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THE TAMPA CHILDREN'S HOME DURING THE DEPRESSION YEARS

by Janet M. Hall

In May 1893 a reporter for the *Tampa Morning Tribune* appealed for contributions for the ten small children housed in the Conoley cottage on Madison Street. He explained that "Miss Carrie Hammerly is, and has been for a year, conducting an orphanage, supported alone by her personal efforts and the charity of a few."¹ Miss Hammerly had originally traveled to Tampa from Baltimore at the request of her ailing cousin, Mrs. William Conoley, and had stayed at the urging of the First Methodist Church's Woman's Missionary Society. These women realized that the growing orphan population needed care, and in 1892 Miss Hammerly became the first matron and president of the Children's Home.²

Actually, the circumstances surrounding the founding of the orphanage in Tampa reflected the increased interest in child-saving across the country. By the 1890s progressive reformers united behind a wide range of youth-oriented issues, including the reform of the juvenile justice system, the playground and compulsory education movements, and the campaign against child labor. At the beginning of the decade only 698 institutions cared exclusively for dependent and neglected children in the U.S. By 1900, 1,075 establishments for youngsters existed.³ Indeed, according to historian Michael Katz, reformers at the turn of the century would have been more likely to refer to their causes as "child-saving" instead of "Progressivism."⁴

Several factors influenced this spreading concern for the nation's youth. Between 1890 and 1920 the United States experienced a period of rapid industrialization and urbanization. In addition, a massive influx of new immigrants, especially from southern and eastern Europe, transformed many of the country's burgeoning cities. The birth rate among the more educated, native-born, white population fell while the divorce rate rose. Anxiety about the preservation of the family, and what many considered the American way of life, resulted. In light of these changes, many historians now view Progressivism as a conservative movement where predominately upper- and middle-class white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants attempted to maintain the established social order. In other words, rather than altruism and benevolence, the real motivation behind the reform movement became control of the disadvantaged.⁵ Children were crucial to this objective. Historian Susan Tiffin points out, "In the Progressives' search for order, much of their hope was rooted in a belief in the malleability of the human character. The years of childhood were considered the most important."⁶ Therefore, the successful socialization and Americanization of poor and immigrant families depended upon the "correct" education and environment for their children.

In the case of dependent and neglected youth, the selection of the right surroundings became decisive. While some state governments had assumed responsibility for these youngsters, private agencies managed the great majority of institutions.⁷ Again, the circumstances surrounding the founding of Tampa's Children's Home reflected the events of the time as many of these orphanages evolved out of volunteer women's organizations. During the late nineteenth century the nature of housework changed as upper- and middle-class women took advantage of such labor-saving devices as canned goods and washing machines. In addition, smaller families and



Carrie Hammerly, first president of Tampa Children's Home, pictured on the left (c. 1892).

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

compulsory education gave wives more freedom to pursue interests outside of the home. Since mother love and understanding appeared vital to the child-saving movement, this seemed a natural, and safe, outlet for growing leisure time. As a result, women organized and staffed the boards of directors of many children's institutions.⁸

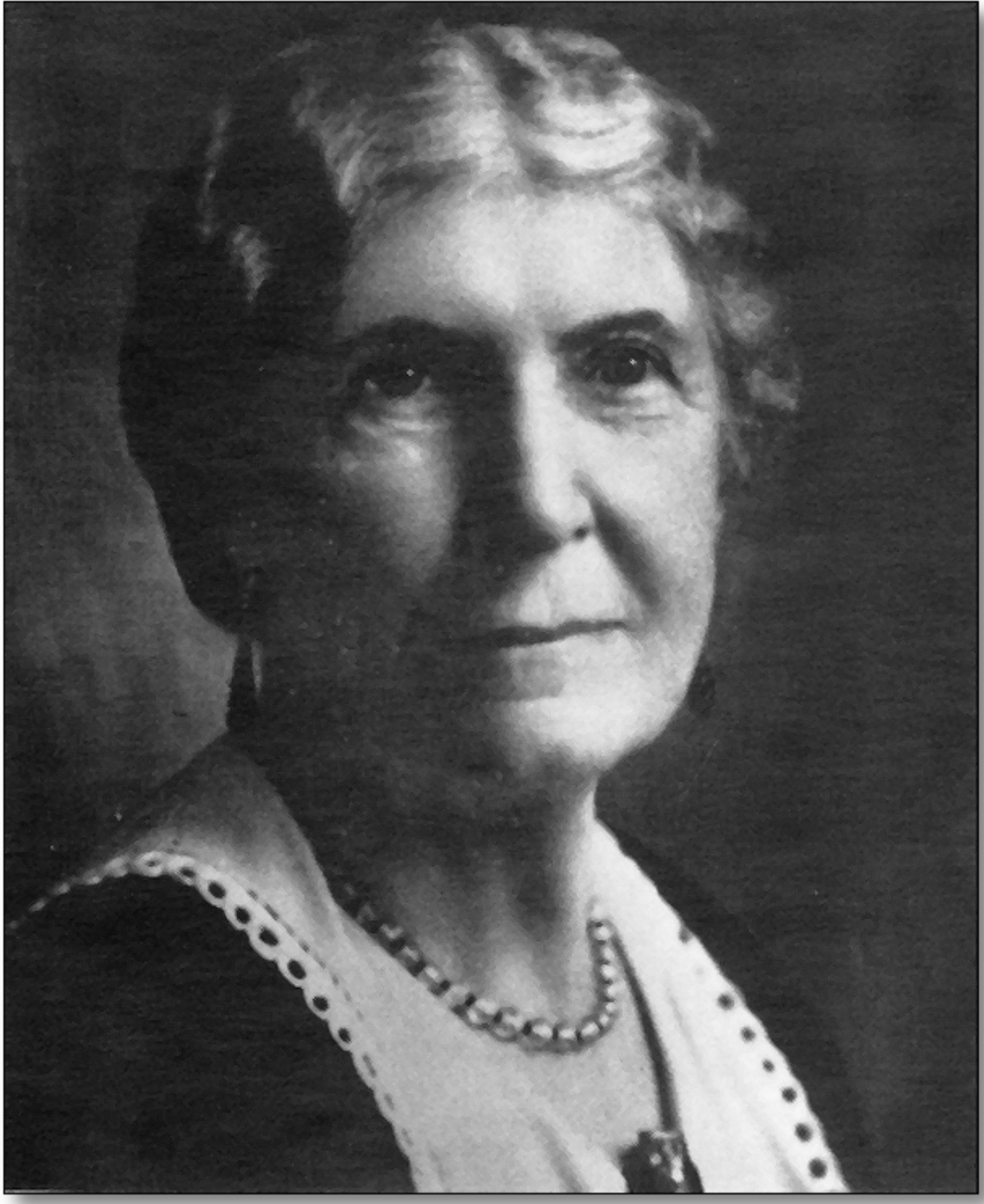
Tampa's Children's Home incorporated during a decade of massive upheavals similar to those being felt by other American communities. "From a quiet village of 800 in 1885, Tampa exploded into a city of 15,000 by 1900, roughly 30% of whom were foreign-born and another 25% Afro-American," historian Nancy A. Hewitt writes. "This population boom coincided with dramatic expansions in industrial activity, city boundaries, and demands for social services."⁹ State welfare offered little relief. Although Florida's "poor law" dated back to 1828, subsidies remained virtually nonexistent. Under that adjudges could indenture orphans or any other child whose father's name appeared on a county pauper list. Although in 1889 the legislature created a State Board of Health which had a separate bureau for maternal and child care, its main purpose consisted of combating the yellow fever epidemic.¹⁰ Into this void stepped the white, native-born, upper-class women of the city. Prior to 1890 a local branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Union organized. In 1888 the Ladies Improvement Society formed and focused on the beautification of the Court House Square.¹¹ The Children's Home soon followed.

