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## Women's Campaign for Culture: Women's Clubs and the Formation of Music Institutions in Dayton, Ohio 1888-1933

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WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN FOR CULTURE:  
WOMEN'S CLUBS AND THE FORMATION OF MUSIC INSTITUTIONS  
IN DAYTON, OHIO 1888-1933

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Humanities

By

SHERRI LYNN DERRINGER  
B.M., Wright State University, 2003

2007  
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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY  
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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY Sherrri Derringer ENTITLED Women's Campaign For Culture: Women's Clubs and the Formation of Music Institutions in Dayton, Ohio 1888-1933 BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Humanities .

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## ABSTRACT

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Women's Campaign For Culture: Women's Clubs and the Formation of Music  
Institutions in Dayton, Ohio 1888-1933.

This thesis is about the Women's Club Movement in Dayton, Ohio, using the music clubs as a case study. The dates encompassed range from the formation of the Mozart Club in 1888 to the formation of the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra in 1933. The formation of women's clubs, by both white and black women, was a national phenomenon, and Dayton exemplified what was going on throughout the United States.

This thesis traces the roots of women's activism and association building from the early benevolent and religious reforms of the early nineteenth century to the formation of clubs, and finally the establishment of major cultural institutions, including orchestras. The research was collected by using primary sources such as local club records and nineteenth century women's memoirs, as well as secondary sources on the women's club movement and women's activism. The significance of this research reveals an interesting story about Dayton, and the major impact women had on fostering a love of culture in their city.

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## **Introduction:**

In 1919, Charlotte Reeve Conover recalled the phenomenon of the Woman's Club Movement, and its impact on Dayton, Ohio. Her memory takes her back to the 1870s, a time when women had few rights, yet they were drawn to enlightenment, and to seek something more than what society demanded of them. Conover was one of these women and she wrote:

To any wider outlook [women] were blind, to the large outstanding interest with which their husbands were familiar they were indifferent. If in any group, a woman was so untactful as to introduce as a subject of conversation a new book, she was quickly silenced by the chill with which the effort was received. It was considered to be 'posing' to try to talk of world events... All that is now changed... What has made the change? It will not be disputed that it is the club movement which has changed the complexion of modern social life and brought women to their own.<sup>1</sup>

In this passage Conover powerfully expressed her resentment at the inability of a woman to express her intelligence for fear of being shamed. The significance of the club movement for her and other affluent women was that they now had an acceptable arena to discuss books, culture, and worldly things. The club was a place for women to express their thoughts and ideas without the fear of "posing" or a "chilled" reaction. Further, it changed women's lives, giving them confidence that their ideas were important and worthy of discussion. In the club, women were no longer "silent" or "blind." The club movement enabled women to ultimately change their role in society to public impresarios of culture.

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<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Reeve Conover, *Memoirs of the Miami Valley* (Chicago: Robert O Law Co., 1919) 215.



The club movement peaked from the 1880s until the 1920s, and most cities in the United States had one or more clubs by the end of the nineteenth century. Clubs studied subjects, including literature, music, art and even business. They promoted self education and cultural advancement by embracing women as networks to achieve their goals. Although they faced criticism, the women's clubs gained community support and established the most important cultural institutions in the nation, including libraries, museums, and orchestras.

The club movement thrived in cities such as Dayton, Ohio because of rising affluence. Prosperous women, both white and black, had established traditions both participating in and leading religious and charitable associations. Industrialization resulted in a new urban landscape, but cities were far from beautiful, and the new problems lead to a burst of organizations at the turn of the century. One of the problems affecting city life was the lack of culture and intellectual stimulation, especially for women. Women sought to change this and make cities into cultural centers, not just industrial. More than this, though, women wanted to be intellectually stimulated in literature, art, and music.

This thesis will look at the Women's Club Movement, with emphasis on Dayton, Ohio. Chapter 1 will focus on the Victorian ideology of "separate spheres" and the education women received which caused a "dual identity" conflict. This clash resulted from having to deal with what women were ideologically expected to be and what they really were and wanted. Women faced considerable pressure because of the education they were receiving and the desire to be more than wives and mothers. This chapter will

reveal the dual identity and other issues women faced by using quotes taken from the histories and memoirs of these women.

Chapter 2 will focus on the Women's Club Movement as the solution to the problem of dual identity. This chapter will discuss the history of the women's clubs and their roots in the religious and benevolent reforms of the early 1800s. The women's clubs initially promoted self improvement, but later advocated culture for the entire community by establishing libraries, museums, and orchestras.

Chapter 3 focuses on the music clubs and their significance in Dayton. The women who participated in the Mozart Club, Chaminade Club, and Dayton Music Club contributed directly to the establishment of the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra and other community music. The major role that women played in the cultivation of music in Dayton is most evident from the inception of the Mozart Club in 1888 to the formation of the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra in 1933.

Chapter 4 takes a look at the African American experience. African Americans formed their own clubs and associations because of exclusion and racism. Although sparse documentation is available to acknowledge the contributions of blacks in Dayton to music specifically, there is evidence that high art, including classical music, was a critical aspect of African American life. The focus of this chapter will look at race relations in Ohio and Dayton, and the formation of separate institutions and associations in the face of exclusion. Although black women created literary clubs in the community, there is no documentation about whether or not black music clubs existed in Dayton. Black women in Dayton most likely promoted music through the church, and not through the formation of music clubs. Thus this chapter does not focus on music clubs in Dayton.

## Chapter 1:

### Charlotte Reeve Conover and Other Women's Voices of the Nineteenth Century

During the last half of the nineteenth century, Dayton, Ohio evolved from a small town to an industrial city with important factories such as NCR. The population rose from 1,139 residents in 1820 to 30,473 in 1875.<sup>2</sup> The rise in affluence in cities such as Dayton gave way to Victorian ideals, as men entered the work force and women became the first "leisure class."<sup>3</sup> Charlotte Reeve Conover, Dayton historian and clubwoman, stated in 1931:

In the early 'seventies [1870s] Dayton... was commercial to the core and not much else. In the 'eighties [1880s] the most we could say of ourselves was that we were undernourished intellectually and did not know it... The tone of society life was mid-Victorian, superficial, elementary... to have talked about [music, art, or books] would have set one down as a poseur. Women came together in those blank years in one or two or three ways – church sociables, card parties and infrequent and formal evening receptions... [but there was a] remarkable change that came over the city in the last two decades of the century. Those who assailed it at the time as a "fad" now know it as the lever that lifted Dayton women into a new life.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Historical Census Browser* Geospatial and Statistical Center, 2005, University of Virginia Library, 20 Jan. 2007 <<http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>>.

<sup>3</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Great Expectations: Marriage and Divorce in Post-Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) 16.

<sup>4</sup> Charlotte Reeve Conover, *Dayton, Ohio: An Intimate History* (Dayton: Landfall Press, 1931) 229-230.

According to Conover, women were able to rise above the Victorian “superficiality” of life through participation in clubs.

The problem for Conover and other middle class women in the late nineteenth century was a battle between what society expected them to be and what they really were. While women were part of the “private sphere,” devoted to domestic duties, they were also interacting with public life, participating in church, reform movements, and charity.<sup>5</sup> They were receiving an education, giving them a taste of culture and enlightenment. This caused a dual identity for these women, who wanted to be dutiful wives and mothers, but also sought a more meaningful existence.

In the 1820s and 1830s, urbanization led to a transition in the way gender roles were defined, and a more rigid definition of those roles. Women have always played the major role in childrearing and domestic life, but in agrarian society women also played a crucial role in the success of the farm. Women helped men in the fields as well as the building of shelter, and the necessity to rely on everyone in the family resulted in expansive roles for women. However, as the industrial revolution swept through the United States, turning an agrarian society into a more urban one, a physical and ideological separation of the sexes took place.

Americans who once relied solely on their farms for survival were now able to find work elsewhere. The Industrial Revolution and urbanization resulted in a shift from family labor to wage labor. While men entered the work force outside of the home, affluent women could stay home, tending to domestic duties. Historians categorized the separate domains of Victorian life as “spheres.” Men worked outside of the home in the

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<sup>5</sup> May 18

“public sphere” while women worked at home in the “private sphere.”<sup>6</sup> The defined female and male “spheres” were not entirely separate, and although affluent women did not have economic pursuits, they were not confined to the walls of the home.<sup>7</sup> Some women, mostly lower class, did find themselves immersed in the new work force out of their own necessities, yet they faced prejudice and hardships, such as lower pay. Men also participated in both “spheres” and they did not simply pursue economic gains and competition, but they too had societies and clubs, and civic concerns.<sup>8</sup>

Fathers and husbands worked in factories, mills, and took part in business ventures, and then went home to their families. Activities in public life were often viewed as corrupt or immoral, and in order to protect domestic life from this corruption, society demanded that women expose children to moral values and integrity. According to Mary Ryan, the entire ideological center for children thus shifted from an authoritative father to a loving mother.<sup>9</sup> Women played the primary role for the proper upbringing of children, all of which was defined by a strict doctrine. This “Cult of True Womanhood” demanded women be “pious, pure, and submissive,” and to provide the service of “domesticity, nurture, and education.”<sup>10</sup>

Included in women’s domestic duties and the education of their children was music; specifically, women were expected to become amateur musicians with the ability to train their children to do the same. Becoming an amateur musician was also for the purpose of parlor entertainment. The parlor was the central place of the home, known as

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<sup>6</sup> Linda K. Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place: The Rhetoric of Women’s History,” *The Journal of American History*. 75-1 (June 1988): 9-17

<sup>7</sup> May 18

<sup>8</sup> May 18

<sup>9</sup> Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1981) xi.

<sup>10</sup> Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18-2 (Summer 1996) 158 and Kerber 11-15.

the heart, and “the most important room of the house over which the women dominated, aside from the kitchen.”<sup>11</sup> The piano was a focal point of this room for the singing of hymns and carols, and other entertainment. It was the central place for women to demonstrate one of the social graces: music making.

In Dayton, parlor singing was as essential as in any other city in the United States. Charlotte Reeve Conover wrote about the 1870s, stating “We always sang... around the piano at one of the homes... we were not trained singers... but it was music... [thrilling] with thoughts that a phonograph never gives- youth, and hope, and foolish yearnings.”<sup>12</sup> Singing was significant for middle class Americans, and for Conover at least, parlor singing was preferred over phonograph recordings. Music was a part of life, and as women had musical education in and beyond the parlor, it would become an important vehicle for their emergence into public life.

Music education often began in the home, and usually included vocal and piano training, or training on other “feminine” instruments such as the lute, guitar or harp.<sup>13</sup> Other instruments, especially the violin and the entire brass family, were not proper for women to play. Music was considered both feminine and a “divine art,” and women, who were considered the “angels of the house,” played to “promote domestic harmony and to uplift and charm their children.”<sup>14</sup> In the nineteenth century, women were so bound by the restrictions of gender roles that they were expected to become amateur musicians while also being prevented from or forbidden to realize their talents fully.

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<sup>11</sup> Michelle H. Judd, “Domestic Dilettantes: Reflections in Nineteenth Century American Print Media on the Amateur Female Musician,” MM thesis, Cleveland State University, 2005, 18.

<sup>12</sup> Conover, *Intimate* 138-9

<sup>13</sup> Ralph P. Locke and Cyrilla Barr, “Patronage – and Women – in America’s Musical Life,” *Cultivating Music in America: Women Patrons and Activists since 1860*, ed. Ralph P Locke and Cyrilla Barr (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 35.

<sup>14</sup> Adrienne Fried Block, “Women in American Music, 1800-1918,” *Women & Music: A History*. Ed. Karin Pendle (Indiana UP: Bloomington, 2001) 198.

Anything outside of this realm was considered unladylike; “respectable women did not perform in public.”<sup>15</sup>

The musical training which middle and upper class women received throughout much of the nineteenth century was not to produce adept or prodigious musicians. These women were to sing and play parlor music or hymns with “chaste words ... [and were expected] to avoid long and complex works.”<sup>16</sup> According to social standards, women should not become skilled musicians. A common judgment of women who did “almost” impress men was, she “plays well for a woman.”<sup>17</sup> Further, women were not expected to become serious musicians, because this would cause conflict in their primary role as a wives, mothers, and dependants in a patriarchal society.<sup>18</sup> Women did not consider careers, and thus becoming a performer of more than amateur standing was inconceivable.

Appearing “well to do” often resulted in elaborate methods of training sons and daughters in music. This usually meant hiring a private tutor or sending children to Europe to study with the masters, at an often “excessive” price.<sup>19</sup> The opportunities for women to study music were numerous for upper and middle class Americans. Later in the nineteenth century, women began demanding more education, and eventually opportunities arose for careers in music, mainly in education.

Some upper and middle class women did have the opportunity to study at seminaries and conservatories. There were heated debates over women’s education. Some critics believed that there was no reason for women to be educated beyond learning

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<sup>15</sup> Block 193.

<sup>16</sup> Block 199.

<sup>17</sup> Locke and Barr 36.

<sup>18</sup> Block 193.

<sup>19</sup> Judd 18-20

to read and count, arguing that women only needed to learn what they could directly apply to their domestic duties.<sup>20</sup> Others who supported women's educational reform (such as Catharine Beecher, who ran the Hartford Female Seminary in Connecticut in the 1820s), made it their mission to form schools where women could train in the domestic sciences and teaching.<sup>21</sup> The education that women received was not equal to that of men, and the subjects related to the ideology of women being trained for domestic purposes. The subjects included reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, chemistry, language, drawing, needle-work, music, painting, dancing, and riding.<sup>22</sup>

As amateur music making became more widespread, the musical education offered to women improved. The training offered at seminaries began to include notation, harmony, thoroughbass, counterpoint, and composition.<sup>23</sup> After the Civil War, music conservatories began to multiply across the country. Not only did women contribute to the formation of these conservatories, but they also made up the majority of enrollees. Oberlin Conservatory, the first conservatory opened in Ohio in 1865. Two years later the Cincinnati, Boston, and New England Conservatories opened. The Cincinnati Conservatory was founded and directed by Clara Baur (1835-1912), a German who came to America at the age of fourteen. She modeled the Cincinnati Conservatory after the Stuttgart Hochschule für Musik, where she had studied as a child.<sup>24</sup> In 1885, the National Conservatory in New York was founded by Jeannette Thurber (1850-1946).

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<sup>20</sup> Judd 28.

<sup>21</sup> Glenda Riley, *Inventing the American Woman: A Perspective on Women's History, 1607-1877* (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1986) 69.

<sup>22</sup> Judd 35.

<sup>23</sup> Block 199.

<sup>24</sup> Block 200.



Less than one year after it opened, the student body consisted of 1,097 females and 317 males.<sup>25</sup>

In Dayton, Ohio there were opportunities for women to study music and other cultural subjects. Cooper Female Academy was essential to the education of women and to the women's club movement in Dayton. At Cooper Academy education for women went beyond the "domestic arts." The classes and professors at this school provided the tools that Dayton women needed to become advocates for women's education and ultimately the promotion of arts in Dayton.

