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# Evangelizing Indigents: A Move Towards Professionalization of the Cleveland Protestant Orphan Asylum, 1875-1900

Rhianna Gordon

In 1833, a New England migrant, Benjamin Rouse, founded the First Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio; however, Benjamin and his wife, Rebecca, would later establish sundry organizations that evoked the Puritan spirit of morality and the fervent excitement of the Second Great Awakening. From charitable sewing communities to Sunday schools, the Rouses became a prominent New England family within the newly settled then western city of Cleveland. Rebecca Rouse eventually founded the Martha Washington Society in 1843, which later established one of the first charitable orphan asylums in the northern region of Ohio.

By 1849, Cleveland experienced a deadly wave of cholera, which robbed the city of mothers and fathers, and left many children orphaned.<sup>1</sup> In response, the Rouse's and other prominent members of Cleveland's society formulated a plan to rescue the orphaned children of Cleveland from the grasp of poverty and more importantly, sin, idleness, immorality, and filth.<sup>2</sup> Among their supporters were Mrs. S.J. Andrews, Mrs. P. Scovill, Mrs. Mary H. Severance, John M. Woolsey, and various others, who united under the following pretenses:

To [establish] a home for these poor desolate children where they could be trained up to usefulness and happiness. There would be a place where we could all go and do our share, and at some future period may we not hope that some of our benevolent and wealthy citizens will give us a lot in some convenient place and funds to erect a good, substantial building as a permanent abode for our orphan children.<sup>3</sup>

Unknown to the founders, the rented orphan home on Erie Street (now east 9th street) would be replaced by an impressive structure on Woodland Avenue that later came to be known as the Cleveland Protestant Orphan Asylum. The Asylum had small beginnings as a non-profit charitable organization that was influenced by the ideologies of the New England Theology. The Rouse family maintained direct relations with prominent figures in the Second Great Awakening that began roughly in 1803, and continued into the mid-century.<sup>4</sup> The Awakening revived Puritan concepts of moral reform, extreme piety, evangelicalism, the perfect Christian family dynamic, and benevolence through voluntarism.<sup>5</sup> Due to the New England heritage of the Rouses, the Cleveland Protestant Orphan Asylum adopted these concepts and applied them to their work throughout the nineteenth century.

Unlike previous research which emphasize the social and economic influences on orphanages during the nineteenth century, the paper seeks to examine the direct effect of the Second Great Awakening on the Cleveland Orphan Asylum's founders and its placing out program.<sup>6</sup> Between 1875 and 1900, the Cleveland Protestant Orphan Asylum entered a critical era of welfare reform. However, the asylum's susceptibility to embrace nuanced reform theories and align with the regulations of the state enabled the institution to systematize their placing-out program. Moreover, their original vision of evangelizing indigent children continued under new aliases of Victorian moralism or American ethics allowing the asylum to remain connected to their founders' Puritan intentions.

The Second Great Awakening ushered in a humanitarian reformation based on the Puritan ideals of morality and the Arminian concept of world mending. Numerous benevolent, voluntary charities emerged hoping to mend the world of social undesirables: orphans, criminals, lunatics, and fallen women. Infatuated evangelicals and revivalists obsessed over reforming and molding the human race to fit the perfect Christian image.<sup>7</sup> The concept of Puritan morality underwent numerous transformations throughout the nineteenth century; moreover, the early lives of the Cleveland

Orphan Asylum's founders highlights the multiple embodiments of Puritan moralism that occurred simultaneous to the development of the orphanage.

Benjamin Rouse was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1795; however, he was soon orphaned due to the loss of both parents to an epidemic of yellow fever.<sup>8</sup> Benjamin's transient period of orphanhood ended when he moved to Portland, Maine, to live temporarily with his aunt.

He later resumed life in Boston with his grandmother, who introduced him to a profound individual associated with the Unitarian movement in the early nineteenth century. However, Benjamin did not pursue religion until he returned from the War of 1812.<sup>9</sup> In 1814 he embraced the Baptist tradition under the guidance of Reverend Daniel Sharp.<sup>10</sup> After he was baptized and adopted in his faith, Benjamin participated in the evangelical frenzy by establishing one of the first Sunday schools in Boston. Finding his true calling as a man of faith, Benjamin devoted his life not only to architectural work, but also to forming Sunday schools in order to spread the gospel.