The amount of influence that women's organizations generated often reflected the stature of the husbands and fathers of its associates. "In important clubs," historian Nancy Woloch writes, "members were the wives and daughters of wealthy men in prominent positions... [I]t was a counterpart of the male power structure."¹² Historically, the Children's Home Board of Directors has illustrated the prestige of this assemblage. From its inception, the Board drew its membership from the upper-class segment of society. In addition, many of these affluent families intermarried creating a network of relatives who held important offices in a variety of Tampa's women's organizations. This elite coalition sought to establish some sort of moral and social control over the chaos around them.¹³

In September 1898 the Charter and By-Laws of the Children's Home were approved and incorporated in Hillsborough County Circuit Court. Article 1, Section 1 of the By-Laws demonstrated the religious orientation of the group by requiring that all meetings begin with devotional exercises. Yet Section 4 encouraged interdominational participation and empowered the Board to appoint a committee of individuals from each of the various religions found in the county. Furthermore, another article provided that candidates for admission to the Home would be reviewed without regard to the religious beliefs of their parents. However, such tolerance did not extend to different races, and the charter clearly limited membership to "any white person" and restricted admission to "destitute white children."¹⁴

During these early years two members of the Board of Directors became prominent. The influence that these two women exerted over the shape and direction of the Children's Home cannot be overestimated. Their Progressivism fashioned the nature of the institution for much of its first fifty years.

Ida F. Macfarlane helped establish the Home. She served on the original committee and acted as secretary at the incorporation in 1898. Her husband, Hugh C. Macfarlane, came to the United States from Scotland in 1865 and to Tampa in 1883. As the founder of West Tampa, he contributed land and buildings to cigar manufacturers as incentives for them to move their factories to the area.¹⁵ Mrs. Macfarlane served as president of the Home from 1906 to 1911, but her influence extended far beyond that time. She continued to be a vital member of the organization well into the 1930s.



Ida F. Macfarlane.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

Bena Maas joined the Board of Directors in 1905. After emigrating from Germany in 1875, her husband, Abe Maas, had moved to Tampa in 1886, when he opened a small dry goods store. Two years later he and his brother Isaac formed Maas Brothers, and by 1929 their business had



Bena Maas.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

become the largest department store south of Jacksonville.¹⁶ Mrs. Maas assumed the presidency of the Children's Home in 1912 and served in that capacity for twenty-five years. After her retirement as chief executive in 1937, she remained on the Board until her death ten years later.

By the eve of the depression of the 1930s these two women had helped the Children's Home face many national and local emergencies. The First World War created an economic bonanza for Tampa's port and shipbuilding industries, but it caused adversity for those who lost husbands and fathers in the fighting. In 1920 the cigar industry experienced a ten-month strike which closed factories and contributed to the hardship of many workers and their families.¹⁷ That same year the Children's Home burned beyond repair. After thirty months in a West Tampa building provided by businessman August Mugge, the youngsters moved into a new home on Florida Avenue constructed on land donated by Hugh Macfarlane and his partner, Dr. E.S. Crill.¹⁸ By the end of 1925 the Florida real estate boom collapsed. Coupled with the violent hurricane of 1926 and the infestation of the Mediterranean fruit fly, Florida's economic fortunes sank.¹⁹

The women of the Children's Home felt prepared to face further adversity. In 1922 extensive amendments to the charter and by-laws sought to modernize the organization. The structure of the Board of Directors was altered, and the number of members increased from eleven to twenty-five. Ten males served as trustees and only attended annual meetings and rare emergency "call" meetings where their presence might be beneficial. Fifteen females comprised the Board of Managers and oversaw all aspects of the Home. These women met every Tuesday and divided their duties into seven different committees: Admission and Release, House, Education, Religious Education, Publicity, Ways and Means, and Auditing. Committees for Investigation, Hospital and Nursery, and Groceries and Food developed as well.²⁰ Yet amendments to update the organization constituted only superficial changes. The Board of Managers in 1926 faced the economic downturn with the same early Progressive philosophy that had dominated since the Home's founding. Over ten years would pass before true modernization began.

