusiasm for mothers' allowance legislation as a means to dignify needy mothers with children, in practice, mothers' aid (and later aid to dependent children) instead became another form of under-funded and often-derided public charity.

NOTES

1. The author based these comments on review of Maine town and municipal annual reports held in Special Collections departments at Fogler Library (hereafter referred to as SpC Fogler), Bangor Public Library, and the Maine Historical Society. Specific towns are referenced throughout the chapter.

2. See, for example, the *Reports of the State Board of Charities and Corrections* (Waterville: Sentinel Publishing Co, 1913–1930) and *County Homes and Infirmarys for the Poor vs. Municipal Almshouses* (Augusta: Maine State Board of Charities and Corrections, 1922). For poor women with children, the poor house served as one of the few options that could allow the family to stay together, and outside of informal charity groups, generally it was the only aid available.

3. Although poor farms were seen as outmoded by Maine social reformers in the early twentieth century, they continued to be used for decades into the modern era of social security. For example, the Biddeford poor farm and the Portland City Farm were in active use into the 1950s. The Lewiston town farm, founded in 1839, functioned as a working city poor farm until 1967. For a historical overview of six New England poor houses, including Lewiston, see David Wagner, *The Poorhouse: America's Forgotten Institution* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

4. Scholarly skepticism toward elite or federal claims of complete authority and modern superiority over local and rural communities (seen as inherently conservative, backward or primitive) has greatly influenced the author's thinking on this issue. Ian McKay, for example, has written extensively on the problematic meanings of modernity and progress in relation to shifting visions of the rural poor as tourist attractions. See Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994). McKay's influential article, "The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review* 81 (2000): 617–645, provides a very useful alternative framing of modernist state-building as a project to advance a more liberal bureaucratic order on local communities, a process that is not inherently either positive, negative, or "natural," but highly dependent on context and perspective.

5. The history of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American social-welfare initiatives and ideologies has been well documented. Some of the most cited include: June Axinn and Mark Stern, *Social Welfare: A History of the American Response to Need*, 5th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001); Edward D. Berkowitz, *Creating the Welfare State: The Political Economy of Twentieth-Century Reform*, 2nd ed. (New York: Praeger, 1988), and James Leiby, *A History of Social Welfare and Social Work in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

6. These reports were usually included in annual town reports, many of which can be accessed digitally through the University of Maine library at: www.library.umaine.edu/townreport.

7. For a useful overview of Maine settlement law on this topic, see: G. Wilmot Carruthers, *Maine Pauper Law: Statutes and Decisions, Effective October, 1940* (Brewer, ME: L.H. Thompson, 1940).

8. State of Maine, Public Law 1821, Ch. 122, sec. 6. The law required children be taught to read and write, but left all other decisions to the town. Many examples of this practice can be seen in the statewide compilation of correspondence between the State of Maine and various towns over settlement laws in "Pauper Accounts, 1875–1907," Maine State Archives (hereafter referred to as MSA).

9. The practice of binding out child paupers was prevalent throughout eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century America, but began to disappear by the mid-nineteenth century. See Ruth Wallis Herndon and John E. Murray, eds. *Children Bound to Labor: The Pauper Apprentice System In Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

10. This fascinating system generated a great deal of paperwork between town

officials as they struggled to locate the proper town and bill them for services rendered. This was further complicated for women, because they took their husbands' settlement upon marriage, and thus could not be legally supported if they moved away upon desertion. For more on settlement law in Maine, see Franz U. Burkett, "Paupers and Pauper Settlements," LL.B. Thesis in Law, University of Maine, 1916 and Carruthers, *Maine Pauper Law: Statutes and Decisions, Effective October, 1940*.

11. A 1913 survey listed more than 127 functioning town poor farms. This is the earliest survey of these farms that the author located. See, Annual Report, 1914, State Board of Charities and Corrections, 11.

12. "Detroit, ME School District Records, 1834–1906" MS 453, SpC Fogler). The population statistic was found in *Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900* (United States Census Office, 1906), 194.