Benjamin soon became acquainted with Rebecca Cromwell, a resident of Salem, Massachusetts. Similar to her prospective husband, Rebecca exhibited compatible religious inclinations that led her to assume missionary and benevolent roles in society. According to Sydney Ahlstrom, the Second Great Awakening was a catalyst for securing Arminian tradition throughout the New Republic.<sup>11</sup> As a practitioner, Rebecca understood that humans are born in sin, but through moral reform and prayer one could be saved. Arminian ideology is reflected in her poetry where she believed that one could be saved through, "earnest prayer and watchfulness."<sup>12</sup> Based on Rebecca's poetry and private thoughts, it is certain that moral reform, cleanliness, thriftiness, prayer, covenant renewal, and scripture show prevalence in every act of work performed by the Rouse family, especially the founding of the Cleveland Protestant Orphan Asylum.<sup>13</sup>

In 1824, the Rouses relocated to New York City and began benevolent work upon their arrival. After establishing a variety of Sunday schools in New York, Benjamin was approached by the recently established American Sunday School Union of Philadelphia to missionize in New Orleans.<sup>14</sup><sup>14</sup> Due to recent outbreaks of disease there, Benjamin firmly declined; yet, when offered a position in Cleveland, Benjamin accepted and arrived on October 19th, 1830.<sup>15</sup>

The disease the Rouses tried to evade infiltrated their new home city of Cleveland, Ohio. By December 1st, 1848, New York reported cholera outbreaks across the city.<sup>16</sup> Due to technological advancements in travel, cholera made its way into Cleveland by the end of July 1849. As the disease became an ominous reality for Clevelanders, it inspired Benjamin Rouse to reflect on the devastation in a journal entry. Benjamin wrote on August 2nd, 1849,

for the past six weeks the cholera has been spreading over various parts of our country and to an alarming extent in some of our cities among which are Cincinnati, St. Louis, New Orleans, and Sandusky westerly of Cleveland, has suffered more than any other place in proportion to the numbers of its inhabitants. In Sandusky, the people fled for their lives, the panic was so great according to letters directly writing from those that some families left their dead and dying. This was wrong, if not wicked to say the least. The President of the United States in view of prevailing epidemics- the country has provided a recommendation for a day of fasting and prayer to be offered.<sup>17</sup>

Benjamin's somber account of the widespread panic ensuing in Ohio predicts the urgent demand for benevolent relief in the growing city of Cleveland. The Cleveland Orphan Asylum's humble beginnings originated in a rented property on the corner of Ohio and Erie Street. The choice of this rented home, which was provided and paid for by Mrs. Stillman Witt, did not anticipate the growth of the city.<sup>18</sup> The newly organized orphanage expressed anxieties regarding the influx of indigence, which accelerated with the ominous epidemic of cholera. Fortunately, Reverend Eli Sawtell donated one acre of land on the corner of Woodland and

Wilson Avenues (presently known as E. 55th Street).<sup>19</sup> By 1855, the Woodland location opened its doors to the waifs, or orphans of Cleveland. Through elite philanthropy and various denominational donations, furniture, clothing, and food, filled the newly constructed orphanage.

Due to the increase in population, Cleveland underwent social changes that caused an alarming need for benevolent organizations such as the Cleveland Protestant Orphan Asylum. However, the influx in population crowded other organizations such as the city almshouse. State officials concerns grew as children were placed within the same living quarters as unsavory characters. In 1863, Massachusetts wrote into existence their State Board of Charities, soon after, many states followed including Ohio in 1867.<sup>20</sup> By 1874, the National Conference of Charities and Correction was formed in order to unite the State Boards to share and debate concepts in the field of benevolent charities.<sup>21</sup> By the close of the 1860s, Ohio's State Board of Charities conducted various investigations and found disturbing results pertaining to young children in the almshouses.<sup>22</sup> By 1884, the demand to remove children became a legal order, and directly influenced the admittance rates in the Cleveland Protestant Orphan Asylum.<sup>23</sup> One year later, the CPOA hosted a meeting with Ohio's Board of Charities and other benevolent workers to discuss the immediate actions necessary for removing waifs, from the city infirmaries.<sup>24</sup> According to the asylum and reformers, the nefarious scenes of the Infirmary were damaging the children; thus, they needed immediate removal. The CPOA's involvement in welfare reforms did not subside with the removal of children from almshouses; in fact, the orphanage progressed rapidly after Joseph Perkins and Mr. A.H. Shunk joined the benevolent institution.