Cooper Female Academy opened in 1845 as a private boarding school for girls from Dayton and surrounding cities and states.<sup>26</sup> It was located on the corner of First and Wilkinson Streets in Dayton, where the Westminster Presbyterian Church is now. Its mission was "Higher Christian Education of Young Women."<sup>27</sup> The courses included geography, arithmetic, geometry, chemistry, astronomy, physiology, English grammar, ancient and modern history, philosophy, moral science, literature, painting, drawing, and music.<sup>28</sup>

Students who attended Cooper Female academy included Sara B. Thresher, who would become a leader in the Mozart Club in Dayton; Electra C. Doren, Dayton's pioneer librarian; Julia Shaw Carnell, founder of the Dayton Art Institute; and Charlotte Reeve Conover.

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<sup>25</sup> Block 200.

<sup>26</sup> "Cooper Female Academy Name Index to 1850," *Morgan Library of Ohio Imprints and Name Index Series* ed. Richard P. Morgan, 1995-2006, 22 September 2006  
<http://www.morganohiolibrary.com/CooperFemale.html>.

<sup>27</sup> "Education of Girls in Dayton Cooper Seminary," (1911) *Dayton History Books Online* ed. Curt Dalton, October 2004, 1 May 2007 <<[www.daytonhistorybooks.citymax.com/page/page/1540552.htm](http://www.daytonhistorybooks.citymax.com/page/page/1540552.htm)>>

<sup>28</sup> Education of Girls in Dayton Cooper Seminary

A favorite professor and principal of Cooper Female Academy was James A. Robert. He was principal in the 1880s, and after his resignation from the position in 1886, the school closed. He was remembered fondly by Mrs. Charles Chatland Bosler, a graduate of Cooper Seminary in 1885. She described Robert as “almost a faculty in himself, a man of unusual learning and cultivation, a classical scholar, fine arts critic and trained musician.”<sup>29</sup> In Charlotte Reeve Conover’s histories of Dayton, she praises Robert for “disseminating and promoting musical taste in Dayton through three decades.”<sup>30</sup> Conover credits Robert with the inception of the club movement in Dayton, stating:

It goes without saying that Mr. Robert was an interesting teacher. The fame of his interpretations spread to the homes of his pupils where, to a proposal that he lead a weekly class for the mothers, the welcome was instantaneous. It was the only place in Dayton where adult women met with subjects outside of their own domestic duties and their church. Gradually it became the fashion to admit interest in serious things and when the class disbanded it was he who suggested that it be the nucleus for a larger group to call itself a ‘club.’<sup>31</sup>

That “club” became the Woman’s Literary Club of Dayton, Ohio.

## Dual Identity

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<sup>29</sup> Margaret Ann Ahlers, “Cooper Seminary Stirs Recollections,” *Journal Herald* 7 October 1960, 33.

<sup>30</sup> Conover, *Memoirs* 107.

<sup>31</sup> Conover, *Intimate* 230.

The voices of Charlotte Reeve Conover and other women of the last century were captured in their writings. These materials include memoirs, histories, and club documents. Autobiography and memoir writing was a popular outlet for women at the turn of the last century. Women “address[ed] the public in the self-revealing mode of autobiography.”<sup>32</sup> Autobiography and memoir writing are very significant because they reveal an insider’s perspective to the culture and society of the past, to the “sphere” women were a part of yet many were conflicted about. These women, including Dayton’s own Charlotte Reeve Conover, wrote histories which are also autobiographies or memoirs because their personality or “self” is revealed.

However, women often revealed not through explicit personal story, but rather through a report of “history happening in and through all individuals, each of whom has some story to tell.”<sup>33</sup> These women’s histories were revealing by “presenting a self... who is revealed only in what she reveals about others.”<sup>34</sup> There were women, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who wrote in uninhibited personal ways, but other women had anxiety about revealing too much. As women’s scholar Mary Jean Corbett wrote,

most secular woman autobiographers... can master their anxiety about being circulated, read, and interpreted only by carefully shaping the personae they present and, more especially, by subordinating their histories of themselves to others’ histories.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Lois J Fowler, *Revelations of Self: American Women in Autobiography* (New York: State University Press, 1990) ix.

<sup>33</sup> Mary Jean Corbett, “Literary Domesticity and Women Writers’ Subjectivities,” *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader* ed. Sidonie Smith (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998) 256.

<sup>34</sup> Corbett 258

<sup>35</sup> Corbett 255

Thus many turn of the century women's autobiographies and personal revelations are hidden in their memoirs or histories.

Often, these accounts have not been taken seriously by historians, regardless of their insight into certain aspects of women's history. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, scholars of woman's history, wrote:

women's autobiographical writing [was] seldom taken seriously as a focus of study before the seventies... [It] was not deemed appropriately 'complex' for academic dissertation, criticism, or canon... Academic and popular historians alike... deemed it too windy and unreliable – since life stories 'stretch' the truth – to be worthy of critical investigation.<sup>36</sup>

It is nonetheless important to consider and evaluate the writings of women from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These women devoted their writings to documenting and memorializing a time which was rapidly changing, and they felt was disappearing in the face of immigration, urbanization, and industrialization.<sup>37</sup> Thus women writers of history and memoirs captured the scenes, events, and feelings of a complex and diverse time period, and their works should be taken seriously to understand the many aspects of this.

An important theme of women's autobiography is dual identity, which many women were struggling with in their writings. These women captured in their writing an internal fight between accepting society's role for them as bound to family, church, and home and an increasing desire for independence.

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<sup>36</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, "Introduction: Situating Subjectivity in Women's Autobiographical Practices," *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader* ed. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998) 1-5.

<sup>37</sup> Jane C Nylander, *Our Own Snug Fireside: Images of the New England Home: 1760-1860* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993) 4-5.

The concept of dual identity is something that originated with African Americans, and perhaps a concept borrowed from them. W E B DuBois wrote about in 1897, which he calls “double consciousness.”<sup>38</sup> According to DuBois,

the Negro is gifted with second-sight in this American world, a world which yields him no true self consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelations of the other world... always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others... one ever feels his twoness... two warring souls... longing to... merge his double self into a better truer self.<sup>39</sup>

Similarly, women have also felt this pull between two identities. A woman is aware of how she is being defined as a woman, a member of a group whose identity has been defined by the dominant “male” culture.<sup>40</sup> Unlike men, who “often have the luxury of forgetting their sex or color,” women and minorities are constantly reminded.<sup>41</sup> The dual identity women and minorities face is a fight between how culture defines them and how they define themselves.

Virginia Woolf in her memoirs *A Sketch of the Past* recalls the image of a mirror and the shame she had when she would look at it.<sup>42</sup> According to woman’s scholar Shari Benstock, the imagery of the mirror reveals the lack of concurrence between the actual

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<sup>38</sup> W E B DuBois is credited as coining the phrase “double consciousness” in 1897, but the concept was developed even earlier by Frantz Fanon in his book *Black Skins, White Masks*. W E B DuBois, “Strivings of the Negro People,” *Atlantic Monthly* (1897) later published under the title “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” in his collection of essays titled *The Souls of Black Folk*.

<sup>39</sup> W E B DuBois, “Strivings of the Negro People,” *Atlantic Monthly* (1897) later published under the title “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” in his collection of essays titled *The Souls of Black Folk*.

<sup>40</sup> Susan Stanford Friedman, “Women and Autobiographical Selves Theory and Practice,” *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women’s Autobiographical Writing* ed. Shari Benstock (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) 38.

<sup>41</sup> Friedman 39.

<sup>42</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* (New York: Harcourt Brace World, 1929) 67-69.

self and the self image.<sup>43</sup> The identity between what society demanded of women and who she really was caused conflict. Sidonie Smith wrote that women had “split life stories” and she cites from Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s memoir *Eighty Years and More, 1815-1897*:

The story of my private life as the wife of an earnest reformer, as an enthusiastic housekeeper, proud of my skill in every department of domestic economy, and as the mother of seven children... [is different from] the incidents of my public career as a leader in the most momentous reform yet launched upon the world – the emancipation of women...<sup>44</sup>

Stanton’s revelation of her “dual” identity is quite obvious, while in other women’s writings the conflict is not quite as prevalent.

### **Charlotte Reeve Conover**

Charlotte Reeve Conover, turn of the century Dayton historian, also dealt with a duality of identity. A devoted wife, she always referred to herself in her histories as “Mrs. Frank Conover.” This was traditional for the times, but there were also clues in her histories, through her tone and words, leading the reader to believe she also had an independent and feminist identity as well. She used phrases such as “brought women to their own” and “the lever that lifted Dayton women into a new life” to describe what happened in Dayton as the women’s clubs became part of her life.<sup>45</sup> According to

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<sup>43</sup> Shari Benstock, “Authorizing the Autobiographical,” *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women’s Autobiographical Writing* ed. Shari Benstock (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) 14-15.

<sup>44</sup> Sidonie Smith, “Resisting the Gaze of Embodiment: Women’s Autobiography in the Nineteenth Century,” *American Women’s Autobiography: Fea(s)ts of Memory* ed. Margo Culley (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992) 85-6.

<sup>45</sup> Conover, *Memoirs* 215 and Conover, *Intimate* 229-30.

Conover, participation in clubs enabled women to leave behind their “dull” and “superficial” Victorian lives, and transform their lives into something more meaningful. Further, Conover believed women could and should contribute to the advancement of their own lives and their communities.

Conover was born in Dayton, Ohio June 14, 1855. She attended Central High School and Cooper Female Academy, and even attended the University of Geneva in Switzerland. Her education was both important and influential in her life, leading her to become a writer with several published works, an editor for several local publications, as well as a respected and valuable citizen of Dayton. She lived in the Miami Valley for 85 years, sharing much of her experiences within the pages of her histories about Dayton and prominent Dayton citizens. She lost her sight in 1935, but continued to write. Between 1938 and her death she wrote *On Being Eighty, Grow Old and Like It*, *Signposts in the Dark*, and *The Pools Are Filled With Water*. She died in Dayton September 30, 1940, at the age of 85.

Conover’s histories are full of vivid scenes from the past, with such topics such as women, social atmosphere, culture, and everyday life. In her *Memoirs of the Miami Valley* she talks about how women were bound to family, home, and church until the 1870s, before the women’s club movement. Her tone is bitter when she wrote about the “superficiality” of life for women at this time.<sup>46</sup> Conover wrote in *Dayton, Ohio: An Intimate History* about the change the women’s club movement had on the social atmosphere in Dayton:

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<sup>46</sup> Conover uses the term “superficial” to describe life for women in the 1870s, before the club movement. The following passages are taken from Conover, *Memoirs* 215.

...It is interesting to note the change in public opinion. In 1890 some husbands were not a little concerned over the question whether a woman's 'club' could really be perfectly respectable, that is in the sense of *comme il faut*. Newspaper editors knew from the beginning that it was a fateful experiment. In the first place women, they were sure, could have nothing really vital to discuss or contribute. In the second place there was no use in it. Women were not really citizens, they had no share in the public issues that affect men... I have gone at some length into the story of this atmosphere of dull but pleasant superficiality to note the remarkable change that has come over the city in the last two decades of the century. Those who assail it at the time as a 'fad' now know it as the lever that lifted Dayton women into a new life.<sup>47</sup>

Conover boldly describes the club movement in this previous passage. In this passage, as in the one which opens this chapter, she talks about the "dull[ness]" and "superficiality" of the Victorian period in Dayton, and that women "could have nothing...[to] contribute." She clearly is cynical about the intellectual inferiority associated with being a woman at this time. She is brutal when she describes how men did not at first accept the women's clubs. Her words and tone are full of spunk and sass, and it is clear that she believed the women's clubs *were* vital and that women *did* have something important to contribute. Moreover, the women's club movement was a vehicle for the uplift of women, and for asserting their right to be enlightened and to contribute to society on a different level than was accepted at the time.

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<sup>47</sup> Conover, *Intimate* 229-230.



The founding of women's clubs in the United States had major effects on their female members and their communities. Many of these women recognized what they were doing as significant. Jennie Cunningham Croly, founder of *Sorosis* in 1868, the first recognized literary club of the club movement, stated in her *History of the Woman's Club Movement in America*, "When the history of the nineteenth century comes to be written, women will appear as organizers, and leaders of great movements among their own sex for the first time in the history of the world."<sup>48</sup> Charlotte Reeve Conover was a founding member of the Woman's Literary Club in Dayton, Ohio in 1889. She wrote in *Daton, Ohio: An Intimate History*, "at last the women of Dayton, or some of them, found a better reason for existence than dressing, calling, jelly-making, and gossip."<sup>49</sup> Conover, as one of these "women of Dayton" found purpose and fulfillment from participating in the Literary Club, which was much more significant than the domestic and "superficial" activities expected of women at this time.

For Croly and Conover, the women's clubs were a vital part in their lives. They were also creating institutions which changed the meaning of their lives. Croly wrote:

The woman has been the one isolated fact in the universe. The outlook upon the world, the means of education, the opportunities for advancement, had all been denied her... this advance [the club movement]... was, simply the change of a point of view, the opening of a door, the stepping out into the freedom of the outer air, and the sweet sense of fellowship with the whole universe that comes with liberty and light. The difference was only a point of view, but it changed the aspect

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<sup>48</sup> Jennie Cunningham Croly, *The History of the Woman's Club Movement in America* (New York: Henry G Allen, 1898) i.

<sup>49</sup> Conover, *Memoirs* 231

of the world. This new note, which meant for the woman liberty, breadth, and unity, was struck by the woman's club.<sup>50</sup>

For Croly, the woman's club caused a change in perception of what women were capable of. Because of this change in awareness, women were free in a way they had not been before, and this opened the door for more change to come. Conover was thrilled with the recognition and new role of her life. She wrote:

It was remarkable to see our own names in print, and as purveyors of knowledge that, in a way, went to our heads. The club became a saturnalia of culture... Our aims were novel and we did take it most seriously.<sup>51</sup>

The women who participated in the club movement contributed to their own intellectual stimulation, and the cultural stimulation of their communities. These women dealt with the conflict between Victorian ideology and their true identity as intelligent and capable beings. The clubs provided a place for women to gain the confidence and managerial skills needed to provide culture for everyone in their communities.

Women formed clubs for culture resulting in a movement that swept the nation. They established institutions such as libraries, museums, and orchestras, which enriched the lives of everyone around them. However, the tradition of women forming associations began long before the club movement, as a result of a sense of mission and duty for providing moral guidance to an immoral world.