The leaders of the Children's Home missed their first opportunity for change in 1920 when they failed to consider the cottage plan for their new home. Almost as soon as they rose, single-building institutions became the least desirable method of care for dependent and neglected youth. In 1909, at the White House Conference on Children, Progressive reformers declared that if youngsters could not remain with their parents or relatives, foster homes surpassed asylums. However, if confinement became necessary, establishments should resemble families. The cottage plan, a system of small houses each containing a limited number of children and surrounding a main administration building, offered the best alternative. Although only fifteen percent of all orphanages in 1909 claimed to be of this design, most had not recently had the opportunity to rebuild.²¹ Yet, as late as 1922, Tampa's Children's Home constructed an edifice based upon the earliest conception of youth institutions.²² One large structure contained separate boys' and girls' dormitories as well as a nursery, hospital, kitchen, dining room, offices, school, and laundry. A child could conceivably sleep, eat, work, play, and learn without leaving the building. Of course, this arrangement provided for greater control and easier supervision which remained of the utmost importance within the Board's Progressive philosophy.

In 1909 social reformer Amos G. Warner wrote, "The object of institution life for children should be precisely the same as that of the home and school – to prepare them for citizenship."²³ The charter of the Children's Home affirmed that the purpose of the corporation consisted of training, educating, and providing for destitute orphans and half-orphans.²⁴ Naturally, the moral and behavioral standards of the benefactors constituted the correct path to success. The 1926-



The original Children's Home, shown here in 1914, was located at 3302 Florida Avenue.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

1927 annual report of the superintendent, Mrs. Lyda McLean, illustrated the perceived function of the Home, especially with regard to the boys:

90% of the children we receive are retarded mentally and physically from lack of training and proper food.... Boys ranging in age from a few days to thirteen years are brought to us to make men of. The children are descendants of all classes and nationalities. Nevertheless, each boy is trained in such a manner that he will become the best citizen possible.... The body of the boy is developed by means of supervised play.... The boy's mind as well as his body receives training. His religious life receives special attention.... By the time a boy has spent several months under this supervision he has acquired those qualities which build up clean manhood. He is not only obedient, but thoughtful, dependable, studious, considerate and is prepared to play the game of life.²⁵

Therefore, the work of the Home began as soon as the child gained admission. During the Depression years, youngsters came primarily from juvenile court, where judges often heard and



The Children's Home on Florida Avenue, pictured in 1924, soon after it opened.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

adjudicated cases concerning dependent and neglected youth. Although poverty alone no longer necessitated the removal of a child from its home, children could be committed if orphaned, or if parents were found immoral, criminal, insane, or mentally deficient.²⁶ Other private and public agencies, including church organizations, Family Service, and the Salvation Army Hospital, also referred youngsters. In addition, destitute parents and relatives surrendered children, either temporarily or permanently, simply because they could not provide for them.²⁷

The Board of Managers of the Children's Home exerted little control over the entrance of the children committed by the court. However, the candidates referred by other agencies, or by their parents and relatives, received close scrutiny. Occasionally the women required references from school principals, ministers, or neighbors. Sometimes the Investigation Committee visited the residence before a final determination transpired. Most often the decision came during a Board meeting. The minutes of April 5, 1927, provide two typical examples. First, a Plant City woman came before the group requesting admittance of her four children. One son and one daughter had been fathered by her first husband, the others by her second spouse who had disappeared. The minutes reflected that "this was not thought a worthy case as Husband living." Next, a man

appeared before the ladies wanting to, relinquish his two youngsters. His wife had recently been committed to an asylum. A member of the Board phoned his employer and "was told a very worthy man." The women voted to admit the children.²⁸

While the juvenile court provided the Home with its largest number of charges, youths returned from foster homes supplied the second most sizeable group. This reflected a nationwide problem. Although by 1919 reformers advocated child-placement only by professional social workers, agencies such as the Children's Home continued to investigate inadequately prospective foster and adoptive parents. The ideal system called for a trained agent who examined both the family and the child for their specific needs. However, the actual method generally mirrored the technique used by the Tampa women: As many as three (but usually just one) well-meaning, upper-class ladies visited a home once for a short period of time and made a very unscientific decision concerning the suitability of the applicants. The child's needs were seldom considered at all. As a result, many careless placements occurred and often concluded with the return of the youth to the institution.²⁹ Even by 1930 many public and private agencies lacked the monetary resources necessary to successfully place, and then supervise, the children under their care.³⁰

The Board of Managers' minutes describe the recommitment of many youngsters. Occasionally the women realized they had made a mistake and asked for the child's return. In March 1936, for example, they reconsidered the placement of a boy due to "[d]rinking and bad language spoken in the presence of the child."³¹ Sometimes they asked for a youngster's readmission when they found out that the couple could not afford it.³² In addition, foster parents brought children back simply because they had changed their minds. For some, the responsibility became too much. Others decided they did not like the child they had and requested, and received, another. In one case of a set of twin girls, the prospective parents wrote and asked to keep one but return the sister. The Board then insisted that both girls be readmitted.³³

Despite the frequency of recommitments, permanent adoptions represented the final goal of the great majority of placements made by the Home during the Depression years. Although the number of these dispositions steadily declined, the Board of Managers reviewed requests at each of their weekly meetings. These letters often specified the age range and sex of the child desired and occasionally even mentioned the name of a certain youngster. The women required that three recommendations accompany the applications. Usually these came from ministers, bank officers, and neighbors.³⁴

After review of the requests and references at a meeting, a member of the Investigation Committee visited the prospective home and reported back to the group. As mentioned earlier, most Progressive reformers believed that their moral and religious philosophies transcended those of other classes and cultures. Therefore, the disposition of benefits often depended upon the recipient's adherence to these behavioral standards.³⁵ The commentary recorded in the Board meeting minutes regarding many of the investigation visits clearly reflects this Progressive attitude. In June 1936 one examiner reported that a woman who had requested a girl "was kind and very intelligent" but "the house was unattractive and she was afraid a girl would be unhappy there."³⁶ The Board automatically rejected the applications of couples if the wife worked outside of the home, and one family was refused because the husband had a WPA job. Other

disapprovals occurred because a prospective mother or father appeared “lazy,” “irresponsible,” “subnormal,” “not living the right kind of life,” or “of a very low type.”³⁷