Contemporary to the shifting dynamics of the city, the Cleveland Orphan Asylum concluded once more that a larger facility was necessary. Additionally, they decided to change the name to the Cleveland Protestant Orphan Asylum to differentiate itself from other institutions that sprang up since its original opening in 1852.

These institutions included the Cleveland Jewish Orphan Asylum and St. Joseph's Orphanage for Girls. With their new name, their future hopes of a larger asylum, and their dedication to professionalization, Mr. Joseph Perkins was formally elected president of the CPOA in 1875.

Joseph Perkins was born in Ohio on July 5th, 1819. Throughout his years, Perkins acquired an eclectic resume: advisor at Oberlin College, vice-president of the Humane Society, band member of the Board of State Charities.<sup>25</sup> The asylum's detailed annual reports begin with the induction of Perkins and Shunk as president and superintendent. Mr. M.A.H. Shunk was superintendent of the orphan asylum from the years 1874 until 1906.<sup>26</sup> Early in his career, he married Miss Julia Warren, the hired matron. For the remainder of their years as Superintendent and Matron of the institution, they are often addressed in letters from placed children. Annual reports dating from 1875 until 1906 show multiple letters with a remarkable outpouring of appreciation toward the couple regarding their support highlighting the likable characters of Mr. and Mrs. Shunk.<sup>27</sup> By 1880, the asylum not only moved locations to St. Clair street to continue work in a much larger facility, but documents also mention co-operation with the local courts in order to remove and secure safety for children.<sup>28</sup> Due to Perkins' association with the Board and the Humane Society, the asylum embraced reform concepts other benevolent charities would feud over until the 1920s.

The Perkins' administration catalyzed a succession of positive occurrences. In 1877, the asylum received a land donation from the formidable, Mr. Leonard Case.<sup>29</sup> In addition, Mr. J.H. Wade donated around 20,000 dollars in necessary funds to establish a professional and efficient asylum.<sup>30</sup> Unlike the earlier establishments, the St. Clair location possessed the necessary room to supply the managers and trustees with additional functions: hospital room, laundry room, nursery, external storerooms, and a school.<sup>31</sup> The CPOA's new location supplied them with the tools necessary

for embracing welfare reform to better the lives of children and secure their future.

The formation of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections or NCCC accentuated common debates involving the functionality and purpose of nineteenth century orphan asylums. For instance, welfare reformers in the 1870s urged orphan asylums to shorten the period of institutionalization. Their concerns were not only rooted in the financial backlash of housing large quantities of children for extensive durations of time without state funding, but also the emotional and psychological effects it would inflict on children.<sup>32</sup> Advocates such as Charles Loring Brace argued against institutionalization, but also encouraged children's reform through benevolent institutions. In other words, Brace believed children should be institutionalized so their immoral defects are removed, but did not support long periods of institutionalization because it promoted prolonged state dependency as adults.<sup>33</sup> In accordance with Brace's views of institutionalization, the CPOA's thoughts on the matter are best summarized in three words: receive, reform, and replace. For instance, a 1903 souvenir booklet recalled that it had always been the asylum's, "desire to retain" the children, yet they understood it was best for both the orphan and the institution if they "receive" and instill the appropriate "responsibilities" before relocating the intended ward to a new home.<sup>34</sup> Throughout the annual reports between 1875 and 1900, these three words were repetitively used to describe their mission as a progressive benevolent facility. In 1881, Reverend A.G. Byers best embodied the CPOA's stance, "[h]ere they are gathered for temporary care and training, to remain only until they can be placed, one by one, in families capable and willing to assure the care and responsibility of their further rearing."<sup>35</sup> One year later the board mentions their views on institutionalization once more, "institutionalizing children is almost a crime, for those brought up to be dependent on the institution, when grown, will easily learn to be dependent on the State."<sup>36</sup> Conclusively, the CPOA firmly attested to the negative effects of placing children in large institutions for extended periods of time.