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<sup>50</sup> Conover *Memoirs* 12

<sup>51</sup> Conover, *Intimate* 231

**Chapter 2:**  
**Municipal Housekeeping: The Growth of Women's Associations for Benevolence,  
Reform, and Culture**

The women's club movement, generally dated from the 1880s to the 1920s, had roots in the benevolent and charitable religious reforms of the early nineteenth century. Women had participated in and formed their own organizations to effectively combat problems that affected the country at the time. Women, driven by their sense of mission, were initially religious reformers. There was little criticism of women's public activism because they were considered "municipal housekeepers." Women were acceptable activists because it was their moral duty, and it was an expansion of the female sphere.<sup>52</sup> The ideology of "republican motherhood" meant that women had the responsibility to instill virtue and the love of God and their country in America and the world.<sup>53</sup>

Religious and moral reforms, abolition, temperance, and suffrage were a few of the early issues around which large numbers of women organized. Sara Evans describes this phenomenon as "The Age of Associations," occurring from 1820-1845 primarily among the newly emerging middle class in northern and Midwestern towns. This age of associations was significant because men and women created organizations on a scale that had never before been seen. It later evolved into the club movement, which lasted until well into the twentieth century.

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<sup>52</sup> Karen J Blair, *Clubwomen as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes & Meier Pub., 1980) xi-5.

<sup>53</sup> Sara Evans, *Born For Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1989) 67.

## Women network for religion and benevolence

In the early 1800s, Protestant religious fervor gripped the country, and peaked with the religious revivals of the 1820s called the Second Great Awakening.<sup>54</sup> Women attended and participated in these revivals in much larger numbers than men. Many of the issues debated by preachers such as Charles G. Finney were the concerns of women, including universal loving, salvation, and forgiveness.<sup>55</sup> Female leaders like Phoebe Palmer promoted these teachings at her Tuesday Meetings in New York City from 1837 to 1874.<sup>56</sup> These and other revival meetings were the basis for widespread growth of liberal evangelical beliefs, including the conversion of others to save souls. Both men and women formed groups based on Christian morality and duty, and thus women became increasingly active outside of the home. Although the revivalist spirit declined in the late 1830s, women continued to create voluntary associations with religious and moral undertones.

Many women in Ohio organized through church and secular groups to address moral reform through charitable works. One of the earliest groups was the Female Society of Cincinnati for Charitable Purposes organized in the early 1800s.<sup>57</sup> Its expenditures included Bibles, missionary work, and seminary education.<sup>58</sup> In Piqua, women organized the Female Bible Society in 1818.<sup>59</sup> In Dayton, Catherine Brown formed the Dayton Female Bible Society on April 12, 1815. Mrs. Robert Patterson was

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<sup>54</sup> Stephanie Elsie Booth, *Buckeye Women: The History of Ohio's Daughters* (Athens: Ohio UP, 2001) 90.

<sup>55</sup> Booth 90 and George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870-1925* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1980) 74.

<sup>56</sup> Marsden 74.

<sup>57</sup> Booth 103.

<sup>58</sup> Booth 103.

<sup>59</sup> Croly 9.

elected as its first president.<sup>60</sup> The women active in these kinds of societies created funds and aid for church mission work, and they were the first purely female lay groups started for religious work.<sup>61</sup>

Women continued to form religious and moral societies before and after the Civil War. American Female Moral Reform Societies flourished in the 1830s and 1840s, and by 1850, there were over 400 chapters across the nation.<sup>62</sup> Women's Home and Foreign Mission Societies also thrived through the Civil War. In Dayton, the Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society of the Presbytery of Dayton was active and held a District Meeting November 4, 1867.<sup>63</sup>

The women of Dayton were influenced by the formation of the local YMCA in 1870. The YMCA was first established in London on June 6, 1844 by a group of young merchants who wanted to offer Christian fellowship to young men in the city during the Industrial Revolution.<sup>64</sup> The United States formed its own YMCA in New York in 1852, and by 1905 the YMCA had 5,000 associations in 24 different countries.<sup>65</sup> The YMCA opened in Dayton, Ohio in 1858, but was disbanded in 1861 because of the Civil War. It was reestablished in 1870.

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<sup>60</sup> "498-History of Montgomery County, Chapter XIX, Montgomery County Bible Society – Sabbath Union School," *The History of Montgomery County, Ohio* (Chicago: W. H. Beers & Co., 1882) ed. Allen L Potts, 20 April 2007 <[www.heritagepursuit.com/Montgomery/MontgomeryChapXIX.htm](http://www.heritagepursuit.com/Montgomery/MontgomeryChapXIX.htm)>

<sup>61</sup> Croly 8.

<sup>62</sup> Mary Ryan, "The Power of Women's Networks," *U.S. Women in Struggle* ed. Claire Goldberg Moses and Heidi Hartmann (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995) 2.

<sup>63</sup> "Women's Resources," *Research Guides* 5 Feb 2004, Ohio Historical Society, 2 May 2007 <[www.ohiohistory.org/resources/archlib/research/women/](http://www.ohiohistory.org/resources/archlib/research/women/)>

<sup>64</sup> Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt, *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and the YWCA in the City* (New York: New York UP, 1997) 2

<sup>65</sup> Mjagkij and Spratt 3

The YWCA was formed in England in 1855, by a group of young middle-class Christian women to provide charity to less fortunate women.<sup>66</sup> In America, the religious revival movement enticed women to form their own YWCA in 1858.<sup>67</sup> By 1875, women in 28 American cities had formed branches of the YWCA. The YWCA opened in Dayton in 1870. The women of Dayton formed the Young Women's Christian Association to promote charitable causes such as relief for the poor, visiting the sick, and sending supplies to the needy. The early organizers of the YWCA included Sara B. Thresher and Agnes Robert, who later played an important role in the music clubs of Dayton.

The YMCA and YWCA reached out to men and women, and both middle class and working class members of society. These two organizations operated in much the same way as society did at this time, segregated into "separate spheres." The YMCA and YWCA trained their leaders separately, although encouraging both men and women to join their programs.<sup>68</sup> The two organizations originally offered educational programs for adults, including English classes, but later shifted focus to recreational facilities. The YMCA in Dayton first began offering classes in 1887, and the curriculum consisted of only two classes: bookkeeping and mechanical drawing.<sup>69</sup> Music was offered as a course at the Dayton YMCA in 1900. It was the first class women were allowed to attend, although they were not formally admitted as students of the YMCA classes until 1920, and they had to sit separately from the men.

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<sup>66</sup> Majagkij and Spratt 6.

<sup>67</sup> Majagkij and Spratt 6.

<sup>68</sup> Majagkij and Spratt xii.

<sup>69</sup> The following information about the first courses offered at the Dayton YMCA are courtesy of correspondence with Julie Fairchild, Archivist at Sinclair Community College.

Providing aid for working women was also a focus for women's clubs. Working women had their own organizations, and according to Sara Evans "the outpouring of association building in the 1830s crossed class lines... the growing working class led the formation of labor organizations."<sup>70</sup> Working women also had literary and educational clubs, including the working women at NCR in Dayton, Ohio.<sup>71</sup> Affluent women wanted to help working class women, by establishing lunch rooms, working girl's homes, reading rooms, and retreat locations. In Dayton, the Young Woman's League had all of these and the working women of Dayton had a safe environment to have lunch or find leisure.<sup>72</sup>

### **Political Activism out of Reform Activism**

The early religious reform organizations debated about what was "proper" for women to be involved in. Female activism and public speaking were topics among women as well as men in the 1830s, generated by radicals such as Fanny Wright and the Grimke sisters.<sup>73</sup> These radical women openly spoke in public, sometimes to unreceptive audiences, about the reforms they believed in with deep religious conviction. Sara Evans writes that "they sharpened the contradictions in the ideology of true womanhood: How could women discharge their moral duty while remaining silent on the fundamental moral dilemma[s] of their time?"<sup>74</sup> This early leadership and networking is the background for the large numbers of women who were to associate and pursue more political agendas such as liberty, citizenship, and voting rights.

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<sup>70</sup> Evans 81.

<sup>71</sup> Watson 164.

<sup>72</sup> Young Woman's League Records, Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University, Dayton.

<sup>73</sup> Evans 92.

<sup>74</sup> Evans 80.

Women became political and social activists in both the abolitionist and temperance movements which grew out of the evangelistic reform movement which peaked in the 1830s.<sup>75</sup> Although met with harsh criticism, women were persistent in their quest for what they believed in.

## **Abolition**

Abolition was an issue which was controversial at its core. As more and more northern states began to free slaves, the immorality of slavery became increasingly apparent. Women in Ohio became very involved in the fight to free slaves. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published in 1852 by Harriet Beecher Stowe, a Cincinnati resident, and the novel sold more than 300,000 copies in its first year.<sup>76</sup> As Ohio became an important part of the Underground Railroad, as well as for abolitionist reforms, women began to join male abolition groups such as the American Colonization Society in 1826.<sup>77</sup> In 1833, the women of Cleveland formed their own organization called the Cleveland Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>78</sup> In Cincinnati, abolitionist organizations were formed as well. Dayton, Ohio was yet another story.

Conover wrote that as preachers and political speakers came to Dayton in the 1840s and 1850s to speak about the sin and injustice of slavery, they were met with violence and hatred.<sup>79</sup> The anti-abolitionist reaction to those who spoke about ending slavery included mob attacks and riots, especially after the court marshal of one of

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<sup>75</sup> Booth 56-97.

<sup>76</sup> Booth 95.

<sup>77</sup> Booth 91.

<sup>78</sup> Booth 91.

<sup>79</sup> Conover, *Intimate* 69.



Dayton's most controversial anti-abolitionist, Clement L Vallandigham.<sup>80</sup> He was born in Lisbon, Ohio in 1820, and eventually made his home in Dayton in 1847. He became a politician, serving one term as a Democrat in the House of Representatives, but after his defeat for re-election by a pro-Lincoln Republican in 1862 he took his anger to Mount Vernon, where he made a speech that would change his life. In 1863, he spoke at Mount Vernon, saying the Civil War was being fought to achieve "the freedom of the blacks and the enslavement of the whites."<sup>81</sup> Four days later, he was arrested by federal troops at his home in Dayton, and after his arrest his supporters in Dayton reacted, burning an entire city block.<sup>82</sup> It seemed that Dayton was not fully in support of the abolition of slavery, although part of the Union and not Confederacy.

In Dayton, the abolitionist spirit was nonetheless alive. The Abolitionist Society held its first meeting in 1832.<sup>83</sup> There were also a number of Underground Railroad stops in and around Montgomery County. The Daniel Miller House and the Lowe House, both located in Montgomery County were havens for fugitive slaves passing through Dayton.<sup>84</sup> Daniel Miller had been an active participant in building the Wolf Creek Pike from Dayton to Trotwood. Peter Perlee Lowe was important to the abolitionist movement by providing the house where the Dayton Abolitionist Society held its first meeting.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Roberta Sue Alexander, "Clement L Vallandigham, the Ohio Democracy, and Loyalty during the Civil War," *Builders of Ohio: A Biographical History* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2003) 121-136.

<sup>81</sup> Alexander 128.

<sup>82</sup> Rebecca Goodman and Barrett J. Brunsman, *This Day in Ohio History* (Cincinnati: Emmis Books, 2005) 139.

<sup>83</sup> *Freedom Seekers: Ohio and the Underground Railroad* The Ohio Underground Railroad Association (Columbus: Friend of Freedom Press, 2004) 168-169.

<sup>84</sup> *Freedom Seekers* 168-169.

<sup>85</sup> *Freedom Seekers* 168-169.

It is unclear what role women played in the anti-slavery movement in Dayton. Women played a role in the national movement and in other areas of Ohio. However, the truth about Dayton is yet to be revealed.

## **Temperance**

Alcohol abuse was a problem which affected many American cities. Women believed that the problems faced by Americans such as poverty, poor housing, child labor, immigration, and crime was caused by alcohol abuse.<sup>86</sup> Ohio women were leaders of the temperance movement in 1873 and 1874, but an early temperance crusade was evident from the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>87</sup> Randomly throughout Ohio, societies began without any organized activities or agendas. However, it was not until the 1850s that more centralized organizations would develop.

Cleveland and Cincinnati were among leading Ohio cities in the temperance movement. In 1850, the Cleveland Ladies' Temperance Union was organized by Rebecca Rouse.<sup>88</sup> In Cincinnati the Daughters of Temperance Union organized in 1851.<sup>89</sup> In 1853, the Women's State Temperance Association, which had formed in January, held a meeting at the Ohio State Fair in Dayton.

Once the Civil War began, the banning of alcohol halted. However, in the late 1860s temperance activists saw that alcohol problems were worse than ever, and the Ohio Women's Christian Temperance Union was formed in 1873. Men were not allowed to join, and it was within this environment of women discussing and debating, that the roots

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<sup>86</sup> Booth 96.

<sup>87</sup> Booth 96

<sup>88</sup> Booth 96.

<sup>89</sup> Booth 96

political participation was begun.<sup>90</sup> Because many of the social problems of the day were seen to stem directly from alcohol abuse, the WCTU spoke out publicly to advance its goals to close saloons and prohibit the use of alcohol. This agenda was not popular, and often women temperance activists were the victims of criticisms and sometimes violence.<sup>91</sup> Although women were stepping outside of their defined roles in the private sphere, they defended their actions by asking, “If the saloon was a threat to home and hearth, was it not a woman’s duty to invade the public sphere to defend what was universally acceded to be her special area of responsibility?”<sup>92</sup> Women were using their role as moral guardians to wage war against alcohol. This continued through the turn of the century as more and more women joined. Hillsboro, Waynesville, Springfield, and Dayton were part of the forces joining during the 1873-1874 temperance crusades. The WCTU continued its work through Ohio and the US, some until the 1950s.<sup>93</sup>

## **Suffrage**

By the late 1840s, affluent women in America had access to education at common schools and female seminaries.<sup>94</sup> The education they received was subordinate to that of men, and women were realizing that so was their position in society. Although some were tolerant of and unaffected by this inferior status, other began questioning the restrictions placed on women by religion, politics, and society as a whole, and ultimately women were driven to action.

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<sup>90</sup> Evans 127.

<sup>91</sup> Booth 96.

<sup>92</sup> Ruth Bordin, “The Temperance Crusade as a Feminist Movement,” *Major Problems in American Women’s History* ed. Mary Beth Norton (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Co., 1989) 217.

<sup>93</sup> Booth 102.

<sup>94</sup> Booth 57.

Women had gained political experience with the antislavery and temperance movements of the 1830s, and the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 attracted the attention of reformers across the United States. In Ohio, the response was immediate. Led by Jane Elizabeth Jones, Emily Robinson, Mary Ann W. Johnson, and Sara Coates, women gathered to try and secure equal rights and political privileges for women on April 19 – 20, 1850 in Salem, Ohio.<sup>95</sup> Although the convention was unsuccessful, the women of Ohio did not back down. More conventions occurred in Worcester, Akron, and Massillon in the 1850s. The Massillon convention, held on May 27, 1852, resulted in the establishment of the Ohio Woman’s Rights Association, a statewide association “open to any person interested equal rights for all human beings in all endeavors.”<sup>96</sup>

Ohio played a prominent role in the national movement for suffrage. Women held national conventions for suffrage in Cleveland in 1853 and Cincinnati in 1855. However, the quest for a constitutional amendment was defeated in the Ohio Senate in 1857. The Civil War halted activities until the late 1860s, when women began forming suffrage associations across the state and country. The Cincinnati Equal Rights Association organized in 1868, and women founded the Equal Suffrage Association of Lucas County in 1869 by Toledo women. In Dayton, women formed the Woman Suffrage Association in January 12, 1869.<sup>97</sup> The American Woman Suffrage Association held its first meeting in Cleveland in 1869. By 1870, Ohio had 31 suffrage associations.<sup>98</sup> Although the suffrage amendment continued to be defeated through the

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<sup>95</sup> Robert W. Audretsch, *The Salem, Ohio 1850 Women’s Rights Convention Proceedings* (Salem: Salem Area Bicentennial Committee and Salem Public Library, 1976) 17-20.