13. Town of Limington, ME, pauper notice and \$60 bill to Waterville, Me, 31 Dec. 1909, MS 1267, Pauper Notices: Town of Limington, 1905–1914, SpC Fogler. Limington is in York County, just south of Sebago Lake, and had 1,001 residents in 1900. See *Twelfth Census*, 195.

14. I.O. Winslow, St. Albans, letter to Detroit, ME Overseers of the Poor, 7 July, 1892, folder 1890s, Detroit, ME School District Records, 1834–1906, MS 453, SpC Fogler.

15. S.E. Plummer and Co., Detroit, bill of \$6.28 to Detroit Maine Overseers of the Poor, Feb. 1887, folder 1890s, Detroit, ME School District Records, 1834–1906, MS 453, SpC Fogler.

16. Detroit records almshouse reference supplies for "the Burke child" between September and December 1909. See folder 1900s, Detroit, Me School District Records, 1834–1906, MS 453, SpC Fogler.

17. James Houston, correspondence with town of Detroit, ME, April 13, 1893, folder 1890s, Detroit, ME, School District Records, MS453, SpC Fogler.

18. 1903 court documents record the binding out of five-year-old Eddie Lancaster, a destitute child in Hudson, to a private citizen until the age of twenty-one. This binding out relieved the town of Hudson from all future expenses due to Eddie's settlement. See, Binding Out Child, Hudson, 1903, folder 15, box 2049, Charles J. Dunn papers, MS 150, SpC Fogler.

19. Warrant for John Nason 14 June, 1897, box 2048, Charles J. Dunn papers, MS 150, box 2048, SpC Fogler.

20. Overseers of the Poor series 6, 1914–1923. MS 2048, City of Portland Health & Human Services Archives Collection," Special Collections, PPL. These records cover 1914–1923, and mention health complaints, meetings with Associated Charities and Overseers of the Poor, sewers, milk safety, and offal removal contracts. They do not elaborate on the work of the Overseers of the Poor. In 1907, Portland employed its first public health nurse in response to the tuberculosis epidemic and established a well baby clinic in 1917 that continued into the 1970s.

21. General Secretary's Report, 1910, Book 5, Reel 1, Community Health and Counseling Collection, BPL. This organization changed names several times,

but still exists as Community Health and Counseling of Bangor. Scott's 1913 report listed three children still in residence.

22. The seminal work on this topic is Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991). See also: Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work: The Rise of Women's Political Culture, 1830–1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Elizabeth J. Clapp, *Mothers of All Children: Women Reformers and the Rise of Juvenile Courts in Progressive-Era America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998); Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797–1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Francesca Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); and Elizabeth N. Agnew, *From Charity to Social Work: Mary E. Richmond and the Creation of an American Profession* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

23. For examples, see: Alice Taylor, "From Petitions to Partyism: Antislavery and the Domestication of Maine Politics in the 1840s and 1850s," *The New England Quarterly* 77, no. 1 (March 1, 2004): 70–88; Marli F. Weiner, ed., *Of Place and Gender: Women in Maine History* (Orono: University of Maine Press, 2005); and Nancy Payne Alexander, "'Keeping House': The Hidden Economy of Maine Coastal Women, 1850–1900" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maine, 2006).

24. William D. Barry, *Rum, Riot, and Reform: Maine and the History of American Drinking* (Portland: Maine Historical Society, 1998); Ruth Bordin, *Frances Willard: A Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Carol Mattingly, *Well Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Activism*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000); Ian Tyrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire: The Women's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880–1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

25. Though many Maine temperance records, including meeting minutes, annual reports, and temperance newsletters, are held in Maine libraries, the Maine WCTU has received scant scholarly attention. Burton W. Pease, "The Cause of Temperance is the Cause of God: Maine Baptists and Temperance Reform" (M.A. Thesis, University of Maine, 1991); and George O. Comer, "A Partial Survey of the Temperance Movement in Maine to 1860" (M.A. Thesis, University of Maine, 1955).

26. For example, Dover-born and Portland-based Lillian M.N. Stevens served as the President of the national WCTU from 1898 to 1914, and Maine president from 1878 to 1914.