Occasionally families requested children without any intention of adopting. The reasoning behind these proposals varied during the Depression. Before 1933 children often left temporarily to help out on farms or with housework. From 1933 to 1937 these placements ceased. However, by the end of the decade the Board again approved the removal of a child without the thought of a permanent commitment. In these circumstances, the women most often suggested that requesting adults come to the Home and select a suitable child.³⁸

One of the most distressing aspects of the early Progressive philosophy regarding child-placing and adoption concerned the frequency of sibling separations.³⁹ Indeed, in 1919 reformer Hastings H. Hart wrote, “There are many agencies, institutions, and individuals who dispose of children body and soul, with little more thought or conscience than they would give to the disposal of surplus kittens or puppies.”⁴⁰ Certainly, the procedures followed by the women of the Children’s Home did not reflect this degree of callousness. By reading the minutes of their meetings, one can determine that they truly believed they acted in the best interests of the youngsters. However, placing siblings in different homes remained a common practice throughout the Depression. The case of the twin girls cited earlier constituted the only recorded time the Board insisted that brothers or sisters stay together. Occasionally one child would be placed with the hope that a sibling might join the family later if the first adoption proved successful. During several meetings letters were read from former inmates searching for brothers and/or sisters. Since children’s names (both first and last) often changed after placement, the Home provided the only hope these individuals had of reunification. The women usually cooperated by sending the requested information, although the minutes never reflected the success or failure of the searchers’ efforts.⁴¹

A three-month trial period followed a child’s placement in a prospective home. Follow-up investigations occurred, but much less frequently than visits prior to placement. The Board required that at the end of the probation, the adoption procedure commence or the child return to the institution. The number of children readmitted has already been discussed. In addition, the trial period often stretched far beyond the three months stipulated. Record keeping remained a problem. In 1927 Superintendent Mrs. McLean reported that many children had been taken without proper adoption papers and warned “the Home would be extremely criticized if [this was] not attended to.”⁴² In 1930, a family moved to Texas with a provisional child and could not be found. Others just delayed the process for reasons not specified by the Board. However, one of the main impediments to permanent adoption became the economic situation. Many people just could not afford the twelve dollar fee charged for filing the proper papers. In 1932 Mrs. William Taliaferro, wife of an attorney and a member of the Board, offered her husband’s services free of charge to facilitate some of the delays in final processing.⁴³ In addition, on at least one occasion, the women advanced the couple the necessary amount.⁴⁴

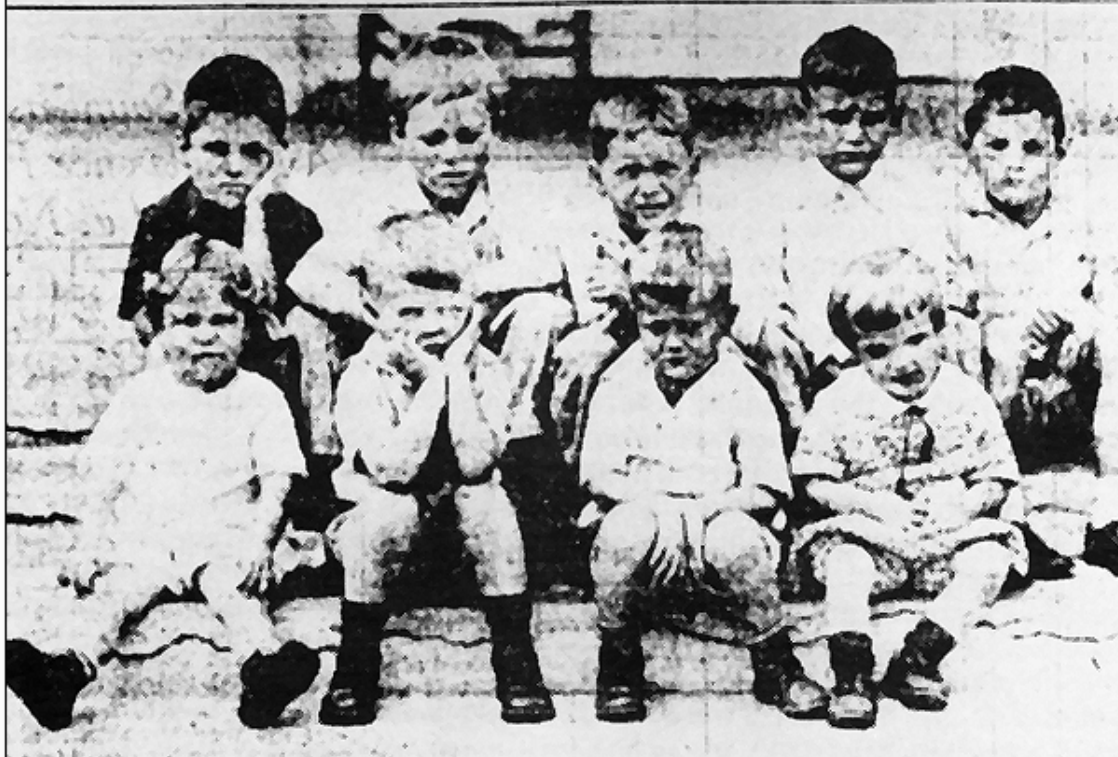
Although permanent adoption represented the ideal objective for the children who left the Home to live with foster families, the youngsters who remained in the institution needed the training and education necessary to become good citizens and achieve success in the outside world. As reported previously, this represented the original purpose of the corporation in its 1898

charter, and the Board of Managers took these obligations very seriously. Again, early Progressive philosophy dominated, even during the Depression.