<sup>96</sup> Booth 61.

<sup>97</sup> Woman Suffrage, League of Women Voters, Historical Sketch, Woman Suffrage Association Records, Dayton Metro Library, Dayton – hereafter notated as WSA Records.

<sup>98</sup> The above paragraph of information, unless otherwise noted, comes from Martha Whitlock, *Women in Ohio History* (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society, 1976) 6-25.

turn of the century, many women continued to believe change was bound to occur, and their activism did not cease.

Dayton, Ohio was an example of what was going on across the country, including the criticism of anti-suffragists. Conover wrote, “If, in the past, men had been skeptical as to the value and permanency of women’s organizations, they were doubly so now...”<sup>99</sup> The suffrage campaign in Dayton was met with criticism not only from men but from women as well. Katherine Talbott, one of the founding members of the Mozart Club, was also one of the opponents of suffrage. Although prominent leaders such as John H Patterson endorsed women’s right to vote, the suffrage movement in Ohio developed slowly.

Martha McClellan Brown and Charlotte Reeve Conover were supporters of the suffrage movement in Ohio. They both realized the stakes were high, and they were up against much opposition to gaining the right to vote for women. Brown wrote a paper called “The Accident of Sex” in 1881 which she presented to the National Woman Suffrage Association in Boston. She wrote,

We are told that the State, or men representing the State, can extend the largest opportunity to women without the ballot. If the State can, doubtless the State never will. The modern State recognizes no force but political force. It respects no power but ballot and money power. It confers no honors but to voting constituents... Without the ballot, culture, character, business tact, executive skill, energy, diplomacy – all count for

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<sup>99</sup> Conover, *Intimate* 237.

nothing in the person of a woman as an applicant for a remunerative position of State.<sup>100</sup>

Brown clearly realizes that regardless of what the political leaders were saying about treating women fairly, women would not have equal rights without first gaining the right to vote.

### **Suffrage gains momentum in the peak of the club movement**

As the club movement peaked at the turn of the century, the suffrage campaign again gained momentum. Between 1910 and 1920, confidence in the suffrage amendment surged. In Dayton, the Women Suffrage Association held its first meeting on June 11, 1912.<sup>101</sup> It had been preceded by two unsuccessful suffrage associations in Dayton in 1869 and 1887, but not this time.<sup>102</sup> The 25 women who gathered at the Dayton YMCA in 1912 elected Jessie Leech Davisson as their president.<sup>103</sup> By 1914, Dayton Women Suffrage Association had over 500 members.<sup>104</sup> The group distributed pamphlets, had parades, and even had a booth at fairs where they gave pancakes to men in return asking for signatures on petitions.<sup>105</sup>

Ohio continued to defeat the suffrage amendment from 1912 – 1916. Criticism came not only from the men, who were defeating the amendment at the polls, but also women. Katharine Talbot of Dayton was one opponent of the suffrage amendment.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Martha McClellan Brown, *The Accident of Sex* (New York: Logan and Fiegel Printers, 1881) 18.

<sup>101</sup> Goodman and Brunsmann 181.

<sup>102</sup> The previous associations had been unsuccessful because they did not survive.

<sup>103</sup> Jessie Leech Davisson will appear later in this thesis, as a prominent leader of the Mozart Music Club.

<sup>104</sup> Booth 70, Goodman and Brunsmann 181, and WSA Records.

<sup>105</sup> Goodman and Brunsmann 181.

<sup>106</sup> Katharine Talbot will also appear later in this thesis, as a leader in the Mozart Music Club and founder of the Westminster Choir. It is interesting that Katharine Talbot and Jessie Leech Davisson were

She was president of the Ohio Association Opposed to Woman's Suffrage, and on October 19, 1916 she wrote a letter to Reverend Albert F Brandenburg of Dayton, Ohio appealing to him and all clergy of Dayton to oppose woman's suffrage as a moral issue.<sup>107</sup>

Although there was opposition to women receiving the vote, there was also much support. In 1917, John H. Patterson, a prominent Dayton businessman, donated funds to help the Dayton Woman Suffrage Association.<sup>108</sup> Support even came from out of state, as exemplified by a letter from Carrie Flarida of Rochester, New York dated March 29, 1918.<sup>109</sup> She made a \$5.00 pledge and remarked, "Dayton is coming on famously" for the woman's suffrage issue. Dayton women who were not immediate members of the Woman Suffrage Association, but who supported the goal of the association were active in pushing for the amendment. Sara B. Thresher spoke to the "colored" YWCA and to "NCR girls," Frau Von Klenze spoke to the German population, and Mrs. Welliver spoke to the Hungarian population.<sup>110</sup> Black women such as Jewlia Higgins and Hallie Q Brown advocated suffrage to the black community.<sup>111</sup>

The hard work and dedication of the women of the Dayton Woman Suffrage Association and other supporters paid off in November 1917, when Ohio approved statewide suffrage for women. In 1919, the Nineteenth Amendment, otherwise known as the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, was passed by Congress, and June 16, 1919 Ohio ratified it. In 1920 women's right to vote became Federal Law. However, this was not

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presidents of associations on opposite sides of the suffrage issue, and were leaders in the music scene together.

<sup>107</sup> "Letter to Rev. Albert F Brandenburg, Dayton, Ohio," WSA Records.

<sup>108</sup> "Letter from John H Patterson," WSA Records.

<sup>109</sup> "Letter from Carrie Flarida to H. T. Upton" WSA Records.

<sup>110</sup> "Diary, 1912-1913," WSA Records.

<sup>111</sup> "Speakers in Equal Suffrage Campaign in Montgomery County, 1912," WSA Records.

the end for the women of Dayton. After the ratification of the Susan B Anthony Amendment, not all women exercised their newly acquired right. Some women did not vote because they did not have the knowledge about politics or issues of the day. In Dayton, the League of Women Voters organized in May 1920 for the purpose of “educating women in citizenship.”<sup>112</sup> The League wanted to provide a forum for “newly-enfranchised” women to study the political issues of the day and become well informed, active participants in government. The League published a newsletter called *The Dayton Woman Citizen* edited by Charlotte Reeve Conover. The newsletter informed Dayton women about political candidates and important events, such as presidential primaries.

For Conover, gaining the ballot was significant. She lists all of the women’s clubs in her chapter on the club movement, and saves the League of Women Voters for last. The League of Women Voters was formed in Dayton after the Suffrage Amendment passed, to help women gain confidence and knowledge about candidates and issues they as constituents would need to know. She wrote, “We now come to the most potent of all women’s clubs – potent because it works politically for the ends for which other clubs have only used persuasion. This is the League of Women Voters... To have achieved the vote was for the women only the first step toward economic freedom and service.”<sup>113</sup>

The League was “potent” to Conover because it meant more than the right to vote; it was a place for women to learn about the issues and what they were voting for. Its significance was in the education it offered. The club movement offered the same opportunity for knowledge.

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<sup>112</sup> League of Women Voters, Dayton Area Chapter Records, Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University, Dayton.

<sup>113</sup> Conover, *Intimate* 237.



## Women's club movement

The first recognized women's club of the movement was a literary club formed in 1868 by Jane Cunningham Croly, a journalist who wrote under the pen name "Jennie June." She and other women in New York City wanted to attend a dinner given for author Charles Dickens, but were turned away because they were women.<sup>114</sup> Croly and the others formed their own women's literary club, Sorosis.<sup>115</sup> Although this club was credited with being the first, there were other literary clubs which date back to the 1830s. The Ladies Educational Society of Jacksonville, Illinois was organized in October of 1833, and the Ladies Library Association of Kalamazoo, Michigan was formed in January of 1852.<sup>116</sup>

These examples were exclusive to white, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon, urban, affluent women, a norm for the club movement.<sup>117</sup> However, there were women who do not fit this profile who should be recognized for their contributions as well. Antebellum free black women in eastern cities formed the first literary societies.<sup>118</sup>

In the face of segregation and racism, black women were forming separate clubs for self-improvement and community betterment. These women formed literary and other clubs, not only to promote education among themselves and their community, but also with high hopes of breaking down prejudice and uplifting black women in the eyes of whites. In 1831 the Female Literary Society of Philadelphia organized to work for "self

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<sup>114</sup> Croly 1175-1184.

<sup>115</sup> Mildred White Wells, *Unity in Diversity: The History of the General Federation of Women's Clubs* (Washington DC: General Federation of Women's Clubs, 1965) 19.

<sup>116</sup> Sara Evans 58.

<sup>117</sup> Karen J Blair, *The Torchbearers: Women and their Amateur Arts Associations in America, 1890-1930* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994) 3.

<sup>118</sup> Blair 3

improvement and thus for the improvement of the whole black race.”<sup>119</sup> Black women were also responsible for forming the first literary society in Dayton. In 1884 the Colored Literary Society was established in Dayton.<sup>120</sup> This club was founded three years before the Woman’s Literary Club.<sup>121</sup>

The Woman’s Literary Club of Dayton was formed March 30, 1889. On April 5, 1889 the Dayton Journal wrote about the club, “It will be hard to overestimate the value of such an undertaking to our city. It will be extensive enough to have its influence permeate a large part of our society, and it will stimulate and encourage broader general culture to a degree that private individual study cannot.”<sup>122</sup> Indeed the goal of the club was to provide not just a literary, but cultural education for women who desired for it. The club was divided into 4 departments: art, history, general literature, and miscellaneous.<sup>123</sup> This club was the first of several clubs in Dayton to form for the same purpose of literary and cultural self-improvement, including the Helen Hunt Club formed in 1891 by a group of teachers to “study and read papers on literary subjects.”<sup>124</sup> In 1893 yet another club emerged, the Friday Afternoon Club which remains active today.<sup>125</sup>

The club movement’s initial goal of self improvement was met with some criticism. In May 1905 the *Ladies Home Journal* publisher E. Bok gave space for former President Grover Cleveland to attack women’s clubs for neglecting families.<sup>126</sup> Many of

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<sup>119</sup> Ann Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women’s Associations in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991) 112.

<sup>120</sup> “Clippings and Notes,” Charles M Austin Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University, Dayton.

<sup>121</sup> For a complete discussion of black women’s clubs and black women advocates see Chapter 4.

<sup>122</sup> “The Woman’s Literary Club of Dayton,” *Dayton Daily News* Friday April 5, 1889.

<sup>123</sup> “The Woman’s Literary Club of Dayton” *DDN* and Conover, *Intimate* 231.

<sup>124</sup> “Constitution and By-laws,” Helen Hunt Club Records, Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University, Dayton.

<sup>125</sup> Friday Afternoon Club Records, Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University, Dayton.

<sup>126</sup> Blair 31.

the women's clubs were outraged by this, and boycotted the magazine.<sup>127</sup> However, by 1917 the *Ladies Home Journal* was supportive of the women's club movement, and stated "there is a body of two and one-half million earnest, active, wide-awake women... if you women knew your power, nothing could stand in the way of the accomplishments of your cherished desires."<sup>128</sup>

Other criticism came from the community. The College Woman's Club of Dayton, Ohio organized, as the founder Gertrude Felker wrote, because of a young girl in Dayton who "was lonely and inclined to think of herself as the only girl in Dayton who had ever gone to college."<sup>129</sup> Thus, the College Woman's Club was significant for those women who had gone to college or the university and desired the companionship of others who had done the same. However, not even a week after the first meeting of the College Woman's Club, the *Dayton Journal* published an article stating, "There is a fairly prevalent idea that college women too often develop the intellect at the expense of the sympathies... that they set up mental standards that are higher than their husbands have leisure to reach. This higher education often leads them to seek a life of self-exploitation, and leaves them embittered in a world where the fullest happiness is to be in beneficent human relations."<sup>130</sup> It seemed that women did not have the support of the community in their efforts to find self fulfillment. Of course, at the time women were expected by ideology to serve their family, not to seek personal satisfaction.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines* Vol. 4 (New York: D Appleton, 1930) 147.

<sup>128</sup> "The Woman's Club for the New Year" *The Ladies Home Journal* (1917) 25.

<sup>129</sup> Gertrude Felker, "History of the College Woman's Club," 1940, College Woman's Club Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University, Dayton.

<sup>130</sup> *Dayton Journal* March 12, 1907.

<sup>131</sup> Mary Louise Roberts, *True Womanhood Revisited* (Indiana UP, 2002) 150.

However, women of Dayton did receive some community support. John H Patterson had written as early as 1901 that “The future betterment of conditions in this country depends largely upon what the women will do. Women are fearless in support of their ideals and have the time to devote.”<sup>132</sup> John H Patterson was a fierce supporter of the women’s clubs, and even promoted the formation of clubs within his business, NCR.<sup>133</sup> In 1896, the Woman’s Century Club organized to provide “furtherance of musical, literary, and educational matters” for all young women who worked at NCR.<sup>134</sup> Dr. Hugh Ivan Evans of the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Dayton was also an avid supporter of women’s organizations and leadership, and encouraged their formation within the church, appointing Mae Durnell to be Woman’s secretary.<sup>135</sup>

The first women’s clubs of the movement had goals for self-improvement, but quickly encompassed community service as well. The founding and funding of public libraries owe a lot to the women’s clubs, who reportedly contributed to the establishment of 75 percent of the public libraries in the nation.<sup>136</sup> Clubwomen also helped the poor, by providing aid to poor families, especially to women and children.<sup>137</sup> In Dayton, the Helen Hunt Club contributed funds to charitable foundations and also sponsored a Birthday Ball for Crippled Children.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> John H Patterson, “Practical Suggestions for Women’s Clubs,” *Dayton Daily News* March 1901.

<sup>133</sup> Claudia Watson, *Dayton Comes of Age: The City through the Eyes of John H Patterson* (Dayton: Montgomery County Historical Society, 2002) 145-165.

<sup>134</sup> Watson 164.

<sup>135</sup> Mickey Gogle and Mim Clute, “Presbyterian Women,” *Westminster Presbyterian Church: Increasing the Love of God and Neighbor, 1799-2003* (Wilmington: Orange Frazer Press, 2003) 89.

<sup>136</sup> Anne Ruggles Gere, *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Culture Works in US Women’s Clubs, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997) 122.

<sup>137</sup> Gere 121-122

<sup>138</sup> “Letter to Helen Hunt Club from Birthday Ball for Crippled Children” Helen Hunt Club Records, Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University, Dayton.