27. For nineteenth-century women's suffrage activism in Maine, see Shannon Risk, "'In Order to Establish Justice': The Nineteenth-Century Woman Suffrage Movements of Maine and New Brunswick" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maine, 2009). For discussion of the public health movement in Maine, see Martha Eastman, "'All for Health for All': The Local Dynamics of Rural Public Health in Maine, 1885–1950" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maine, 2006).

28. The author surveyed the manuscript records for more than forty Maine women's clubs held by the Maine State Archives, the Maine Historical Society,

the Portland Public Library, and the Bangor Public Library. In all of these files, mothers' allowances were mentioned a handful of times as part of general support for social welfare improvements. Both the Portland and Bangor Associated Charities voted in support of the 1915 law, and the Children's Protective League of Portland supported the movement with resolutions and guest speakers.

29. Bertha Pettengill, *Sixty Years with the Family Welfare Society* (Portland, ME: Bradford Press, 1939). The organization changed its name to the Portland Family Welfare Society in 1925 and then merged with the Child Protective Society in 1946 to become the Child and Family Services Bureau.

30. The rhetoric of charity encouraging idleness and discouraging thrift is a commonplace, but increased significantly in public discourse with the rise of large-scale public and private charity in the late-nineteenth century and continues into contemporary debates about welfare reform. For a good synthesis of this discourse, see Robert Asen, *Visions of Poverty: Welfare Policy and Political Imagination* (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 2002). Lily's comments found in: Associated Charities of Portland, *A Manual of the Benevolent Organizations, Charitable Societies, Relief Associations, and Public Charities of the City of Portland, Maine* (Portland: Portland Associated Charities, 1904). This manual listed eleven active charity groups, including the Portland Female Charitable Society, the Widow's Wood Society, the Diet Mission, and many others.

31. For example, Robert Treat Whitehouse served on the board of Associated Charities, and his wife Florence Brooks Whitehouse served on the Executive Board of the Child Protective Society.

32. Portland Female Charitable Society, *1812–1962: A Brief History from the Secretaries' Minutes* (Portland: Portland Female Charitable Society, 1987).

33. These works are discussed in detail in Chapter One.

34. Mary Ryan, "The Public and the Private Good: Across the Great Divide in Women's History," *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 1 (Spring, 2003): 23.

35. National Conference of Charities and Correction (U.S.), *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1904). For a history of the National Conference of Social Welfare, see Clarke A. Chambers, *A Century of Concern, 1873–1973* (Columbus, OH: National Conference on Social Welfare, 1974). Published on the 100th anniversary of the conference, Chambers' work charts overall trends toward professionalization and casework management in the profession.

36. "An Act for the Protection of Children," Ch. 123, 1905.

37. "For Humanity: Opening Meeting of Maine Conference of Charities and Corrections, In Auburn," *Lewiston Daily Sun*, 22 Oct. 1907.

38. The Overseer of the Poor for Waterville, A. J. Ponsant, is listed in the program; he spoke on "What an overseer of the poor should do for a widow with five children in destitute circumstances, unable to work because of sickness."

39. Resolves Providing for the Appointment by the Governor of a Committee to Inquire into the Advisability of Creating a State Board of Charities and Corrections, ME Resolves 210, 1907.