One scholar writes that an asylum at the turn of the century “was seen as shelter, sanctuary, and training school for the child. Moralism dictated the routine and the orientation put a premium on order, obedience, and character development through work.”⁴⁵ Mrs. McLean’s description of the conditioning of the boys in her care in 1926-1927 serves as an example of the perceived success of close supervision and instruction. Throughout the 1930s the Home believed that routine and labor built character. Structure ruled each day, and bells dictated when the children should get up, go to school, eat, and study. The girls helped in the kitchen, dining room, laundry, and nursery. In addition, they sewed the great majority of the clothes worn by all of the youngsters. The 1933 annual report related that 780 house linens (including chair upholstery, sheets, spreads, and towels) and 921 articles of clothing had been made or mended by the girls. Boys swept and scrubbed floors, cleaned the halls, carried fuel, and cut the lawn.⁴⁶ These duties reflected typical chores given to children in other establishments, and Tiffin states, “The actual value of this type of training to the children involved is questionable. . . . More often than not this smattering of domestic skills was of far less use to the child than to the institution that child helped to maintain.”⁴⁷ Indeed, the 1933 annual report listed the efforts of the youngsters as instrumental in keeping down the cost of running the Home.⁴⁸

Formal education also remained essential to the training of good citizens, and before 1932 the Home provided its own school for the younger children. In 1927 the curriculum included religion, sewing, cooking (“Culinary Arts”), general housekeeping (“Domestic Science”), and cleanliness, along with reading and arithmetic.⁴⁹ Two teachers, who also lived in the Home, oversaw these primary groups. Usually the children separated with one instructor supervising the kindergarten through third grade while the other handled the fourth through sixth level. The older children traveled to Thomas Jefferson Junior High and Hillsborough High School. Occasionally scholarships made it possible for youngsters to attend private academic or vocational schools as well. However, by 1931 the sixth grade students started attending B.C. Graham Elementary School, and in 1932 the treasurer, Mr. Paul Van Pelt, advised closing the Home’s educational facilities. Although the minutes of the Board of Manager’s meeting did not specify a reason for his suggestion, financial considerations may have dominated. The expenditures for school supplies alone were \$232.90 in 1930 and only \$46.25 in 1935.⁵⁰

They Long for Real Homes



A 1927 newspaper photo which noted in the caption that these “youngsters at the Children’s Home... are ready for adoption.”

Photograph from *The Tampa Morning Tribune*, November 2, 1927.

Another high priority of the Board of Managers concerned the health of the children. As early as 1895 the women decided that “no child afflicted with incurable disease shall hereafter be received into the home.”⁵¹ Actually any illness could necessitate the refusal of admission. Doctors, who donated their services, examined the youngsters prior to their entrance. These physicals included vision and hearing exams and laboratory tests for hookworm, tuberculosis, and venereal diseases. The physicians also inoculated each youth against typhoid, diphtheria, small pox, and tetanus. After the examination, children remained in the Home’s observation ward for fifteen days before entering the dormitories. Infants and toddlers stayed in the nursery until they reached four years of age.⁵² The institution’s infirmary handled routine sicknesses, but any child who became dangerously ill or required an operation left for care in the city’s hospital. Annual reports indicate many cases of tonsillitis, chicken pox, measles, mumps, and flu and the administration of large amounts of cod-liver oil. More than a dozen doctors and over fifteen different dentists attended to the children each year.⁵³

The mental health of the youngsters also received close scrutiny. According to historian Susan Tiffin, children’s agencies had an obsession with mental defect. “In the early twentieth century,”

she observes, "there was a fairly wide-spread fear that the feeble-minded constituted a large proportion of all groups of dependents and delinquents and they would, if unchecked, flood America with their idiotic offspring."⁵⁴ The Board of Managers continued, well into the 1930s, to have the children examined for any feeble-minded tendencies. Although some charges determined to have "low mentality" remained in the Home, others were returned to the jurisdiction of the court or removed for testing at the Florida Farm Colony in Gainesville.⁵⁵

Despite the importance of routine, hard work, education, and physical and mental health within the Progressive institution's program of character building, discipline reigned supreme.⁵⁶ Normally the youngsters' behavior in the Children's Home came under the jurisdiction of the Superintendent and of the Boys' Supervisor. However, throughout the Depression, various degrees of misconduct continually demanded the attention of the Board of Managers. The problem of runaways persisted, and although the women recorded children's absences and returns, they omitted any reference to the penalty for this particular offense.⁵⁷ "Unruly" female inmates usually lost some important privilege, such as going to the movies or to a dancing lesson.⁵⁸ However, misbehavior by males often resulted in more serious consequences. In 1932 the Board "felt that it would not be wise" for the Boys' Supervisor to "whip" his charges, but by 1938 Board members had lost their patience and asked the juvenile court's opinion regarding this form of punishment. The judge advised that since the Home served in the capacity of parents, whipping would be allowed if not overly brutal.⁵⁹ In addition, the women decided on several occasions, usually in response to theft, to have a number of male offenders returned to the court and sent to the juvenile reformatory at Marianna.⁶⁰ Although this action may have been justified, Tiffin points out that this practice occurred commonly across the nation. As a result, "the stigma of delinquency may have been unjustly conferred on any number of children who failed to conform to the institutions' rather rigid regimes."⁶¹

Of course, the care, training, and discipline of these dependent and neglected children could not proceed without funding. In January 1924 the Children's Home joined with four other local agencies to form Tampa's Community Chest.⁶² The idea for a group appeal to raise money originated in Denver in 1888, but the movement really expanded during the First World War. In 1918 Secretary of War Newton D. Baker persuaded seven national organizations to band together in the United War Activities Fund. Following the end of hostilities, these groups dissolved, but local social welfare services continued to develop the concept. Fund-raisers admired the efficiency of having one annual drive instead of smaller, more numerous appeals. However, the participating agencies lost some control over their operations by having to submit budgets to the central organization for its approval.⁶³ Therefore, while the Tampa Community Chest relieved the Children's Home of the burden of financing their corporation, the Board of Managers relied upon the success of the annual campaign. In addition, the fund had to ratify proposed expenditures.