Initially literary in nature, the club movement grew to encompass a variety of topics. Art, music, business, higher education, and gardening were also part of the women's clubs. Dayton has examples of each of these, including the Dayton Society of Arts and Crafts founded in 1902 (art), the Mozart Club founded in 1888 (music), the Altrusa Club founded in 1917 (women in business), the College Woman's Club founded in 1907 (higher education), and the Dayton Garden Club founded in 1922.<sup>139</sup>

These clubs were effective in their own pursuit for self education, but as clubs became interested in community service and wanted outreach, they formed statewide and national "umbrella" groups to network effectively with other women who had the same goals. The General Federation of Women's Clubs was organized in March 1889, adopting the motto "Unity in Diversity."<sup>140</sup> This national group originally consisted of 61 clubs across the nation, but by 1894 that number had grown to be 400.<sup>141</sup> State chapters of this organization formed, and the Ohio Federation of Women's Club organized in 1894 in Springfield, Ohio.<sup>142</sup> In 1907, the Dayton Federation of Women's Clubs organized and adopted the following in their constitution,

The purpose of this organization shall be to unite the Club women of Dayton and Montgomery County, Ohio for closer co-operation and efficiency in the promotion of their major interests, patriotism, education,

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<sup>139</sup> Conover, *Intimate* 212-234 and *Williams' Dayton City Directory* (Cincinnati: Williams & Co., 1889-1890).

<sup>140</sup> Wells 22.

<sup>141</sup> Wells 23.

<sup>142</sup> "History of the Ohio Federation of Women's Clubs," Dayton Federation of Women's Clubs Records, Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University, Dayton.

philanthropy and civic betterment and to become better acquainted as clubs and individuals and to help one another in every possible way.<sup>143</sup>

The national, state, and local chapters of this organization still exist today, uniting the women who continue to be active in the women's clubs.

The women and clubs united for common goals and were able to reach their objectives of self improvement and community service. Conover wrote,

It was in 1907 that the club women of Dayton learned their most important lesson – that good and interesting as their own clubs were, they could be twice as good and useful and interesting if joined together... And so... the Dayton Federation of Clubs came into existence... It has, possibly without knowing it, created a basis of public opinion to support the advance of musical concerts, literary lectures, the study of art, the spread of books and magazines, street cleaning, good government and city beautification.<sup>144</sup>

As women networked with other club members and other clubs they found a strength which enabled them to provoke support for their endeavors. As the women supported one another, they also influenced what their husbands and families supported.

The reliance on one another was critical to the success of the women's clubs, especially in the face of criticism and fear. Performance anxiety was a common fear for women in music clubs. Sarah B. Thresher, founding member of the Mozart Club in Dayton, Ohio and the National Federation of Music Clubs, gave a speech in Chicago in 1893. Thresher discussed the anxiety of performing in public, especially since women

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<sup>143</sup> "Constitution," Dayton Federation of Women's Clubs Records, Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University, Dayton.

<sup>144</sup> Conover, *Intimate* 238-239.

did not usually do this.<sup>145</sup> However, she discloses that strength and overcoming their fears was a direct result of working together,

The first benefit we have received has arisen from contact with one another. Unaccustomed to concerted action, we found ourselves launched... upon a period of organization... It has been a training in itself to learn to work together, in a musical society, with kindness, forbearance, patience and in honor preferring one another.<sup>146</sup>

The music club was just one example of the way in which women were able to gain confidence in their abilities.

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<sup>145</sup> Sarah B Thresher, "The Mozart Club of Dayton, Ohio," *The Record of the Founding Meeting of the National Federation of Music Clubs* (National Federation of Music Clubs, 1973) 57.

<sup>146</sup> Thresher 57.

### Chapter 3

#### Campaign for Culture:

#### Music Clubs and Other Music Institutions in Dayton

Music clubs were a significant part of the women's club movement that swept across the nation from the 1880s to 1920s. In the music clubs, women met to "study music, to make music, to help amateur members gain the confidence to successfully practice music as a profession, and to ... [create] an educational institution, working for higher culture."<sup>147</sup> Women had been educated in music as amateurs since the early nineteenth century, but were ideologically banned from pursuing music as a career. Overcoming the dual identity between what women were socially permitted to do and their desires for something more resulted in the formation of clubs where pursuing music was acceptable. Originally adopting the goal of self education, the clubs later began to promote musical culture in their communities by sponsoring concerts and touring artists, thus contributing to America's concert stage.<sup>148</sup> By 1927 music clubs were responsible for three-fourths of the concert activities in the United States, spending over one million dollars.<sup>149</sup> Women were the major driving force in these clubs and eventually in the formation of community orchestras in many cities. However, in larger cities music has been promoted since the early nineteenth century.

Major cities such as Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York had well-established cultural institutions from the early 1800s. In Colonial America, there was insufficient

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<sup>147</sup> Linda Whitesitt, "The Role of Women Impresarios in American Concert Life, 1871-1933," *American Music* 7-2 (Summer, 1989) 160-161.

<sup>148</sup> Karin Pendle, *Women and Music: A History* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2001) 487.

<sup>149</sup> Pendle 487.



talent and population for such institutions as the symphony orchestra.<sup>150</sup> However, there were serious musicians and composers as early as the 1750s, including Francis Hopkinson and William Billings.<sup>151</sup> Their works were among the earliest serious compositions in the English colonies, and while Hopkinson preferred the European standard for art music, Billings wrote music that was “a unique expression of early American culture.”<sup>152</sup>

There was American interest in classical music, by amateurs as well as skilled musicians, resulting in the formation of music societies, mainly promoting European art music. “Until World War I serious music in America was dominated by immigrants and foreigners – first British, later Italian and especially German.”<sup>153</sup> In 1815 the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston formed to promote religious choral music.<sup>154</sup> American concert life began in Charleston, but after the Revolutionary War it shifted to New York, Philadelphia, and Boston.<sup>155</sup> The influx of immigrants from Europe into northern towns caused of this shift, and many of them were skilled musicians who replaced amateurs in concert life.<sup>156</sup>

Concerts also were performed by international traveling opera groups.<sup>157</sup> These traveling groups brought professional orchestras, and in 1842 New York musicians founded the first orchestral music institution, the Philharmonic Society of New York.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Phillip Hart, *Orpheus in the New World: The Symphony Orchestra as an American Cultural Institution*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973) 4.

<sup>151</sup> Ronald L. Davis, *A History of Music in American Life: Volume 1 – The Formative Years, 1620-1865* (Malabar, Florida: Robert Krieger Publishing Co., 1982) 58.

<sup>152</sup> Davis 58 and 73.

<sup>153</sup> Davis vii.

<sup>154</sup> Hart 4

<sup>155</sup> Davis 95-96.

<sup>156</sup> Davis 95.

<sup>157</sup> Hart 4.

<sup>158</sup> Hart 5.

Women played a significant role in the formation of orchestras in the United States. In Ohio, women founded most of the professional orchestras and other musical institutions. In Cleveland, Adella Prentiss Hughes established what would later be named the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra.<sup>159</sup> Likewise, the Ladies' Musical Club founded the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in 1894.<sup>160</sup>

The women of the Mozart Club (later the Dayton Music Club) established community concert series and civic music. The formation and success of the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra was also a direct result of the club's activism. These women helped to strengthen the community support of music in Dayton. However, other influences shaped the love of music in Dayton as well, including nearby cities such as Cincinnati and the German population with a tradition of classical music.

Cincinnati, Dayton's closest neighbor to the south, had a significant influence on Dayton. In 1850 Cincinnati was the largest city west of the Appalachians and the fifth largest city in the United States.<sup>161</sup> The "Queen City" was a commercial and manufacturing center of the rapidly growing Midwest. The large number of German immigrants and German-Americans in Cincinnati were major contributors to the city's love of music. Numerous German clubs, musicians, and concerts thrived in the city. The Germans created the first national Sangerfest (song festival) in June 1849.<sup>162</sup> In the 1870s, referred to as Cincinnati's "Golden Age of Music," free band concerts and a music hall were among the new attractions at this time. However, the city was slow to

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<sup>159</sup> Pendle 488.

<sup>160</sup> Pendle 488.

<sup>161</sup> This paragraph's statistics and information about Cincinnati come from Louis R. Thomas, *A History of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra to 1931* (PhD Dissertation, 1972 University of Cincinnati) i-ii and 1-96, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>162</sup> *Dayton's German Heritage: Karl Karstaedt's Golden Jubilee History of the German Pioneer Society of Dayton, Ohio* Ed. Don Heinrich Tolzman (Heritage Books, Inc. 2001) 52

appreciate classical orchestral music, because of the Anglo-Saxon preference for choral music, and it wasn't until 1894 that the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra was born. Although a wealthy city, its slow acceptance of the orchestra led to suspended operations in 1908, but by the fall of 1909 the orchestra resumed and has succeeded to this day.

Dayton also had a large and influential German population. The Federal Census indicates that in 1874, 10,000 of the city's 28,000 inhabitants were of German descent. In 1890, the Dayton Liederkrantz-Turner organization, Dayton's oldest German organization, was founded. It was responsible for annual concerts and Oktoberfest. On October 2, 1890 the first "German Day" was celebrated in the city of Dayton.<sup>163</sup>

In 1890, Edmund S. Lorenz founded the Lorenz Publishing Company in Dayton. He was a self-taught musician who had attended Otterbein College and Yale University. He founded his publishing company to publish music in German for local churches. In 1932, his daughter Ellen Jane Lorenz Porter joined the company. She also was active in the Dayton Music Club. The Lorenz Corporation has grown and operates today, publishing choral, piano, and church music nationwide.<sup>164</sup>

There have been many influences in the musical life of Dayton, but none has been as significant as the role women have played. The women of Dayton effectively networked with one another, and with state and national groups to establish a love of music in their city. This love grew out of their own training and education in music, and a desire to create this knowledge in their home and community.

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<sup>163</sup> J. McLain Smith, "German Day" *Address of J. McLain Smith at Music Hall Dayton, Ohio* (Dayton Volkszeitung Print), Dayton Metro Library, Dayton.

<sup>164</sup> Interview with Kris Kropf, Managing Editor, Lorenz Corporation September 21, 2005

## Music Clubs in United States and Ohio

Across the United States, women advocated for self and community culture through their membership in clubs. Music clubs flourished between 1890 and 1930 and initially provided women a place to expand their own musical knowledge and performance abilities. These women often had musical training as young girls, but after getting married and having families their time was devoted to household duties. Music clubs gave these women an opportunity for further music education in history, composition, theory, and performance, in a society excluding them from male-dominated music professions. Later, music clubs took on more civic activities, such as assisting professional women and minority composers and performers; promoting community concerts, orchestras, and traveling artists; and supporting the ideology that no citizen should be denied the enjoyment of classical music.

Women organized the first amateur female music club in Portland, Maine in 1869; it still functions today. The women called their association the Rossini Club, adopting the goal “mutual improvement in the art of music.”<sup>165</sup> This goal of self-improvement was echoed in countless clubs across the United States.<sup>166</sup> Nevertheless, before the turn of the century, the music clubs began to promote musical culture in their communities by sponsoring concerts of touring artists.<sup>167</sup> They funded their endeavors through private donors and their own membership dues.<sup>168</sup> The women often faced failure, including financial deficits forcing the clubs to disband. Ella May Smith, who

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<sup>165</sup> Whitesitt, “Women as ‘Keepers of Culture” 66.

<sup>166</sup> Blair 44.

<sup>167</sup> Linda Whitesitt, “Women’s Support and Encouragement of Music and Musicians” *Women and Music: A History* Ed. Karin Pendle (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2001) 487.

<sup>168</sup> Ralph P. Locke and Cyrilla Barr, “Patronage – and Women – in America’s Musical Life: An Overview of a Changing Scene” *Cultivating Music in America: Women Patrons and Activists since 1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 30-32.

served as president of the once disbanded Music Club of Columbus, Ohio, increased the membership of this club from 850 at the end of her first year (1903), to 3,500 in 1906.<sup>169</sup>

The women's amateur music clubs were early in their successes, resulting in the formation of music institutions across America, such as music festivals, touring artists, and the establishment of permanent orchestras. In 1924, internationally renowned pianist Harold Bauer said that "everybody knows America wouldn't have any music if it weren't for women," referring to the phenomenon of women involved in community music clubs.<sup>170</sup> The number of women who joined music clubs increased from the late 1800s through the turn of the century. In 1893 there were 42 known women's music clubs, and by 1898, 225 women's music clubs from across the nation gathered in Chicago to form the National Federation of Music Clubs.<sup>171</sup> By 1919, there were more than 600 active clubs, with a combined membership of over 200, 000.<sup>172</sup>

These women, who were driven by a desire to make music widely accessible to all in their communities, operated by the motto, "every American, regardless of economic situation or geographical circumstance, deserves access to the fine arts."<sup>173</sup> Many clubs offered discount tickets or installment plans to enable everyone to enjoy "the best artists at a low price."<sup>174</sup>

The music women's clubs studied, performed, and promoted in their communities included European masterpieces as well as American and modern music. The women of the Dayton Music Club specified in their early programs that they would present "some

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<sup>169</sup> Whitesitt, "Women's Support and Encouragement of Music and Musicians" 487.

<sup>170</sup> Mildred Adams, "Foster-Mothers of Music," *Woman Citizen* (January 1924) 7.

<sup>171</sup> Blair 45 and Adrienne Fried Block assisted by Nancy Stewart "Women in American Music, 1800-1918," *Women and Music: A History*. Ed. Karin Pendle, Second Edition (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2001) 204.

<sup>172</sup> Whitesitt, "Women as 'Keepers of Culture'" 66-67.

<sup>173</sup> Blair 5.

<sup>174</sup> Conover, *Intimate* 201 and Whitesitt, "Women as 'Keepers of Culture'" 69-70.

of the best music of the world from the time of the ultra classics, through the romantics, down to the modern dramatic period.”<sup>175</sup> The composers they incorporated into their recitals included Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, and Grieg, all European composers from the Baroque to Romantic. As women’s clubs entered into the twentieth century, they also included modern music. The women’s clubs promoted the modern music of D’Indy, Debussy, Strauss, and Ravel and “any of the other eccentric writers of the present time.”<sup>176</sup>

While women’s music clubs did promote “modern” music, this usually meant the more conservative traditions, like the impressionist composer Debussy, and nothing avant-garde.<sup>177</sup> However, there were women who advocated for the most modern of composers. Claire Raphael Reis was a New York music club member who was a significant supporter of modern music.<sup>178</sup>

According to women’s music club historian Karen J. Blair, the music clubs promoted American, minority and female composers.<sup>179</sup> Favorites included the music of Amy Beach, Cécile Chaminade, and Margaret Ruthven Lang, as well as the compositions of their own members.<sup>180</sup> In 1898, Amy Beach praised the women’s clubs for their endorsement of American and women’s compositions, stating,

I can not express too strongly my belief in the value of women’s clubs as a factor in the development of our country... That American audiences

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<sup>175</sup> Betty Deitz Krebs, “Dayton Music Club Celebrates 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary,” *Music Club Magazine* (1988) 16-27.

<sup>176</sup> Quote from Address by Amor W. Sharp, 18 March 1913, Women’s Music Club of Columbus, Ohio, Ohio Historical Society; cited in Whitesitt “Women as ‘Keepers of Culture’” 71.