In addition to placement, other issues arose involving visitations, correspondences, and parental rights. Between 1870 and 1900, debates on parental rights and placing out comprised the discussions of the NCCC.<sup>37</sup> Thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Shunk, the asylum was later credited with pioneering attempts to systematize the placing out program and secure parental rights of privacy.<sup>38</sup> The asylum's stance on relinquishing parental rights is stated in an annual report published in 1892,

As the asylum to better protect its wards must stand in the relation of legal parents, anyone having parental rights are required to surrender all such rights to a child, and not be allowed to interfere in any way with its care or managements, or to know where it is eventually placed, as experience has taught us the wisdom of such actions, the courts moreover sustain us in such control for the child must be protected, the new parents shielded from the interference of the natural parents.<sup>39</sup>

Evidence further concludes, the asylum demanded legal custody of children placed in their facility. Because of their preference of home life over institutionalization, the asylum also provided services such as boarding so that families could be reunited after economic hardship.<sup>40</sup> Conclusively, the asylum agreed with reformers on the length of stay in an institution and its negative effects on children. Because of the religious value placed on nuclear Christian families, the CPOA recognized that parents should be offered boarding services during economic hardships. However, the asylum's view of the family as a sacramental and heavenly relationship applied only to certain parents. Parents with distasteful qualities were not shown mercy by the asylum, and their rights as parents were revoked. Parents were expected to reform their own lives prior to removing their children from the asylum. Therefore, the complexity of boarding frustrated the asylum's managers and trustees after their extensive efforts to reform and manipulate the character of the waif.<sup>41</sup> Even though America underwent a scientific movement to methodize multiple occupations including social work, antiquated Puritan intentions of moral reform and perfectibility remained. However, they masqueraded as home training

programs that were used to form manual skills, profane and sacred education, industrial habits, economic or thrifty habits, and hard work over idleness.<sup>42</sup> As a result, attachments to old philosophies and new alliances with the state encouraged the CPOA to embrace systematization and centralize their mission to focus on placing out and home aestheticism.

For the CPOA, sheltered orphans arrived contaminated from their previous profane lifestyles; moreover, they demanded immediate reform through their extensive home training program. In order to erase the effects of their previous life, the children were trained in familiar, desirable American morals: industry, thrift, frugality, piety, and obedience.<sup>43</sup> Similar to their Puritan ancestors, the orphanage's managers credited the powers of Divine Providence for blessing couples with a childless life. The managers' assumed the orphaned children were given an opportunity from God to be placed in a childless household and leave their previous profane lives behind them.<sup>44</sup> According to Joseph Perkins, caring for the malleable waif and fragile fallen woman characterized the work of God.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, children needed redemption before they could revel in a perfect Christian domain; the asylum believed their Christian duty included gathering, preparing, and placing the children.<sup>46</sup>

The asylum's susceptibility to embrace progressive concepts of welfare reform warranted further acceptance in child education and rearing theories. The CPOA's home training and private kindergarten emulated popular New England works of child education literature such as Lydia Child's *The Mother's Book* and Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *American Woman's Home*. By the 1850s, many began to accept that childhood extended beyond the age of six and deserved extended preservation before entering the trials of adulthood.<sup>47</sup> However, a child required direction and training in order to gain habits of industry and obedience. In accordance with the popularized movement, the asylum added a kindergarten in hopes of repressing habits of immorality before they became irreversible.<sup>48</sup> Originally,

kindergartens were used in low-income and highly impoverished areas in order to shape the morals of little waifs before they reached a certain age of permanency.<sup>49</sup> The CPOA's kindergarten used childish songs to instill mild lessons in moralism and temperance into the minds of the children.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Lydia Child emphasized the importance of tender and mild instruction for little children. In *The Mother's Book*, Child uses a series of anecdotes to prove young children need instruction, yet it should only include mild scolding and gentle religious moral assimilation.<sup>51</sup> Like Lydia Child's theories, the orphanage emulated the Puritan family and labored to "correct their evils and form good habits," along with instilling gentle religious sentiments.<sup>52</sup> The Puritan family met in the morning and evening to pray and study scripture. Prominent figures such as Horace Bushnell believed that religion could be cultivated at home to create a healthy spiritual atmosphere.<sup>53</sup> Likewise, through the creation of a habitual familial routine, the orphanage established an ideal nuclear, Christian family aesthetic for the young children of the asylum.

Instilling gentle lessons in religiosity included ritualized Sunday services in the city, bible study, and lessons in religious history.<sup>54</sup> Tender moral lessons were taught by using a system of merits to reward the children's good behavior rather than entice them through monetary bribery. Every day the children worked to reach twenty-five good merits in order to receive a paper medal. The asylum's merit system recognized children for their hard work and allowed them to feel needed. Similar to Beecher and Stowe's publication, *The American Women's Home*, the asylum used chores not only to complete mundane tasks, but also to teach the children multiple skill sets and feel needed within the household.<sup>55</sup> The children of the orphan asylum were expected to use their newly acquired domestic skills in their new homes, and emulate the life and habits they learned at the asylum.