Problems developed early for the Tampa fund-raisers. In 1926 the Chest did not meet its goal, and the budgets of the member organizations had to be slashed. In June 1927, the Home's Board held an emergency "call" meeting to discuss the shortage of funds. The women decided to reduce the salaries of the nurse and the two teachers and to "do away" with the services of the head of the dining room and one laundress.⁶⁴ But the 1927 campaign proved even less successful. The Chest at that time had twenty-one participating agencies, and the leaders of the drive assured the

citizens that the economic situation really was not that bad. President J.A. Griffin told a reporter, “Tampa’s financial condition is better than Tampa people realize.”⁶⁵ Chairman Peter O. Knight agreed that “we have no unusual conditions in Tampa today.... There is no more poverty in Tampa than there is in New York City, the greatest city in the world.” In addition, he warned, “We can’t allow the news to go out that Tampa can’t care for those who are in need.”⁶⁶

Despite the optimistic view of its directors, the Community Chest continued to fall short of its goals. Throughout 1929 the Board of the Children’s Home discussed requests from the central agency to limit expenditures, but Board members finally decided they “simply can’t do on less.”⁶⁷ In April 1930 the situation reached a climax, and another emergency “call” meeting brought eighteen of the twenty-five directors together. Treasurer Paul Van Pelt reported that the Home had \$1,500 in a savings account but when that ran out, “he didn’t know what would happen.”⁶⁸ Mayor D.B. McKay, sounding like a true politician, “said he was not prepared to say anything at this time but would have something to say later; however, he said [the Children’s Home] will be the last to be abandoned, if he has anything to do with it.”⁶⁹ This assurance proved insufficient. The group decided it could gather more support on its own and voted to withdraw from the Chest at the end of the year.⁷⁰

However, the controversy continued. While the Children’s Home developed fund-raising plans with the Elks Club, other charity organizations begged the Board to reconsider. Yet the women stood firm. When asked by Community Chest representatives if the Home thought it would get more money if it withdrew, Mrs. Maas answered firmly “that she thought we would get what we needed.”⁷¹ Mrs. Macfarlane expressed the discontent of many participating agencies with the budgeting practices of these groups by stating, “we were told long ago that if we did not come into the chest, there would be no chest, then when we did go in, we were given just what the chest decided to give us.”⁷²

The fact that other agencies followed the Children’s Home and resigned from the fund illustrates the power and prestige of the individuals who comprised its Board. In the fall of 1930, the directors of the Chest voted to disband. However, efforts to organize a new united appeal quickly materialized, and formational meetings occurred during November and December. The conflict centered around distinguishing between “charity organizations,” such as the Children’s Home, Old People’s Home, and Milk Fund, and “character-building organizations” which included the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and YMCA. Abe Maas led the first group and stated emphatically that the Home would not join the new agency without a guarantee that it would receive its entire budget. The maintenance of charity organizations represented a duty; financing character-building groups constituted a luxury. Obviously, the leaders of the opposition feared their possible loss of funds. On December 19 the adversaries compromised by approving a dual pledge-card system. Contributors could designate which type of organization they wished to support, and any monies not specified would be distributed at the discretion of the Chest.⁷³

However, the resolution of the funding controversy did not mean the end of the financial crisis. At the annual meeting of the Children’s Home in January 1931, Treasurer Van Pelt announced that the Board owed \$315.84.⁷⁴ Normally the city and county gave money to the Home monthly, but during the Depression these contributions became sporadic. Again, the state offered little relief. Although Florida had created the State Board of Public Welfare in 1927, its main

However, removing a perceived problem proved easier than finding an adequate replacement. The following fifteen months represented a period of transition for the Children's Home. From October 1 to December 1, Mrs. Juanita Goodall served as superintendent. In December Mr. and Mrs. William C. Brown moved into the institution. A truly turbulent year followed. Much of the trouble centered around Mr. Brown who had to be questioned concerning "the unfortunate incident with one of the girls in the dining room," and about the rumored use of a black jack on the boys whose "feeling for Mr. Brown. . . is rather bad."⁸⁷ Mrs. Brown and the new nurse also came under fire when they neglected to place a recently admitted child in the observation ward prior to entering the dormitories. The youth developed whooping cough which quickly spread to seven other youngsters. This outbreak resulted in the temporary closing of the nursery, the pediatrician threatening to refuse to serve the Home, and the demotion of the nurse.⁸⁸

Throughout this transition period, the women searched for a professionally trained manager. They contacted employment agencies in New York and Chicago and enlisted the help of the State Welfare Board. This represented a remarkable change in philosophy. Less than ten years earlier they had offered the job of dietitian to a woman whose only qualification consisted of having three children and eight grandchildren and, therefore, presumably knowing a lot about food.⁸⁹ By 1938, these standards no longer applied. Finally Irene Zewadski, the Director of the Department of Child Welfare of the State Welfare Board, recommended a thirty-nine-year-old Brooksville woman, Marion McCool. In January 1939 Miss McCool moved into the Home.

The situation prior to 1939 can best be detected by reading Miss McCool's annual report:

At the beginning of the year bodily assaults of one upon the other were everyday occurrences in both the boys' and the girls' dormitories. Temper outbursts toward one another and toward the staff, accompanied by strong words and epithets were very common. Run-a-ways were fairly prevalent, especially among the boys. The children were destructive. Thieving was common. The problems were many and decidedly alarming.⁹⁰

These difficulties, although usual in institutions, "were far more common here than necessary."⁹¹ Yet she did not blame the children. "All of these anti-social characteristics are results and not causes," she wrote. "It is up to us to learn the causes, change the pressures and then study the results."⁹²

Miss McCool quickly developed programs to rectify the situation. A merit system, where children earned points toward the acquisition of their own money, clothing, and other possessions, helped reduce theft. The new administration encouraged the youngsters' schoolmates to visit them in the Home and a more "normal association with those of the opposite sex" evolved.⁹³ The Home even held an occasional Friday night dance for the older youth and their friends. The superintendent worked to improve the quality and quantity of the children's clothing, and as a result they had more "self-confidence [and] greater pride in their appearance."⁹⁴ Miss McCool also focused on the staff. She hired another male to better balance the administration since the boys and girls "need father substitutes as well as substitute mothers."⁹⁵ Individual conferences with employees sought to develop a greater understanding of each child and of youngsters as a whole. A psychiatrist joined the medical staff and helped with

some of the problem children. Not even the Board of Managers escaped change, and a Case Committee formed to study the charges who needed special attention or treatment. In the past, the Superintendent attended the weekly meetings only when invited, and then primarily for the resolution of a specific issue. Miss McCool sat in at each gathering and contributed to the overall direction of the corporation.⁹⁶