40. Report of Commission to Investigate Advisability of Creating State Board of Charities and Corrections: To the Honorable Members of the Senate and House of Representatives of the Seventy Third Legislature of the State of Maine (Augusta, ME: 1908).
41. Report of Commission to Investigate Advisability, 85.
42. "Bill for Maine Board Defeated" and "Recent Social Legislation in Maine." *Charity and the Commons* 21 (October 1908), 1221–1223.
43. Pamphlet, Speeches at Republican State Convention at Augusta, Maine, 29 June 29, 1910, file 26, Bert M. Fernald Papers, MS 1443, SpC Fogler.
44. Pamphlet, Speeches, 22. Austin was correct in this assumption. Democratic candidate Frederick Plaisted won the election on the platform of cutting taxes, excessive Republican spending, and ending Prohibition. See file 48, Frederick Plaisted papers, MS1443, SpC Fogler.
45. Laws Prescribing the Powers and Duties of the State Board of Charities and Corrections (Augusta, ME: State Board of Charities and Corrections, 1913).
46. Laws Prescribing the Powers, 4.
47. Florence Whitehouse was president of the Maine branch of the National Woman's Party, and her husband Robert was, for a time, president of Maine's Equal Suffrage League. For biographical information, see: A.N. Marquis, *Who's Who in New England: A Biographical Dictionary of Leading Living Men and Women of the States of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut* (1915), 1146; and Louis C. Hatch, *Maine: A History* (New York: American Historical Society, 1919): 42. For more information on Florence Whitehouse, see Records of the National Woman's Party, Library of Congress, www.hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mnwp.275035.
48. Frederic W. Freeman, *Mother Goose Comes to Portland* (Portland, ME: Southworth Printing Co., 1918). This small book, written and drawn by Freeman, was presumably a fundraiser for Republican and/or progressive causes in Maine and highlighted notable political leaders and public officials. In addition to Florence Brooks Whitehouse, it included Mrs. Helen D. Heywood, chair of Personnel Red Cross, Mrs. Althea Quimby, Pres. Of the WCTU, Grace Nash Hill, chair Home Service Section Red Cross, Florence Mosher Stevens, Pres. Maine Humane Education Society and Red Star, Mrs. Charles F. Flagg, Trustee Maine Juvenile Institutions, and Miss Bernadette Moreau, pianist. Mrs. Flagg is pictured protecting Little Miss Muffett from a spider labeled "poverty," with her "Industrial School for Girls" broom.
49. Also appointed were Augusta businessman John Liggett (1913–1915) and John Wilson (1913–1915).
50. John W. Leonard, *Woman's Who's Who of America: A Biographical Dictionary of Contemporary Women of the United States and Canada, 1914–1915* (New York: American Commonwealth Company, 1914), 894; Brief Biographies, Maine (Lewiston, ME, 1926), 278, and Georgia P. Porter, *Maine Federation of Women's Clubs: Historical Sketches 1892–1924* (Lewiston: Lewiston Journal Printshop, 1925). Wing's husband, a Lewiston-based news journalist, died of cancer in 1912, leaving Grace, age forty-six, a widow.

51. Records, Maine Federation of Women's Clubs, MS 314, SpC Fogler.

52. This would fit into the discourse of many professional social workers, who felt that this type of public aid was misguided without the firm supervision of trained social workers. This general distrust of state and local government, common to social workers and many private charities, to administer aid effectively has been well documented. Historians of the US Children's Bureau provide ample evidence of these attitudes. See Kriste Lindenmeyer, *"A Right to Childhood": The U.S. Children's Bureau and Child Welfare, 1912–46* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

53. The extant sources for the board's work include a complete set of annual reports, partial set of quarterly bulletins, and a bound ledger book of meeting minutes; Maine, *Reports of the State Board of Charities and Corrections* (Waterville: Sentinel Publishing Co, 1913–1931), SpC Fogler; "Minutes of the State Board of Charities and Corrections," 1913–1931 (MSA); and *Maine Charities and Corrections: Quarterly Bulletin* (Augusta: State Board of Charities and Corrections, 1915–1920), MSA.

54. The Board of Charities and Corrections was established by PL 1913 chapter. 196, sec. 1. In 1927, it became the Department of Public Welfare. This Department was abolished by PL 1931 c. 216, Article VII Sec. 7 during the creation of the present-day Department of Health and Welfare.

55. For example, the Anson town-farm summary recommended that a resident family of four be separated in order to discourage further children. As the unnamed visitor noted, "There appears to be no reason, when a man is unable to support his family and has to go to the town farm, why he should be allowed to continue the family relationship, with the likelihood of bringing into the world more children who are destined to be dependent even from birth." In Turner, the visitor strongly advised another family of four, two parents and two children under age ten, be allowed together only be together only during the day. The town remained in control of these decisions, however, and while later reports mentioned this same family, no changes appear to have been made by the town.

56. Annual Report, 1913, State Board of Charities and Corrections, 11 (hereafter cited as State Board).

57. Annual Report, 1913, State Board, 114.

58. Annual Report, 1913, State Board, 6.

59. *Ibid.*, 7.