Future homes were chosen in accordance to prescribed moral tenets: industry, frugality, social situation, Sabbath observing, Church-going, mentally and physically well, interested in edu-

cation, and financially well off.<sup>56</sup> Potential families were found through networking and correspondences; additionally, the asylum often featured their annual report in the local newspapers.<sup>57</sup> The interconnected web of social relations expanding westward encouraged many to assist the CPOA in finding ideal Christian homes outside of the state. Similar to earlier trends of multilateral state networking, the asylum signaled to humanitarians in the west to align with the mission statement of their facility in order to expand their institution's outreach. Prospective families often intended that the child they receive enter as either an apprentice or an indentured individual. Marilyn Irvin Holt references throughout her work, *The Orphan Trains: Placing out in America*, that children were sent westward under the auspices that they would work for their stay. Although the children may have been sent with the understanding that they would learn a trade, Holt explains that children were often over worked and treated similarly to slaves.<sup>58</sup>

Contemporary to the establishment of the CPOA, many eastern orphan asylums participated in indentured services. For example, the New York Children's Aid Society sent children to the American West for placement. However, the manner of execution resembled a slave auction more than an adoption. One boy from Missouri, who was placed by the New York Children's Aid Society, recalls standing on a stage in his youth while being inspected by numerous farmers. The strange men came up to him and felt his muscles for strength, while their wives searched for a pretty girl to help with domestic duties.<sup>59</sup> Similar to the New York Children's Aid Society, the Cleveland Protestant Orphan Asylum experimented with placing-out services upon opening in 1852. The Asylum's annual reports and meeting minutes between 1852 and 1875 are missing. However, the *Cleveland Herald* and subsequent annual reports unveil the mystery surrounding the experimental years of the orphanage.

On March 14, 1854, the *Cleveland Herald* published the annual meeting of the Cleveland Orphan Asylum. Within its pages, the *Herald* reported that "nine little girls have been taken from the asy-

lum the past year—two of them bound out as servants and six were adopted.”<sup>60</sup> Only two years after opening, the asylum was already participating in adoption services, indenture, and boarding. In an annual report from 1886, the managers recalled:

And only a short time since, another gentleman called to see us, who was indentured to the asylum April 2, 1852, over thirty-four years ago at the age of three and was the first boy admitted to the asylum. He is now a well-to-do farmer.<sup>61</sup>

Later Superintendent, E.J. Henry also revisits the 1850s and believes “that we were pioneers in the practice of keeping children in the institution no longer than necessary for their well being.”<sup>62</sup> Evidence from both accounts confirms the use of indenture during the foundational years of the asylum.

Although Ohio retracted its funding of private benevolent institutions in 1851, it worked to establish county-run orphan asylums. Alternatively, the state of New York funded both private and public benevolent institutions.<sup>63</sup> Similar to the CPOA, the New York Children’s Aid Society, partly founded by Charles Loring Brace, adopted the placing-out program by the early 1850s. The Society operated on a four-point system that also mirrored ideals found within the CPOA: Individual influences and home life was believed to be better than institutional life, lessons of industry and self-help were better than alms, the implanting of moral and religious truths in union with supply of bodily wants, the entire change of circumstances as the best cure for the defects of children of the lowest poor.<sup>64</sup> Like Benjamin and Rebecca, Charles Loring Brace came from a strong New England heritage. Yet, Brace differed on his scale of operation. Inspired by England’s indenture system, Brace viewed placing out as a “safety valve” for society and removed large numbers of children. In 1863, Brace’s Society placed an estimated 883 children in the American West; by 1864, the Society placed around 1,034 children.<sup>65</sup> For comparison, the CPOA placed twenty-five children in 1864. <sup>66</sup>Nevertheless, smaller quantities of children proved easier to manage, place, visit,

and reform. Therefore, the asylum's miniature placement program rivaled that of New York's in quality, rather than quantity.