<sup>177</sup> Blair 4.

<sup>178</sup> Carol J. Oja, “Women Patrons and Crusaders for Modernist Music: New York in the 1920s,” *Cultivating* 245.

<sup>179</sup> Blair, *Torchbearers* 4.

<sup>180</sup> Whitesitt “Women as ‘Keepers of Culture’” 67.

display a power of judgment in marked advance of that shown fifteen years ago is largely due to the faithful array of amateurs who by unceasing toil have tried to cultivate a true appreciation of great music and musicians.<sup>181</sup>

The Dayton Music Club promoted both American and women's compositions. In their 1928-29 Season, they had a guest speaker at one of their dinners, Mrs. Edgar Stillman Kelly of Oxford, Ohio and President of the National Federation of Music Clubs. Her speech, titled "Music in America," stated the need for support of American music, and that although "there has always been in America a great devotion to composers of foreign nations... America contains many composers very much worth while."<sup>182</sup> A favorite during the 1928-29 Season was Pearl Gildersleeve Curran, who composed vocal music.

The Dayton Music Club also promoted American and women performers, including their own Alverda Sinks and Mary Blue Morris. The two pianists had attended Julliard School of Music and were members of the Dayton Music Club. They performed across the country and with the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra.<sup>183</sup> The club also featured Ellen Ballon, internationally praised Canadian pianist, on November 7, 1928 at their Morning Musicale.<sup>184</sup>

Women of the music clubs founded and played significant roles in major musical institutions. Seminaries and conservatories, opera companies, music festivals, and, most

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<sup>181</sup> Quoted in Whitesitt, "Women as 'Keepers of Culture'" 68.

<sup>182</sup> Mrs. Edgar Stillman Kelly cited in Pepelope Perril, "Talk Here by Mrs. Kelly is Most Timely: Local Interest in Music Quickened as Result of Recent Address," *Dayton Daily News* January 21, 1929

<sup>183</sup> "Fifth Concert of the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra," Dayton Music Club Records Dayton Metro Library, Dayton.

<sup>184</sup> "Morning Musical at Miami Hotel," *Dayton Journal Herald* November 4, 1928

significantly, symphony orchestras began to pop up everywhere throughout the United States at the turn of the century. Between 1842 and 1919, ten major orchestras were established, and women were actively involved in setting up nearly all of them.<sup>185</sup> The Cincinnati Orchestra, formed in 1894, is the fifth oldest orchestra in the US. It was also the first orchestra to be founded and managed exclusively by women. The women of the Ladies' Musical Club founded and supervised the orchestra, and Helen H. Taft, wife of the future US president, was the first president of the Orchestra Association Board.<sup>186</sup> The Cincinnati Ladies' Musical Club, founded in 1891, sought to elevate the musical tastes of its members and the community. Within three years, the popularity of their recitals resulted in the leaders of the club forming the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.<sup>187</sup> Similarly, Adella Prentiss Hughes, president of the Cleveland Fortnightly Musical Club, formed the Cleveland Orchestra after raising the funds to pay operating expenses and the salary of conductor Nikolai Sokoloff. Hughes managed the orchestra for 15 years, as well as arranging tours of the orchestra and developing an educational program.<sup>188</sup> Other orchestras founded or led by women include the Houston Symphony, New York Philharmonic, and Philadelphia Orchestra.<sup>189</sup>

Women helped establish other music institutions besides orchestras. In Columbus, Ella May Smith revived the Women's Music Club after financial ruin. She is credited

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<sup>185</sup> Whitesitt, "Women as 'Keepers of Culture:' 73.

<sup>186</sup> Whitesitt, "Women's Support and Encouragement of Music and Musicians" 488.

<sup>187</sup> Louis R Thomas, *A History of the Cincinnati Orchestra to 1931*, diss., University of Cincinnati, 1972, 92-100.

<sup>188</sup> Whitesitt, "Women's Support and Encouragement of Music and Musicians" 487-8 and Whitesitt "Women as 'Keepers of Culture'" 71.

<sup>189</sup> Whitesitt, "Women's Support and Encouragement of Music and Musicians" 488-9.



with producing “outstanding achievements” such as audience education, the founding a music library, and scholarship programs, to name a few.<sup>190</sup>

Women were essential in the establishment of community opera companies. Jeannette Thurber, as mentioned earlier, had her claim to fame by forming the National Conservatory in 1885. She also founded the first opera company to focus mainly on American music, the American Opera Company, also in 1885.<sup>191</sup> Likewise, Eleanor Robson (Mrs. August) Belmont was a critical supporter of the Metropolitan Opera Guild, Helen Huntington Hull founded the New York City Opera, and Mary Cardwell Dawson established the National Negro Opera Company.<sup>192</sup>

Women played critical roles in the founding of music festivals in the US. In 1871, Maria Longworth Nichols Storer established the Cincinnati May Festival, which is the oldest music festival in the country.<sup>193</sup> This music festival was influential on Dayton, which modeled its own May Music Festival of 1925 on Cincinnati’s.<sup>194</sup> Both had famous conductors: in Cincinnati Theodore Thomas of the Chicago Symphony conducted the first festival, and in Dayton Nikolai Sokoloff of the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra came. Communities supported these festivals, many of which continue to occur today. In Cincinnati, the May Festival still occurs annually. In Dayton, the festival did not survive to this day, but the support of classical music did. The community acceptance and support of music in Dayton was a direct result of the work of women, most significantly

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<sup>190</sup> Adella Prentiss Hughes, *Music is My Life* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1947) and Whitesitt “Women as ‘Keepers of Culture’” 71.

<sup>191</sup> Emanuel Rubin, “Jeannette Meyer Thurber (1850-1946): Music for Democracy,” *Cultivating Music in America: Women Patrons and Activists since 1860*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 134-141.

<sup>192</sup> Whitesitt, “Women’s Support and Encouragement of Music and Musicians” 489.

<sup>193</sup> Whitesitt, “Women’s Support and Encouragement of Music and Musicians” and Eldred M. Thierstein “Cincinnati,” *Grove Music Online* ed L. Macy (Accessed[5 September 2006])

<<http://www.grovemusic.com.ezproxy.libraries.wright.edu:2048>>

<sup>194</sup> Conover, *Intimate* 260.

through their membership and activism in music clubs. Further, many of the women discussed in this section have been members of or worked with women's music clubs.

### **Dayton Music Club**

The formation of the Mozart Club in Dayton, Ohio was a turning point for culture in the city. Ellen Jane Lorenz Porter wrote a history titled "The Star Spangled Story of Dayton's Music" on the state of music in Dayton, with an emphasis on the Dayton Music Club (originally the Mozart Club).<sup>195</sup> Porter wrote,

[The Mozart Club was]...the great climax of all the musical history we've been hearing about Dayton, Ohio. On October 15, 1888, a group of Dayton's outstanding women met to form the Mozart Club... later to be called the Dayton Music Club...The idea of a music club for women [was] well received in Dayton... All the elite joined... Almost at once the club became a prominent feature of the educational forces in our city.

Conover wrote about the significance of the Mozart Club also,

It was in 1888 that, stimulated by the enthusiasm of Mr. Robert and inspired by the example of musical clubs in the East, two friends and music lovers, Mrs. O. F. Davisson and Mrs. Harvey King, decided to put in motion the plan for a club in Dayton... result[ing] in the Mozart Club... With the advent of the new century Dayton passed suddenly from the condition of being music-starved and not knowing it, to one of plenty... In

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<sup>195</sup> This unpublished narrative is found in the Ellen Jane Lorenz Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University, Dayton.

the century since the Pleyel Society, all musical things in Dayton have advanced and improved.<sup>196</sup>

The Mozart Club was the driving force of bringing great music to the city of Dayton.

The Dayton Music Club is the oldest continuing music institution in Dayton. It was organized as the Mozart Club October 15, 1888 by 18 women musicians at the home of Victoria Wood, who served as the first president of the club.<sup>197</sup> Wood, Sara B. Thresher (vice president), Jessie Leech Davisson (secretary), and Clara T. Gebhart (treasurer) and the other women who created this club were influenced by the teachings of James A. Robert at Cooper Female Academy. Robert had nurtured the love of music in Dayton, as discussed in Chapter 1.

The women of the Mozart Club were interested in promoting musical education to improve their own knowledge and talents, as was the case for most women's music clubs formed prior to the turn of the century. The women of the Mozart Club were musicians who wanted to play nothing but "the best" and their program consisted of thirteen recitals a season, performing the works of Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin, Schumann, and Brahms.<sup>198</sup> The club not only gave music recitals, but also read essays on the lives of composers and music theory. The club also received a bronze medal signed by the famous conductor Theodore Thomas, awarded by the World's Fair Committee for Representing Ohio in Concert at the World's Fair in Chicago, 1893.

In October of 1902, a younger generation of women musicians who felt intimidated by the "prestige" of the Mozart Club and restricted by limited membership

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<sup>196</sup> Conover, *Intimate* 229-265.

<sup>197</sup> Betty Dietz Krebs, "Dayton Music Club to Observe 100<sup>th</sup> Year," *Dayton Daily News* 1 May 1988, 2C and Conover. *Memoirs of the Miami Valley* 107.

<sup>198</sup> Scrapbooks, 1913-14 Dayton Music Club Collection, Dayton Metro Library, Dayton and Conover *Intimate* 252.

numbers, wanted a “musical center of their own in which to develop their untried powers,” and the Chaminade Club was born.<sup>199</sup> Alpharetta Brookins served as the first president, and also promoted musical learning for the purpose of self-improvement.<sup>200</sup>

The members of the Mozart Club and Chaminade Club realized that their goals and programs overlapped, and decided to merge in 1914, renaming themselves the Women’s Music Club of Dayton, and later the Dayton Music Club, the name which remains today. The newly merged music club adopted a new objective: “to develop the musical talent of its members and to stimulate culture in Dayton.”<sup>201</sup> To promote this goal, the club affiliated with the Ohio Federation of Music Clubs and the National Federation of Music Clubs in 1917. These umbrella groups unite local music clubs and provide networks for promoting community culture.<sup>202</sup>

The Dayton Music Club provided community concerts and touring artists through careful management and fundraising. The 1928-29 Season program reveals that The Dayton Music Club had so-called “Social Center Concerts,” weekly programs for various local public institutions, including the Stillwater Sanitarium, City Rescue Mission, Widows’ Home, Children’s Home, Dayton State Hospital, Salvation Army, YMCA, and YWCA. Touring Artists for the season included Herman Rosen, American violinist; Ellen Ballon, Canadian pianist; Bruce Benjamin, American tenor; and Irving Jackson, American baritone. The *Dayton Journal Herald* and *Dayton Daily News* spread the word about upcoming events and artists. The 1928-29 Season for the Dayton Music Club

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<sup>199</sup> Conover, *Memoirs* 108 and Charlotte Gray, “A Laudable History 1888-1988,” Dayton Music Club Collection, Dayton Metro Library, Dayton.

<sup>200</sup> Conover, *Intimate* 256.

<sup>201</sup> Charlotte Gray, “A Laudable History 1888-1988,” and “By-laws” Dayton Music Club Collection, Dayton Metro Library, Dayton.

<sup>202</sup> Whitesitt, “Women as ‘Keepers of Culture’” 65-67.

is well-documented in the Dayton Music Club Collection at the Dayton Metro Library. Clippings from the local papers have been saved in a scrapbook, a common way for clubs to keep track of their activities. The clippings include articles about upcoming events, programs for concerts, and follow up articles, usually praising the club for a “successful” concert.

The Dayton Music Club’s altruistic work also included the promotion of music education for the young. Its first Junior Club was formed in 1920 to “foster interest and develop talent among young people.”<sup>203</sup> Other junior clubs included Arpeggio Junior Music Club, Allegro Junior Music Club, B# Junior Music Club, Dayton Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, Musical Triplets Club, and Studio Music Clubs. All of these clubs were to help young people improve their talents. The Community Music School, sponsored by the Dayton Music Club, “made it possible for talented children to receive musical education through special arrangements with prominent teachers who have co-operated.”<sup>204</sup> In 1927, over 1000 lessons were given to children by the Dayton Music Club.<sup>205</sup>

The achievements of the Dayton Music Club go far beyond the promotion of music programs, touring artists, and children’s education. One of the most prominent music institutions in Dayton, Ohio is the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra, organized in 1933. Paul Katz, the first conductor of the Dayton Philharmonic, is widely recognized as the founder of the orchestra. However, he could not have done it alone, and the Dayton Music Club had a large part in the birth of this important music group. Paul Katz was

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<sup>203</sup> Charlotte Gray, “A Laudable History 1888-1988,” Dayton Music Club Collection, Dayton Metro Library.

<sup>204</sup> “Altruistic Work of Music Clubs,” *Dayton Herald* September 15, 1928.

<sup>205</sup> Altrusic Work.

born in New York City in 1907, the son of Russian Jewish immigrants.<sup>206</sup> Katz was a violin prodigy, beginning his musical career at the age of 2. After moving to Dayton, Ohio in 1910, he had the opportunity to study music with Emil Heerman, concertmaster of the Cincinnati Symphony. By 1919 he was known in Cincinnati as a “young genius,” but he had yet to perform in his hometown of Dayton, and Katherine Talbott, a member of the Dayton Music Club, got the money and support to sponsor young Katz in a recital at Memorial Hall. Fourteen years later, in the midst of the Great Depression Katz believed that the Dayton community would support “good serious music.” The musicians of Dayton, many of whom were women who belonged to the Dayton Music Club, supported the idea of an orchestra in Dayton. After borrowing scores from others and their own collections, the 26 musicians gave their first concert in the auditorium of the Dayton Art Institute on June 1, 1933. The group called themselves the Chamber Orchestra Society. The concert was given to a full house and newspapers the following day gave rave reviews of the performance, commenting on the “exactness of pitch” and “the beginning of a cherished possession for the artistic development of the community.” The concert was given again the next night to a full house. After this success, a plan was devised to allow for a series of concerts to be given over the next few months.

The problem was the overwhelming number of details to take care of, including programs, soloists, program notes, instrumentation, scores, a place to rehearse and perform, publicity, civic support, financing, ticket pricing and printing, sales, and musicians salaries. These problems were faced head on by Maurice Katz, brother of Paul

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<sup>206</sup> The following history of Paul Katz and the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra, unless otherwise footnoted, is taken from Diane P. DeWall and Charles R. Berry, *A History of the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra, 1933-1983* (Carlson Marketing Group, Inc. and Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra Association, 1983) from the Paul Katz Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University, Dayton.

Katz and a lawyer who drew up the incorporation papers for the Chamber Orchestra Society, Inc., presided by Albert Epstein, an engineer at Wright Field. Maurice Katz served as Vice President, and Ann Kirk, the harpist for the orchestra and a member of the Dayton Music Club, served as Secretary and Treasurer.<sup>207</sup> The papers were drawn up on June 13, 1933 and by July 11, Ann Kirk had persuaded 16 women from the Dayton Music Club to serve on the Advisory Board and Executive Committee for the Chamber Orchestra Society.<sup>208</sup> These women included Mattie B Kumler, Jane Fischer, Katharine Talbott, and Bertha Herbruck, all prominent women in the music club scene in Dayton. The Dayton Music Club officially affiliated with the Chamber Orchestra Society on October 16, 1933. On April 11, 1934 the name was changed to the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra.