60. Annual Report, 1914, State Board, 8.

61. Annual Report, 1914, State Board, 13–21.

62. *Ibid.*, 18.

63. "Law on Child Removal," Public Law 1915, Ch. 320, Sec. 7.

64. "An Act to Provide Aid for Mothers with Dependent Children," Proposed Bill, 1915.

65. The US Children's Bureau regularly published bulletins on the mothers' aid movement. For statistical comparisons of programs nation-wide, see Emma

Octavia Lundberg, "Progress of Mothers' Aid Administration," *Social Service Review* 2, no. 3 (September 1928): 435–458; and Ada J. Davis, "'The Evolution of the Institution of Mothers' Pensions in the United States,'" *American Journal of Sociology* 35, no. 4 (January 1930): 573–587.

66. "New Bills Introduced Friday and Reports from Committees," *Daily Kennebec Journal*, 20 Feb. 1915 and *Legislative Record of the Seventy-Seventh Legislature of the State of Maine*, 19 March, 1915, 872. The *Daily Kennebec Journal* termed the bill "novel" and "commendable."

67. Marion Porter, General Secretary's Report, Bangor Associated Charities, 1914, book 5, meeting minutes, Community Health and Counseling Services Collection 1883–1966, BPL.

68. President's Report, Bangor Associated Charities, 1915, Book 5, Community Health and Counseling Services Collection 1883–1966, BPL.

69. Ledger, Maine Federation of Women's Clubs, 1915–1925, box 345. MFWC Records, 1882–1982, SpC Fogler. They did discuss suffrage and the kindergarten and playground movements.

70. *Legislative Record of the Seventy-Seventh Legislature of the State of Maine* (1915), 874 (cited hereafter as 1915 *Legislative Record*).

71. Frederick A. Hobbs of South Berwick was "Great Prophet" of the state I.O.R.M. in 1914, which at that time had 7,000 members and 81 tribes. *Maine Register, State Year-Book and Legislative Manual* (Standish: F.L. Tower, 1914). The Improved Order of the Red Man was a fraternal organization loosely related to Revolutionary War-era patriotic societies, whose motto was "Friends, Friendship, and Charity." They were a white organization, but modeled their entire aesthetic on the Iroquois Confederacy. See www.mainememory.net for some examples of photographs and memorabilia held by the Maine Historical Society. For more information on Maine's three surviving "tribes" see www.redmen.org and www.redmenofmaine.org for more information on the current organization. For scholarly analysis of the national I.O.R.M., see Dale T. Knobel, "To Be An American: Ethnicity, Fraternity, and the Improved Order of Red Men," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol. 4, no. 1 (Fall 1984): 62–87; Mark Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); and Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

72. 1915 *Legislative Record*, 874.

73. *Ibid.*

74. *Ibid.*, 875.

75. These arguments about aid to children as an investment in the future were a common refrain in Progressive Era support for all types of reform, including education, child labor, and public health. Advocates for current governmental programs for children, such as Head Start and free and reduced lunch programs, continue to use this same argument of investment in the nation's future to deflect criticisms of over-spending.

76. 1915 *Legislative Record*, 875.

77. *Ibid.*

78. Ibid., 876.

79. Ibid.

80. Marquis, *Who's Who in New England*, 239.

81. 1915 Legislative Record, 878.

82. Ibid.

83. "Mother's Pensions: Senator Walker Explains Object and Plan of Maine's Proposed Law," *Lewiston Evening Journal*, 20 March, 1915, and "77th Legislature," *Daily Kennebec Journal*, 20 March, 1915. The House voted to indefinitely postpone, and then the Senate concurred in an eighty-four to twenty-six vote.

178 1915 Legislative Record, 1106. See also "77th Legislature" *Daily Kennebec Journal* and "The 77th Maine Legislature" *Daily Kennebec Journal*, 29 March, 1915.

84. 1915 Legislative Record, 1106.