The CPOA and the New York Children's Aid Society differed in their placing-out programs; however, their mind-sets remained in agreement. For instance, both institutions romanticized the West as a setting freed from the restraints found in the industrialized urban East. The West, through the eyes of the urbanized Victorian, became everything the industrialized cities lacked. For instance, the western frontier removed social class distinctions allowing the class of poverty to elude from the western social hierarchy. The city's smog and disease, which terrorized the heavily industrialized cities, did not plague the west and offered a healthful retreat for those inflicted with vice or illness.<sup>67</sup> In 1896, the CPOA visiting agents expressed their views of the west:

most of them [were placed] in the country...where educational and social advantages are good, or if you could go with us to the bright sunshine and health-giving air of the mountain country, where happiness and contentment are proverbial, and see hundred and hundreds of boys and girls, hale, hearty, and happy, growing into good citizenship, and acquiring habits of industry and independence- seeing these things as we do, you would not wonder that we still believe in the good American, Protestant Home as being far better than institution life.<sup>68</sup>

In addition to their romanticized mirage of the West, the asylum relied heavily on a systematized qualification list for their idea of the perfect Christian home: the status of the surrounding neighborhood, financially well-off, possesses habits of industry and thrift, socially situated, Church going, and Sabbath abiding individuals.<sup>69</sup> In regards on where to find these families, the CPOA looked to the West. By 1890, the asylum had successfully placed children in multiple states: Michigan, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Kansas, Colorado, California, South Dakota, the Canadian province of Ontario, Illinois, Montana, and West Virginia.<sup>70</sup> The asylum successfully established a network system with humanitarians in the American West.

Placing children a considerable distance away from the orphanage aroused concerns felt by many, including the orphans. Therefore, it became imperative to trace the children that were once under the roof of the orphan asylum and assure their newly provided family did not abuse their innocence. Criticisms of placing-out were centered on the possibility of children being sexually, physically, and mentally abused. In agreement with popular concern, Boston recognized the perilous circumstances a child faced when placed with a new family. As a response, Bostonians created the State Visiting Agency in 1869 under the supervision and guidance of Gordon Fisk.<sup>71</sup> Women's Auxiliaries and other volunteers were invited to participate by visiting children previously placed by institutions. Boston's visiting agency removed multiple children from unsavory individuals who abused the children's indentured contracts.<sup>72</sup> Unlike the Boston Visiting Agency, the CPOA held accountability of their children's follow up visits and their well-being after placement.

From 1853 to 1874, the asylum lacked consistency in their placing out records, visitation methods, and the number of days and miles travelled to visit placed children or their prospective families. The asylum's detailed reports pertaining to the miles and days spent in the field begins in 1875 and continues henceforth. Once children were placed, they underwent a trial period with the family anywhere from six months to a year. If the home proved satisfactory, both to the child and the family, adoption or other "arrangements" were made. However, if the child was unhappy or something "[did] not seem right" the child was recalled immediately.<sup>73</sup> In 1885, the asylum's agents travelled around 43,707 miles visiting placed children, delivering children to new homes, or investigating potential homes. One year later, the asylum travelled almost 52,000 miles participating in field-work.<sup>74</sup> Conclusively, the scale of the systematized program grew as the era for scientific management continued towards the age of progressivism.

As their program expanded, their concerns with placing out criticisms increased as well. By the 1880s, critics were skeptical of

the status of children already placed by workers, and in more than one instance, children suffered due to mismanagement and lack of proficiency in follow-up visitations. Failure to follow up with children resulted in death and sexual abuse in some cases, and neglect and overwork in others.<sup>75</sup> Aware of these criticisms, the CPOA emphasized the importance of their field work and accentuated the amount of miles, days, letters, and visits conducted by both agents and former wards. However, numbers and mileage could only assure the public to a certain extent. In order to relieve placing-out critics, the CPOA inserted testimonials into the published annual reports from foster parents, adoptive parents, possibly indentured contractors, and children. The letters chosen lack unscrupulous circumstances, but always depict a positive outcome. Children were always described as excellent students, hard workers, pious little ones, industrious domestics, and lovable children.<sup>76</sup> In fact, the asylum created its own romanticized reputation for the prying, critical eyes of the Victorian population. In most cases, the asylum used letters sent from foster parents requesting the adoption papers of their child in order to accentuate the model behavior that the CPOA claimed responsibility for molding.<sup>77</sup> For example, a family wrote to Mr. Shunk from Iowa on August 18, 1884,

Dear Sir—It has been sometime since I have written you. When last I wrote I asked you to send us the legal papers as we were pleased with our little girl and wished to adopt her. I do not think you could have suited us any better.<sup>78</sup>

The asylum and prospective parents were often concerned with attempts made by the biological parents. The asylum's authority to revoke contact between children and their biological parents resided within the local courts of Cleveland. Therefore, many children were sent to the CPOA through the legal system in Cleveland. The cooperation with local government authorities raised the question of funding. The Treasury Reports from Annual Records lack specificities regarding receipts, yet there are numerous examples that list, "amount received for care of children during the year."<sup>79</sup>