With the behavioral crisis in the Home under control, the administration turned its attention in 1940 to the modernization and professionalization of the Home's procedures. A new filing system, instituted in 1939, continued, and the application, recommendation, and reference forms for adoptions were standardized and altered to include more pertinent information. Miss McCool made the visits of investigation and her 1940 Annual Report pointed out:

Especially weak is our adoptive work for we have neither the time nor the facilities for making the kind of initial investigations of the children whom we accept nor of the families who apply to us for children, to feel assured that we are doing a good placement job. Then, too, this same lack means that we do not give the proper amount nor the proper type of supervision from the time a child is placed in a foster home until he has been legally adopted by the foster parents.⁹⁷

She concluded that the staff needed the addition of a full-time social worker to assist her. Furthermore, the Home could not receive the approval of the Child Welfare League of America unless this type of professional joined the administration. In January 1941, the Board of Managers voted to petition the Community Chest to approve the necessary amount.⁹⁸

Throughout 1940 Miss McCool became an active part of the community. The minutes of Board meetings report her speaking before the Junior League, the Hillsborough Home Economic Program, and a variety of different student groups. In addition, she attended a ten-day seminar course at the New York School of Social Work. This increased professionalism continued to ease difficulties within the Home. Although the discipline problems did not disappear, the 1940 annual report announced that only one child had run away in the last twenty-one months and that little boy left the night before school started and returned the next day.⁹⁹ Miss McCool seemed to have reestablished control.

Historian Hamilton Cravens suggests that the child-saving efforts of Progressive reformers divides into two distinct phases. During the first phase, from 1890 to 1915, the manipulation of the child's life by "noble" laymen dominated. From 1915 to 1930, the emphasis changed to professionalism and the utilization of the new human sciences and technology.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, by the eve of World War II, Tampa's Children's Home reached a juncture that many institutions had attained ten to twenty years earlier. The domination of the establishment by its early founders and staff partially explain this delay. In addition, Florida lagged far behind many states in its regulation and funding for all social services, including dependent and neglected children. As a result, the women of the Board of Managers continued to function on a day-to-day basis much as they had since the turn of the century. When the government stepped in and informed them of their weaknesses, they acted. Indeed, the minutes of Board meetings in 1939 and 1940 reflect that many of the motions that led to modernization came from Mrs. Maas. Therefore, the New Deal, and the changes it forced upon the state, stimulated many improvements in the Home.

The Children's Home had entered the Depression with years much the same philosophy that had dominated since the 1900s. Certainly, social control and the maintenance of order motivated these women. But Susan Tiffin points out that many Progressive reformers saw little difference between "control" and "benevolence."¹⁰¹ The ladies of the Board of Managers attempted to train, educate, and provide for these potential citizens without realizing that other successful paths to this goal might exist. They truly believed that they acted in the best interests of each child. While many Americans tired of reform, these women continued to care for, and about, others. Their dedication to their cause deserves much credit. One scholar suggests that Progressive reformers "were, significantly, the bridge between the local world of the nineteenth century and the corporate-technological society of the twentieth century."¹⁰² Surely, the women of the Children's Home helped that institution, and the city of Tampa, make that transition.

¹ *Tampa Morning Tribune*, May 23, 1893.

² Letter from Mrs. Annie H. Schneder, August 13, 1975, Children's Home Papers, Special Collections Department, University of South Florida Library, Tampa, Florida.

³ Amos G. Warner, *American Charities*, revised by Mary Roberts Coolidge (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1908), 280.

⁴ Michael Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1986), 113.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 117; Ronald D. Cohen, "Child-Saving and Progressivism, 1885-1915," in *American Childhood: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook* ed. by Joseph M. Hawes and N. Ray Hiner (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985), 294; and Susan Tiffin, *In Whose Best Interest? Child Welfare Reform in the Progressive Era* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982): 8.

⁶ Tiffin, *In Whose Best Interest?*, 61.

⁷ In 1900, 956 out of the 1,075 institutions for children were managed by private agencies. This included 90 percent of the youth under care at the time. *Ibid.*, 190.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 50-51; Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 269-70.

⁹ Nancy A. Hewitt, "Social Housekeeping versus Communal Housekeeping: Domestic Modes and Women's Activism in Anglo, Latin and Black Neighborhoods, 1885-1925" (paper presented at Women in the Progressive Era Conference, March 10-12, 1988), 3.

¹⁰ Charlton W. Tebeau, *A History of Florida* (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1971) 401; Federal Writers Project, *Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), 105.

¹¹ Nancy A. Hewitt, "Varieties of Voluntarism: Class, Ethnicity, and Women's Activism in Tampa" (manuscript, University of South Florida, 1987), 9,10.

¹² Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 290-91.

¹³ Hewitt, "Varieties of Voluntarism," 11,32; and Hewitt, "Social Housekeeping," 5.

¹⁴ Charter and By-Laws of the Children's Home, Children's Home Papers.

¹⁵ Henry S. Marks, *Who Was Who In Florida* (Huntsville, Alabama: The Stode Publishers – 1973), 168.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Gary R. Mormino and Anthony P. Pizzo, *Tampa, The Treasure City* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Continental Heritage Press, Inc., 1983), 151.

¹⁸ The Children's Home Papers.

¹⁹ Mary L. Frech, ed., *Chronology and Documentary Handbook of the State of Florida*, vol. 9 of *Chronologies and Documentary Handbook of the States*, ed. by William F. Swindler (Dobbs Ferry, New York: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1973) 23; and Mormino and Pizzo, *Tampa*, 167.

²⁰ By-Laws of the Children's Home, Children's Home Papers.

²¹ Dorothy Zietz, *Child Welfare: Services and Perspectives*, Second Edition (New York: JohnWiley & Sons, Inc., 1969), 64; Viviana A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1985), 177-78; Tiffin, *In Whose Best Interest?*, 81.

²² W.H. Slingerland, *Child-Placing in Families: A Manual For Students and Social Workers* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1919), 97.

²³ Warner, *American Charities*, 283.

²⁴ Charter and By-Laws of the Children's Home, Children's Home Papers.

²⁵ Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1926-1927, *ibid.*

²⁶ Slingerland, *Child-Placing in Families*, 83.