85. Ibid., 1110.

86. Ibid., 1111.

87. See, for example: Edward D. Berkowitz and Kim McQuaid, *Creating the Welfare State: The Political Economy of Twentieth-Century Reform* (New York: Praeger, 1980); Michael B. Katz, *Improving Poor People: The Welfare State, the "Underclass," and Urban Schools as History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Matthew A. Crenson, *Building the Invisible Orphanage: A Prehistory of the American Welfare System* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Chad Alan Goldberg, *Citizens and Paupers: Relief, Rights, and Race, from the Freedmen's Bureau to Welfare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

88. This reference is cited in a 1945 thesis, but unfortunately none of the original records of the meetings of the Maine Conference of Charities and Corrections seem to have survived. See Pauline McClay, "Mothers Aid and Aid to Dependent Children in Maine," (M.A. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1945), 17. McClay wrote approvingly of mothers' aid and ADC. In the 1930s, McClay worked as a field agent for the Maine Department of Health and Welfare, and in 1946 was promoted to Director of Public Assistance, a post she held until her retirement in 1967. See also her obituary, "Mrs. Pauline S. McClay," *Daily Kennebec Journal*, 20 Feb. 1971.

89. *Maine Charities and Corrections: Quarterly Bulletin* 2, no. 5 (July 1915): 3.

90. *Quarterly Bulletin* (July 1915): 33–35.

91. Ibid., 35.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.

94. Maine had very few trained social workers at this time, and undefined qualifications for field agent positions.

95. In *Mother-Work*, Molly Ladd-Taylor noted that prior to the Red Scare of the 1920s, the PTA took a more activist stance in regard to improving social conditions and advocated for improved schools, health care, and juvenile justice. See,

Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890–1930* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 64.

96. Mrs. Frederic Schoff, “The National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 67 (September 1916): 139–147. Schoff was the long-serving national president of the PTA. The PTA also produced and distributed a pamphlet explaining the benefits of the law, titled “The Evolution of the Mother’s Pension—Its Scope and Object.” Schoff confidently stated that truancy would decline by fifty percent once the laws came into full effect. This position was repeated in their self-published institutional history, *The Parent-Teacher Organization, Its Origins and Development* (Chicago: National Congress of Parents and Teachers, 1944). Theda Skocpol credited the National Congress of Mothers with the primary sponsorship of successful campaigns in fifteen states between 1911 and 1919, including Massachusetts and Connecticut. See Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1995), 542–555.

97. Ancestry.com. *1910 United States Federal Census* (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006). Accessed September 12, 2014.

98. *Child-Welfare Magazine*, (March 1916): 1 and (September 1916): 30–31.

99. *Child-Welfare Magazine*, (December 1916).

100. *Child-Welfare Magazine*, (February 1917): 182.

101. Carl E. Milliken, Inaugural Address of Carl E. Milliken to the Seventy-Eighth Maine Legislature, January 4, 1917 (Augusta: Kennebec Journal, 1917).

102. “Proposed Bill of Aid for Mothers and Dependent Children,” *Daily Kennebec Journal*, 10 Jan. 1917. Oddly, the only listed Burleigh listed in the Maine legislature in 1917 was Albert A. Burleigh of Houlton, a Republican in the House of Representatives. See Howard Owen, ed., *Biographical Sketches of the Members of the Senate and House of Representatives of Maine* (Augusta: Kennebec Journal, 1917).

103. “Rev. H.F. Dunnack Talks to Parent-Teacher Association,” *Daily Kennebec Journal*, 10 Jan. 1917.

104. “An Act to Provide for Mothers with Dependent Children,” Public Law 1917, Ch. 222, (7 April, 1917).

105. “An Act to Provide,” 254.

106. *Child-Welfare Magazine*, (July 1917): 324.

107. *Child-Welfare Magazine*, (August 1917): 347.

108. *Child-Welfare Magazine*, (Nov. 1917): 1.

109. *Child-Welfare Magazine*, (Jan. 1921).

110. The Maine branch of the PTA has no records from this time period at all, according to the current president Virginia Mott. Email communication by author, September 10, 2013. D.W. Adams was the wealthy owner of several D.W. Adams department stores in central Maine, but to the author’s knowledge his papers were not archived with the Kennebec Historical Society or any other repository.