Although the reports do not specify the origin of the donation or amount paid, Matthew Crenson explains,

Ohio law did not mandate the establishment of county children's homes. It required only that children be removed from county infirmaries. They could be placed in private families by indenture or adoption, or they could be sent to some 'other charitable institution' where the county would pay their keep. The latter alternative was the one that seems to have been followed in Cincinnati and Cleveland, where no county children's homes were ever established. Taken together, these two cities held half of all the private orphanages in the state, and where the private sector provided such an array of choices for the institutional care of children, there was little need for public establishments.<sup>80</sup>

Because of the close cooperation with Mr. Wightman of the county Humane Society, it is plausible that the amount received for child care consisted of money that belonged to the City of Cleveland. The alliance with the local Humane Society enabled CPOA to professionalize their institution and emerge as a progressive facility within the vibrant and bustling city of Cleveland. Rather than remain privatized, they worked closely with city officials described above. Their ability to embrace progressive theories in child behavior resulted in their lasting legacy of what is temporarily known as, Beech Brook.

After welfare reformers adopted the theory of cottage-style architecture, the Cleveland Protestant Orphan Asylum relocated in 1926 to its current location in Pepper Pike and rebranded itself under the new name, Beech Brook, abandoning its religious affiliations.<sup>81</sup> By 1952, exactly a century after the original opening, Beech Brook's professionalization had been achieved. A centennial biography acknowledges the asylum's early ambitious history, self-describing as a pioneer in the development of social welfare services.<sup>82</sup> Once the asylum worked alone in its efforts of receiving, reforming, and replacing, but by 1952, the institution worked with psychiatrists, caseworkers, on-site medical practitioners, government figures, and social workers.<sup>83</sup> Beech Brook's efforts to

secure itself as a professional institution succeeded subsequent to the Progressive Era. In fact, the legacy continues one hundred and sixty-four years later; however, their focus has shifted to children and adolescents with mental illness.<sup>84</sup> Since its opening in 1852, rehabilitation services replaced home training programs, psychiatric treatment substituted religious lessons in morality, individual counseling supplanted reformatory schools, and professional social work superseded evangelical placing-out missions.

The Second Great Awakening inspired many to continue the work of their fellow Puritan ancestors, reforming, inspiring, and awakening sinners. The capricious nature of America's economy induced a wide spread industrial boom that rattled the traditional familial work force found within New England. Men, women, and children tried to endure the turbulent period, but the economic dynamics of the industrial era ultimately shattered the Puritan nuclear family. With the fervor of religion and the chaos of social instability, Americans began to re-establish their traditional lives by molding undesirables into ideal Christians. Welfare reform criticisms and demands for scientific management emerged in the late Victorian era.<sup>85</sup> However, through the help of the asylum's president, Joseph Perkins, they embraced state alliances and nuanced theories to excel their progress toward professionalism. After various relocations and adjustments, the finale of the nineteenth century closed with the CPOA at the forefront of progressivism, which many asylums did not embrace until after the 1909 White House Conference on Charities and Correction. Furthermore, the asylum's attention to individualization predated many orphanages. The New England Second Great Awakening endures today as Beech Brook, a facility with a goal of reforming children's behavior, and offering a revitalized life after their release.

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[2](#) E.J. Henry, *An Outline History 1849-1903*, BB, Box 1, Folder 1.

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[5](#) Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 422.

[6](#) Nurith Zmora, *Orphanages Reconsidered: Childcare Institutions in Progressive Era Baltimore* (Philadelphia: Temple University

Press, 1994), 71.

[7](#) Ahlstrom, *A Religious History*, 424-425, 427. Benevolent associations created during the early 1800s included the American Bible Society in 1816, the American Tract Society in 1823, and the American Sunday School Union in 1824.

[8](#) Adella Prentiss Hughes and Ellen Rouse, *Biography of Benjamin Rouse*, Adella Prentiss Hughes Family Papers.

[9](#) Adella Prentiss Hughes and Ellen Rouse, *Biography of Benjamin Rouse*, APHFP.

[10](#) Benjamin Rouse, *The First Baptist Church from 1801 to 1837* and inserted manuscripts from 1839 and 1862, APHF, box 9.

[11](#) Ahlstrom, *A Religious History*, 288.