²⁷ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, 1926-1941, Children's Home Papers.

²⁸ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meeting, April 5, 1927, *ibid.*

²⁹ Slingerland, *Child-Placing in Families*, 85, 112-13, 119; and Tiffin, *In Whose Best Interest?*, 101.

³⁰ Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*, 144.

³¹ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meeting, March 31, 1936, Children's Home Papers.

³² Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, June 17, 1930 and February 9, 1932, *ibid.*

³³ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, October 23, 1929, January 31, March 3, 1931, and August 30, 1932, *ibid.*

³⁴ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, 1926-1941, *ibid.*

³⁵ Tiffin, *In Whose Best Interest?*, 10, 57.

³⁶ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, June 16, 1936, Children's Home Papers.

³⁷ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, November 23, 1926, November 1929, June 14, July 7, 1931, June 30, October 6, November 17, 1936, November 8, 1938, *ibid.*

³⁸ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, 1926-1941, *ibid.*

³⁹ Tiffin, *In Whose Best Interest?*, 100.

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- ⁴⁰ Hastings H. Hart in the Introduction to Slingerland, *Child-Placing in Families*, 21.
- ⁴¹ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, 1926-1941, Children's Home Papers.
- ⁴² Mrs. McLean as quoted in Minutes of the Board of Managers Meeting, July 5, 1927, *ibid.*
- ⁴³ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, July 1, 1930, March 8, 1932, May 12, 1936, *ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meeting, December 2, 1930, *ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ Alfred Kadushin, *Child Welfare Services*, Second Edition (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1974), 620.
- ⁴⁶ Annual Report, 1933 and Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1926-1927, Children's Home Papers.
- ⁴⁷ Tiffin, *In Whose Best Interest?*, 71.
- ⁴⁸ Annual Report, 1933, Children's Home Papers.
- ⁴⁹ Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1926-1927, *ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*; Annual School Report, 1929, Minutes of the Board of Managers Meeting, April 12, 1932, Annual School Report, 1930, and 1935, *ibid.*
- ⁵¹ *Tampa Morning Tribune*, December 18, 1895.
- ⁵² Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1926-1927, Children's Home Papers.
- ⁵³ Annual Reports of the Hospital Committee, 1931, 1933, and 1935, *ibid.*
- ⁵⁴ Tiffin, *In Whose Best Interest?*, 269.
- ⁵⁵ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, May 24, 1927, May 13, 1930, March 14, 1933, September 28, 1937, Annual Reports, 1929 and 1933, Children's Home Papers.
- ⁵⁶ Tiffin, *In Whose Best Interest?*, 68.
- ⁵⁷ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, 1926-1941, Children's Home Papers.
- ⁵⁸ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, August 13, 1929, August 7, 1934, and January 18, 1937, *ibid.*
- ⁵⁹ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, November 29, 1932 and January 25, 1938, *ibid.*
- ⁶⁰ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, May 30, 1932, August 7, 1934, October 12, 1937, and February 22, 1938, *ibid.*
- ⁶¹ Tiffin, *In Whose Best Interest?*, 69.
- ⁶² The four other agencies consisted of the Old People's Home, Associated Charities, the Salvation Army, and the Milk Fund. Minutes of the Board of Managers Meeting, January 8, 1924, Children's Home Papers.
- ⁶³ Frank J. Bruno and Louis Towley, *Trends in Social Work, 1874-1956: A History Based on the Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work*, Second Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 201-05; William R. Brock, *Welfare, Democracy, and the New Deal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 27.

⁶⁴ Minutes of the "Call" Meeting, June 25, 1927, Minutes of the Board of Managers Meeting, June 28, 1927, Children's Home Papers.

⁶⁵ *Tampa Morning Tribune*, November 26, 1927.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meeting, May 9, 1929, Children's Home Papers.

⁶⁸ Minutes of the "Call" Meeting, April 14, 1930, *ibid.*

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meeting, October 14, 1930, *ibid.*

⁷² Mrs. Macfarlane as quoted in *ibid.*

⁷³ *Tampa Morning Tribune*, November 29, 1930, December 3, 6, 13, 20, 1930.

⁷⁴ Minutes of the Annual Meeting, January 29, 1931, Children's Home Papers.

⁷⁵ Tebeau, *A History of Florida*, 401.

⁷⁶ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meeting, February 8, 1927, Children's Home Papers.

⁷⁷ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, January 5, 1932, February 2, 1932, Minutes of the Annual Meeting, January 29, 1931, *ibid.*

⁷⁸ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, March 8, 15, 1932 and Minutes of the Annual Meeting, January 29, 1931, *ibid.*

⁷⁹ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, May 2, 1933, February 13, April 4, 1934, *ibid.*

⁸⁰ Minutes of the Annual Meeting, January 30, 1936, *ibid.*

⁸¹ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meeting, May 12, 1936, *ibid.*

⁸² Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, November 24, 1936, January 19, March 30, 1937, and Minutes of the Annual Meeting, January 26, 1939, *ibid.*

⁸³ Susan Ware, *Holding Their Own: American Women in the 1930s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 197.

⁸⁴ Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*, 246; Frech, *Chronology and Documentary Handbook of the State of Florida*, 25; and Lawrence Mahoney, *Children and Hope: A History of the Children's Home Society of Florida* (Miami: The Pickering Press, 1987), 30.

⁸⁵ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meeting, February 9, 1937, Children's Home Papers.

⁸⁶ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meeting, September 7, 1937, *ibid.*

⁸⁷ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, June 28, November 8, 1938, *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meeting, September 6, 1938, *ibid.*

⁸⁹ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meeting, September 9, 1929, *ibid.*

⁹⁰ Annual Report 1939, *ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Annual Report 1940, *ibid.*

⁹⁸ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meeting, January 14, 1941, *ibid.*

⁹⁹ Minutes of the Board of Managers Meetings, 1940, Annual Reports, 1939 and 1940, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Hamilton Cravens, "Child-Saving in the Age of Professionalism: 1915-1930," in *American Childhood*, ed. by Hawes and Hiner, 417.

¹⁰¹ Tiffin, *In Whose Best Interest?*, 294.

¹⁰² Cohen, "Child-Saving and Progressivism," 299.