[12](#) Rebecca Cromwell Rouse, *Poetry on Christian Ethics*, APHF.

[13](#) Board of Trustees, *Annual Report of 1876*, Beech Brook Records, MS. 4544, box 2, folder 14, WRHS.

[14](#) Adella Prentiss Hughes and Ellen Rouse, *Biography of Benjamin Rouse*, APHF, box 9. Rebecca Rouse does not indicate whether the church was located in, or near Cleveland. However, her ledger repetitively includes substantial donations to an African American congregation.

[15](#) Adella Prentiss Hughes and Ellen Rouse, *Biography of Benjamin Rouse*, APHF.

[16](#) Owen Whoolsey, *Knowledge in the Time of Cholera: The Struggle Over American Medicine in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 74.

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[19](#) E.J. Henry, *An Outline History 1849-1903*, BB.

[20](#) Matthew Crenson, *Building the Invisible Orphanage: A Pre-history of the American Welfare System* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 56.

[21](#) Crenson, *Building an Orphanage*, 52.

[22](#) Crenson, *Building an Orphanage*, 55-56.

[23](#) Marian Morton, *And Sin No More* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press), 33.

[24](#) "Children's Homes," *Plain Dealer*, September 9, 1885.

- [25](#) Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1885, BB.
- [26](#) Beech Brook: A Home for Children, 1852-1952, BB, box 1, folder 1.
- [27](#) Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1878, BB.
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- [35](#) Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1881, BB.
- [36](#) Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1882, BB.
- [37](#) Crenson, *Building the Invisible Orphanage*, 206-210, 213.
- [38](#) "Children's Friend Lauded by Pastor," *Plain Dealer*, March 29, 1908.
- [39](#) Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1892, BB
- [40](#) Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1880, BB.
- [41](#) Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1890, BB.
- [42](#) Thomas J. Schlereth, *Victorian America: Transformations in Everyday Life, 1876-1915* (New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 1992), 63.
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- [50](#) Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1882, BB.
- [51](#) Lydia Child, *The Mother's Book* (Boston: Carter and Hendee, 1831), 31, 67.

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- [53](#) Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 19.
- [54](#) “Protestant Orphan Asylum,” *Plain Dealer*, December 20, 1896.
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- [56](#) Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1892, BB.
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- [58](#) Holt, *Orphan Trains*, 133.
- [59](#) Holt, *Orphan Trains*, 51.
- [60](#) “Annual Report of the Cleveland Orphan Asylum,” *Cleveland Herald*, March 14, 1854.
- [61](#) Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1886, BB.
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- [63](#) Hacsí, *Second Home*, 91.
- [64](#) Holt, *Orphan Trains*, 46.
- [65](#) Holt, *Orphan Trains*, 76.
- [66](#) “Cleveland Orphan Asylum Twelfth Anniversary,” *Cleveland Herald*, October 20, 1864.
- [67](#) Holt, *Orphan Trains*, 20.
- [68](#) Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1896, BB.
- [69](#) Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1892, BB.
- [70](#) Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1890, BB.
- [71](#) Crenson, *Building the Invisible Orphanage*, 175.
- [72](#) Crenson, *Building the Invisible Orphanage*, 176.73 Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1885, BB.
- [73](#) Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1885, BB.
- [74](#) Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1886, BB.
- [75](#) Crenson, *Building the Invisible Orphanage*, 213.
- [76](#) In an annual report from 1894, the Board carefully recognized outstanding children that had been recently placed out to new homes. For instance, Minnie was reportedly learning the “family trade” of the new adoptive parents. Similar accounts suggest that

children were provided schooling in exchange for assistance around the house or family trade.

[77](#) Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1876, BB. In another account from the annual report of 1892, the Board members proudly state their ability to remove moral degradation and filth that was “bred in the bone” proving that it can be extracted from “the flesh.”

[78](#) Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1884, BB.

[79](#) Board of Trustees, Annual Report of 1877, BB.

[80](#) Crenson, Building the Invisible Orphanage, 57.

[81](#) Beech Brook: The Beautiful Home of the Protestant Orphan Asylum, 1926, BB, box 2, folder 1.

[82](#) Beech Brook: A Home for Children, 1852-1952, BB, box 1, folder 1.

[83](#) Beech Brook: A Home for Children, 1852-1952, BB.

[84](#) Beech Brook: A Home for Children, 1852-1952, BB.

[85](#) Schlereth, Victorian America: Transformations in Everyday Life, 1876-1915, 63.