The diary of Ann Kirk provides important information about the work she and the women of the Dayton Music Club did for the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra.<sup>209</sup> Page after page describes the endless calls Kirk and others made and letters sent to the community asking for membership pledges. Perhaps the lack of success Kirk and the other women suffers is due to the fact that their efforts are being conducted during the midst of the Great Depression. June 29, 1933 Kirk wrote “ \$100 in account... called Mrs. F. A. Z. Kumler [(Mattie B.)] for names of presidents of small towns surrounding Dayton; executive Ohio Federation of Clubs Mrs. K consented to furnish all information by coming to her home.” Kirk wanted to get other women’s clubs leaders involved, but at

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<sup>207</sup> “Corporation Record of Chamber Orchestra Society Inc. Dayton, Ohio,” Paul Katz Papers, Special Collection and Archives, Wright State University, Dayton.

<sup>208</sup> “Corporation Record of Chamber Orchestra Society Inc.,” and Diary of Ann Kirk, Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University, Dayton.

<sup>209</sup> This paragraph of information about the Dayton Philharmonic comes from the Diary of Ann Kirk, Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University, Dayton.

first no one consented, mainly because of money. July 15, 1933 Kirk wrote “wrote again to Mrs. Carell... Mrs. Kumler – approved of four letters sent to prospects for Board – Mrs. O.F.Davisson, Mrs. Katharine Loy, took six names for membership drive.” The membership drive was at first unsuccessful, again because of money. July 25, 1933 Kirk wrote: “held meeting at Biltmore Hotel... Mrs. F.A.Z. Kumler, Mrs. A.Z. Heller, Bill Smith, Ruth Fischer, Kenneth Blue, Mrs. Kusswoom – Mrs. Kumler will work on \$25 memberships... Mrs. Kusswoom prefers to organize her own team for memberships.” By the end of July Kirk and her team had written over 4000 letters asking for membership, and selling 25 cent tickets to family and friends. The work also included audition calls for more instrumentalists and notes on these auditions. August 30, 1933 Kirk wrote “...nervous when playing, fair to good tone, quite young but ambitious... Rob Cavally – flutist... who can contact most worthwhile musicians in Cincinnati and vicinity, very sympathetic, will play @ \$5 per concert, wanted a place as soloist if possible.”

Initially the funds for paying musicians were contributed by members and a significant amount of funds were contributed by the Katz brothers and Epstein. Ann Kirk wrote, “an uphill battle, but we kept right on going.” Community support grew slowly, but the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra succeeded. It remains an important cultural staple in Dayton today, performing at the Schuster Center.

The Dayton Music Club has contributed to the community of Dayton, Ohio for over 100 years. Community Concert Series, scholarships, and the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra which thrive today, may not have been a part of this city if not for the contributions of the women of the Dayton Music Club.



### **Other music clubs/Women's Contributions to music in Dayton**

In addition to the Dayton Music Club, Dayton, Ohio has had a variety of other music institutions devoted to the development of music in the community. Women have played a significant role in the formation and activities of these clubs and institutions. The love of music was their drive, and they instilled this passion in the city of Dayton, by promoting serious art music to everyone regardless of class or background.

In 1915, Sara B. Thresher, a member of the Dayton Music Club, and Henry M. Waite discussed the idea of presenting the best artists to the community at low cost.<sup>210</sup> The Dayton Music Club, then called the Mozart Club, had 200 members at the time and decided to affiliate with the cause. The women sent out 600 invitations to meet and after an address made by Waite about the advantages of community music, the Dayton Civic Music League was born.<sup>211</sup> Waite had suggested that things like music should be open to all and not reserved alone for people who had money. Thus, the Civic Music League adopted the motto: "The world's best music at cost." Concert tickets ranged from 50 cents to \$3.50, and partial payment plans were accepted as well. However, the concerts were not viewed as the "highest form of art" by more serious music lovers.

The Dayton Symphony Association organized one year later, in 1916, as a result of a desire for a strictly symphonic repertoire. Katharine Talbott was responsible for its formation, and served as president and promoter. The association brought orchestras such as the Philadelphia Symphony, Boston Symphony Orchestra, and the New York Philharmonic to Dayton.

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<sup>210</sup> Conover, *Intimate* 261.

<sup>211</sup> "Civic Music League," Dayton Music Club Collection, Dayton Metro Library, Dayton.

Katharine Talbott has been mentioned several times in this chapter for her role in the music scene. She was a member and leader within the Dayton Music Club, Dayton Symphony Association, and Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra Executive Board. Arguably her most significant role was in the formation of the Westminster Choir, a now famous group in Ithaca, New York, with its roots in Dayton, Ohio.

In Dayton women organized and managed music institutions in their community to foster a love of music and culture. The club offered an arena where women could gain confidence and network with others for the shared goal of community uplift. In African American communities uplift was just as significant, and black women were leaders of this pursuit.

**Chapter 4**  
**Rising From Within:**  
**African American Clubs for Community and Culture**

African Americans were also part of the club movement that was sweeping the nation at the turn of the century. Facing segregation and exclusion, they organized and led separate clubs and associations to improve black communities. Blacks built a “culture within a culture” as a means of survival, relying on their own institutions and traditions such as churches, schools and businesses.<sup>212</sup> Black women became prominent leaders of this effort, actively participating in associations to uplift their communities.

Blacks were concerned with “uplift” of their communities, and this tremendous responsibility was delegated to women.<sup>213</sup> The cult of true womanhood, which defined the feminine virtues of the nineteenth century and the glorification of motherhood, were part of the black experience as well.<sup>214</sup> Women saw themselves as models and teachers of respectable home life, child care, and social codes.<sup>215</sup> Similarly to white women’s clubs, black women’s clubs were an extension of a “spirit of ‘organized motherhood,’” and through their clubs they provided community services such as kindergartens, day nurseries, settlements, and homes for young working girls.

However, black women did not visualize true womanhood in exactly the same way white women did. Black women did not envision true womanhood in terms of

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<sup>212</sup> Doris E. McGinty, “As Large As She Can Make It” *Cultivating Music in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 215.

<sup>213</sup> Anne Meis Knupfer, *Toward A Tenderer Humanity and a Nobler Womanhood: African American Women’s Clubs in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (New York: New York UP, 1996) 12.

<sup>214</sup> Venetria K. Patton, *Women in Chain: The Legacy of Slavery in Black Women’s Fiction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000) 29.

<sup>215</sup> Knupfer 12.

submissiveness and passivity because they associated these terms with slavery.<sup>216</sup>

Rather, black women created their own version of domesticity, by taking on the powerful role as “mother” to their own families and the community. The way black women defined their true womanhood caused conflict, sometimes volatile, within the black community, because black men themselves were conflicted about their manhood.<sup>217</sup> Since slavery, whites had denied black manhood, and in order to get that identity back, black women often had to concede to male authority in the name of preserving black manhood.<sup>218</sup> Gender issues were just one way in which blacks were conflicted about their identity.

Black club women recognized the similarities and differences between their clubs and white women’s clubs. Joesphine St. Pierre Ruffin, who organized the National Federation of Afro-American Women in 1895, stated that the success of black women’s clubs such as the National Association of Colored Women was similar to that of the white women’s clubs: “It shows that we are truly American women, with all the adaptability, readiness to seize and possess our opportunities, willingness to do our part for good as other American women.”<sup>219</sup> However, Fannie Barrier Williams, another black club leader believed there were stark differences between the white and black clubs. She said: “Among colored women the club is the effort of the few competent in behalf of the many incompetent; that is to say that the club is only one of many means for the social uplift of a race. Among white women the club is the onward movement of the

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<sup>216</sup> Shirley J Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992) 40.

<sup>217</sup> James Oliver Horton, *Free People of Color: Inside the African American Community* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993) 76-77

<sup>218</sup> Horton 77.

<sup>219</sup> Anne Meis Knupfer, *Toward a Tenderer Humanity and a Nobler Womanhood : African American Women's Clubs in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (New York: New York UP, 1996) 23.

already uplifted.”<sup>220</sup> According to Williams, there was great responsibility for the few black women who had the opportunity to become educated; they had a duty to help the rest of the black community to become uplifted.

Segregation, exclusion, and the perception of blacks by whites also created a dual identity or “double consciousness” for African Americans. This concept was discussed earlier in the thesis to describe the conflict felt by white women between ideology and true identity. In much the same way, blacks dealt with and reacted to a dual identity. However, this concept was far more complicated for African American. First described by W. E. B. DuBois as a “two-ness,” blacks were both American and Negro.<sup>221</sup> In the nineteenth century, blacks could often trace their American ancestry back over 100 years, yet they were not considered “true” Americans by whites.<sup>222</sup> Their identity was defined by whites, yet was not their true identity. Further identity conflict arose because blacks wanted to retain both the African and American part of their heritage, not conform to one over the other, without being stripped of opportunities.<sup>223</sup> African American identity was shaped by the ideals of America for freedom and privilege and the “African heritage that increasingly rested on a common racial identity and a collective struggle.”<sup>224</sup> Blacks were conflicted because of their mixed identity, and in order to combat this conflict they relied on their own community to uplift, not only for their own gain, but also to be uplifted in the eyes of whites who did not accept them.

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<sup>220</sup> Fannie Barrier Williams, Booker T. Washington, and N. B. Wood, *A New Negro for a New Century* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969) 383.

<sup>221</sup> DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* 17.

<sup>222</sup> Horton 146. Just prior to the Civil War, the Dred Scott case ruled that black people were not legally American citizens.

<sup>223</sup> Horton 147.

<sup>224</sup> Horton 147.

Segregation and exclusion were common experiences for blacks living in Ohio. In antebellum America, most blacks in the south were slaves, while those living in the north were “free blacks.” Free blacks were “free” from slavery but not from prejudice and exclusion. Although Ohio was a free state, there were acts and laws passed from 1807 to 1834 that restricted blacks.<sup>225</sup> David A Gerber wrote that Ohio was not unique in its segregation, but it did have the most “severe anti-black laws.”<sup>226</sup> Blacks faced harsh intolerance from whites in Ohio. A. L. Sherard found that some Ohio whites were so alarmed at the rising number of African Americans from the South, that they literally drove some blacks out of town.<sup>227</sup> By 1878 more “Black Laws” were established to strengthen “separate but equal” status for blacks. In Montgomery County, the Tenth District School was established, becoming the first segregated, publicly supported school in the district.<sup>228</sup> Other examples of segregation include the separation of real estate, and the West Side business district rose out of segregation as well.<sup>229</sup>

Although faced with intolerance, blacks came to Ohio in search of a better life. In Dayton, Ohio the first African American was recorded in the Dayton Township tax listing as early as 1798, according to historian Margaret Peters.<sup>230</sup> These early blacks established their own churches and schools, and some owned their own businesses.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Margaret E. Peters, *Dayton's African American Heritage: A Pictorial History* (Virginia Beach: The Donning Co., 1995) 12.

<sup>226</sup> David A Gerber, *Black Ohio and the Color Line, 1860-1915* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1976) 9.

<sup>227</sup> A. L. Sherard, “The Origin, Development and Present State of Negro Education in Dayton,” (Master’s thesis, University of Dayton, 1943) 12.

<sup>228</sup> Maria S.Boykin, “A Study of Literacy Among African Americans During the Great Migration, 1925-35 in Dayton, Ohio,” (MH thesis: Wright State University, 1993) 72.

<sup>229</sup> *Our True Colors: A Chronicle of Race Relation in the Miami Valley*, videorecording, Greater Dayton Public Television, 1992.

<sup>230</sup> Peters 9 and 11.

<sup>231</sup> Peters 11.

## Civil Rights Associations

The African American community relied heavily on their own to combat the problems they faced in everyday life. Black women became economically sufficient (becoming part of the middle-class), better educated, and more involved in self improvement efforts. The black women's club movement flourished at the turn of the century. According to Darlene Clark Hine, "as black women's clubs, sororities, church groups, and charity organizations took hold in the black communities, they gave rise to the values and attitudes traditionally associated with the middle class."<sup>232</sup> These values included self improvement as well as community service, and both were critical to community uplift.

Uplifting the community was central to the black women who networked in the United States. Community service included solving and dealing with the problems blacks faced. The National Association of Colored Women was founded in 1896, as a result of the merging of the Colored Women's League (founded 1892) and the National Federation of Afro-American Women (founded 1895).<sup>233</sup> The NACW centered around the problems African Americans were facing such as Jim-Crowism, increase lynching and mob violence, verbal and literary attacks on the character of black women, and the deterioration of race relations throughout the United States.<sup>234</sup>

The Ohio State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, the first such organization in the nation, also combated the problems blacks faced. This organization was founded

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<sup>232</sup> Hine and Thompson 220-221.

<sup>233</sup> Stephanie J Shaw, "Black Club Women and the Creation of the National Association of Colored Women," *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: A Reader in Black Women's History* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1995) 433.

<sup>234</sup> Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, *Afro-American Women of the South and the Advancement of the Race, 1895-1925* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989) 191-201.

in 1901 by Carrie Williams Clifford and Hallie Q. Brown. Both women were prominent in civil rights and cultural activism. In 1904, the State Federation held a meeting in Lebanon, Ohio, with Carrie Clifford presiding.<sup>235</sup> The purpose of the meeting was to denounce rag time music and Jim-Crowism, both as racist and demeaning to them. The newspaper reported: “the spirit of ‘lifting as we climb’ has spread its influence over all and many clubs, primarily organized for pleasure, have turned their attention to better things and are attempting to bring ‘a little sunshine’ into darkened lives.”<sup>236</sup>

Many clubs focused heavily on civil rights and problems blacks faced, and Ohio club women were among the most prominent in the nation. Hallie Q Brown, of Wilberforce, had co-founded the State Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs, served as president of this club, and co-founded the National Association of Colored Women. Carrie Williams Clifford, born in Chillicothe, Ohio, had co-founded the Ohio State Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs. She was an author, and founded the Minerva Reading Club in Ohio as well. Later she was an important leader in the Niagara Movement, a semi-radical movement of which the NAACP later emerged. Mary Burnett Talbert, born in Oberlin, Ohio, was the only African American woman to graduate from Oberlin College in 1866. She was an orator, suffragist, and reformer, best known for founding the Niagara Movement, and called the “best known colored woman in the US.”<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> “Women’s Clubs,” *Cleveland Journal* August 6, 1904.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Hallie Q Brown, *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction* (Hallie Q Brown 1926) found at Documenting the South website, images of entire book <<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/brownhal/brownhal.edu>> accessed March 25, 2007



## Community Institutions

The community was a central place for blacks to receive guidance and support in urban centers. Churches played a central role in this community support. Further, the church was a central location for education and organizing.<sup>238</sup> In Dayton Ohio, the earliest institutions established by blacks were churches. Blacks concentrated in Baptist and Methodist denominations, and in Dayton, Ohio branches of both existed.<sup>239</sup> The three oldest black churches in Dayton are the Wayman Chapel AME Church, First Wesleyan Methodist Church, and Zion Baptist Church, all over 125 years old.

The Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church is the oldest church in Dayton, Ohio, founded in 1833. It is one of the most significant in terms of what it has offered to the community.<sup>240</sup> The church has faced severe racism and mob violence by white Daytonians. The church was destroyed by an angry mob in 1867, but soon reorganized.<sup>241</sup> Wayman AME Church was attended by Paul Laurence Dunbar. The church also served as the first black school in Dayton, teaching children and adults of the black community in the basement of the church beginning in 1850. It offered classes until the 1870s.

The AME Church is one of the largest centrally organized denomination of African Americans in the United States, maybe the world.<sup>242</sup> Women have held positions of authority in this church since 1897, although not always receiving the full support they desired. The women leaders of this church used their positions to agitate the male leaders

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<sup>238</sup> Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993) 1-20.

<sup>239</sup> Gerber 141.

<sup>240</sup> Khalid Moss, "Spiritual Destiny," *Dayton Daily News* February 19, 2007.

<sup>241</sup> *The History of Blacks in Dayton, Ohio*, videorecording, Black Leadership Class 5, Dayton and Montgomery County Public Library, Wright State University, 19--.

<sup>242</sup> Jualynne E Dodson, *Engendering Church: Women, Power and the AME Church* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002) 1.

to support community and gendered missionary societies.<sup>243</sup> The tradition of forming voluntary associations was not unique to the white, middle class women discussed earlier in this thesis, but was shared by black women as well. Women used the church, community, and clubs to help them to promote charity, literacy, and culture in their communities.

Affluent black women had organized charitable and religious organizations just as white women had. Benevolent and aid societies flourished in urban areas where people had the means and central meeting places were available.<sup>244</sup> As migrants came from the South and found it difficult to adjust to their new lives in the North, prosperous black women helped to ease this transition.<sup>245</sup> “Members of the ‘Old Elite’ and the wives of a new class of ghetto businessmen and professionals joined forces to help working women.”<sup>246</sup> Women provided services in their communities such as day nurseries, homes for working girls, and recreational places. They also offered education, to children and adults.

Education, especially literacy for blacks living in Dayton and other Northern cities was not going to be a feat easily accomplished. However, the use of nontraditional methods such as church and community help would become a significant means for blacks to learn. According to V. P. Franklín, literacy was a tool for freedom, self

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<sup>243</sup> Dodson 1.

<sup>244</sup> Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family, from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985) 126.

<sup>245</sup> Jones 190.

<sup>246</sup> Jones 190.

determination, and empowerment.<sup>247</sup> Literacy became a tool for the blacks to promote upward social mobility, as it was experienced by others too.

Literacy was important, but there were not many educational opportunities for blacks. In 1825, Ohio law imposed a tax to provide funding to form common schools in the state, for “all” children to attend.<sup>248</sup> However, when lawmakers realized that black families were interpreting the law to include their children, the law was quickly repealed, and the taxes taken from black families were returned. Not until 1849, did Ohio lawmakers even consider funding for the education of African American children. There were examples of school integration in Dayton, including the education Paul Laurence Dunbar received at Central High School, where Orville Wright was a student. However, for the most part the education of black children was at “colored” schools.

The conditions blacks faced in the segregated schools were second class to say the least. Often the school buildings were run down, abandoned and thought to be unusable by whites, but acceptable for blacks.<sup>249</sup> The horrible conditions caused the black community to react by taking action. Blacks had a tradition of taking responsibility for the education of their young themselves. Thus in 1850 in Dayton, Ohio the Wesleyan Methodist Church began educating blacks in the basement of the church.<sup>250</sup> Many of the

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<sup>247</sup> V. P. Franklin, “Education for Life: Adult Education Program for African Americans in Northern Cities, 1900-1942,” *The Education of the African American Adult* Ed. H. Neufeldt and L. McGee. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990) 2.

<sup>248</sup> The following paragraph is taken from Boykin 68-69.

<sup>249</sup> Boykin 47.

<sup>250</sup> Boykin 70.

adults who did not have an education also learned to read and write in the basement of this church.<sup>251</sup>

Adult education in Dayton was a problem, which blacks again had to face on their own. Evening classes were offered for blacks from 1930-1931 at Steele, Stivers, Parker, and Roosevelt High Schools, but only Roosevelt was located in the “black” part of town, making it difficult for blacks to attend any of the other classes. Further, these classes charged tuition and because of decreased enrollment the evening classes were discontinued.<sup>252</sup> According to Thomas Woofter, more blacks would have sought adult education if it had been more convenient.<sup>253</sup> There were no other adult literacy programs for blacks in Dayton until the National Urban League began to help in the 1940s.<sup>254</sup>

The YMCA and YWCA claimed to reach out to men and women, and both middle class and working class members of society. However, they did not offer educational opportunities for blacks. The two organizations did offer courses for whites, originally offering programs such as English classes. However, the courses offered at the local YMCA were clearly for upper class society, and not for illiterates, including African Americans. On May 26, 1934, the *Dayton Journal* reported that the YMCA board had used Federal Emergency Relief money to offer Swedish and Russian courses at the YMCA. Clearly, these courses were not for lower class people of Dayton, such as blacks who could not read English, and the majority of immigrants living in Dayton were

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<sup>251</sup> C. R. H. Johnson, *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of America* (Dayton: First Wesleyan Methodist Church, 1942) 56.

<sup>252</sup> *Dayton Journal* November 20, 1934.

<sup>253</sup> Thomas Woofter, *Negro Problems in Cities* (New York: Negro University Press) 176.

<sup>254</sup> Boykin 77.

either German or Irish. Russian and Swedish would not be classes they would have an interest in.

Throughout their early history, however, the YMCA and YWCA which were founded on doctrines of mission and Christianity, excluded African Americans who may have needed their help most of all. The YMCAs and YWCAs encouraged blacks to establish their own associations, and by the late nineteenth century blacks responded with enthusiasm.

The first black YMCA association was founded in 1853. A former slave, Anthony Bowen, and a group of friends established the YMCA for Colored Men and Boys in Washington DC.<sup>255</sup> By the late 1860s black YMCAs had been established in New York City, Philadelphia, Charleston, and Harrisburg. In 1890, the national YMCA created a “Colored Men’s Department” and William A Hunton became the secretary of this department and the first black man to be employed by the International Committee of the YMCA.<sup>256</sup> The black YMCA opened in Dayton, Ohio in 1889, and is recognized as one of the oldest in the nation.

The black YWCA also has a rich history in Dayton, Ohio, where the first African American branch was established in 1893. In 1900 a group of black women who were members of a sewing club at the local AME church purchased a building from funds they raised and with the support of the local white YWCA.<sup>257</sup> In 1918, the black YWCA became affiliated with the white YWCA in Dayton.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Jesse N. Alexander, *One Hundred Twenty Five Years, 1853-1978: Selected Black Leaders of the YMCA* (Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, Inc., 1978) 5.

<sup>256</sup> Alexander 5.

<sup>257</sup> Adrienne Lash Jones, “Struggle Among Saints: African American Women and the YWCA, 1870-1920,” *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and the YWCA in the City* (New York: New York UP, 1997) 163.

<sup>258</sup> Adrienne Lash Jones 163.

The community benefited from the black YMCA and YWCA branches in Dayton, Ohio. These associations supported black community efforts to help migrating blacks mentally, physically, and emotionally become accustomed to their new environment. They offered literacy, job skills, and cultural enrichment.<sup>259</sup> The early black YMCA acted most like a reading and debating society and mostly appealed to upper class youth.<sup>260</sup> However, the increase in blacks who needed more than educational and religious guidance began to transform the YMCA into a social center.<sup>261</sup>

The need for community institutions grew as the Great Migration led large number of blacks into Ohio and other northern cities. The number of African Americans living in the North prior to the Great Migration was only about 10 percent.<sup>262</sup> As cities grew, so too did the number of blacks living in the North. There was a 20 percent rise in black population across the North from 1910 to 1930. The number of blacks living in Montgomery County Ohio was small compared to the North in general. However, there was also a significant rise in the population. From 1860 until 1880, about 1 percent of the county's total population was black.<sup>263</sup> However, from 1890 until 1940 the number of blacks rapidly grew to over 7 percent of the county's population.<sup>264</sup>

The Great Migration was a movement of an estimated 1.5 million blacks out of the rural South into the North during World War I and lasting until about 1930.<sup>265</sup> This

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<sup>259</sup> Boykin 61.

<sup>260</sup> Gerber 166.

<sup>261</sup> Gerber 446.

<sup>262</sup> *Timeline of African American History, 1852-1925*. <<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/aap/timeline.html>> accessed March 23, 2007

<sup>263</sup> This information was compiled directly from the United States Census of Population and Housing by the University of Virginia Library, accessible at <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/>> accessed March 5, 2007.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1998) 212-214.

movement was the most significant in terms of numbers, but blacks had also fled the South for the North in Antebellum decades and after the Civil War.

The North and its many cities offered jobs and many blacks came to Ohio, especially Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Springfield, Toledo, and Youngstown.<sup>266</sup> The largest rise of blacks in Dayton occurred between 1915 and 1920, when the black population doubled.<sup>267</sup> The numbers from 1910 to 1920 show that the black population had increased a total of 86.4 percent.<sup>268</sup>

An established black middle class began to emerge in the United States by late 19<sup>th</sup> century as more and more African Americans gained more education and better paying jobs. Ultimately industrialization gave rise to increased pay and property ownership. Most interesting, however, is that the black middle class almost totally rose out of the black community itself.<sup>269</sup>

Educational advancement was difficult for blacks to obtain, especially higher education, because of segregation and exclusion. However, some Ohio colleges, such as Oberlin and Wilberforce did have black students. In Dayton, Ohio the black middle class included Paul Laurence Dunbar, Charles Higgins, Lulu Mae Dunn, and Hallie Q. Brown. These prominent blacks advocated for education and cultural advancement of the black community.

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906) was a nationally and internationally recognized poet, the first African American to receive such recognition. He wrote his first poem at the age of 6, had his first recital at age 9, and at age 17 published his

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<sup>266</sup> Gerber 271.

<sup>267</sup> Gerber 471.

<sup>268</sup> Boykin 58.

<sup>269</sup> Thomas J Durant, Jr., "The Black Middle Class in America," *Phylon* Winter 1986, Vol XLVII No 4.

newspaper, the *Dayton Tattler*. At age 21 his first book of poems, *Oak and Ivy*, was published. He attended Central High School, and was the only black student in his class. Dunbar was also a prolific lyricist, and his lyrics have been used for operas, musicals, and symphonies, as well as songs. One significant contribution is the use of melodies inspired by his poems in William Grant Still's *Afro-American Symphony*.<sup>270</sup>

Rev. Charles L. D. Higgins (1869-1952) music instructor at Dunbar High School, also conducted community music groups, and was favored by both whites and blacks as a tenor singer.<sup>271</sup> Higgins had graduated from Westminster Choir School. His family was known throughout Dayton as "the finest musical and poetical family."<sup>272</sup> Higgins also served as secretary under the War Work Council of the YMCA from 1917-1920. After raising his six children and making sure each of them received not only high school but also college education, he returned to school himself. In June 1932, he graduated with honors from Bonebrake Theological Seminary at the age of 63. His wife Jewelia Higgins, an important member of the African American Club Movement in Dayton Ohio and founder of the Unique Study Club will be discussed later.

Lulu Mae Dunn was the first African American woman to graduate from the Antioch College of Music in Yellow Springs.<sup>273</sup> Later, she became a music teacher.

Hallie Q Brown (1845-1949) graduated from Wilberforce University in 1873 and began an illustrious career in education and the promotion of culture in the African American community. She taught at many schools in the South, a common profession

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<sup>270</sup> William Grant Still wrote this symphony in 1930 and revised it in 1969. He linked each of the movements to some verses from a poem by Paul Laurence Dunbar. Explanation taken from: *Norton Anthology of Western Music* Third Edition Ed. Claude V. Palisca Vol. 2 (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1996) 838.

<sup>271</sup> Scrapbook of news clippings from Charles M Austin Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Peters39.



for Northern women teachers.<sup>274</sup> She later taught in public Dayton schools, and opened a night school for blacks. The majority of her career was spent teaching elocution at Wilberforce University, and presenting recitals across the country and world, including making several appearances before Queen Victoria. Her work in the women's club movement is also significant. She co-founded the National Association of Colored Women in 1896. She served as president from 1920-1924. Brown also served as president of the Ohio State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs from 1905-1912. She was a member and civic leader in the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Ohio Council of Republican Women, the National League of Women Voters, and the Negro Women's National Republican League. Her activism included encouragement of music for blacks, and in 1925, at the age of 80 she protested segregation of the All American Music Festival being held at the Washington DC Auditorium, threatening that all black performers would boycott the event if segregated seating were not ended. 200 black entertainers boycotted that day.<sup>275</sup>

These leaders of the black community promoted culture and the arts because they believed the arts were significant. "Literature and the arts were important to free blacks, and education was the 'salvation of the race'."<sup>276</sup> The promotion of culture and the arts, as well as civil rights were major aspects of community activism in black communities.

## **Literary and Musical Clubs**

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<sup>274</sup> Boykin 38.

<sup>275</sup> About: Women's History; Hallie Q Brown

<<[http://womenshistory.about.com/library/bio/blbio\\_brown\\_hallie.htm](http://womenshistory.about.com/library/bio/blbio_brown_hallie.htm)>> accessed May 25, 2004

<sup>276</sup> Hine and Thompson 122.

Literature was an important tool for African Americans, and literary clubs became the vehicle to promote literature for self improvement and community betterment. This goal of self and community betterment through education was also seen in the white club movement going on at the same time. However, black women were not able to form ties with white clubs because of exclusion.<sup>277</sup> Black women, thus, formed separate associations and clubs. According to Anne Firor Scott, associations “were literally everywhere” and black women were among those forming these associations.<sup>278</sup> Most historians note that the women’s literary club movement began in 1868 with the formation of a literary society called *Sorosis* by Jane Cunningham Croly.<sup>279</sup> However, the first literary society can be traced to an antebellum community of free black women in Philadelphia. In 1831 the Female Literary Society of Philadelphia organized for self improvement and “thus for the improvement of the whole black race.”<sup>280</sup> There were other literary associations formed by free blacks also, but they were and have remained just as invisible, because of the white women’s clubs.

This invisibility can also be said of Dayton, Ohio. Two separate African American literary clubs were established in Dayton, one of which still remains today. These clubs were for the purpose of “enlighten[ment]... culturally and intellectually.”<sup>281</sup> The first was the “Colored Literary Society” formed in 1884, 5 years before the first

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<sup>277</sup> Black women’s clubs were excluded from joining the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, thus prompting blacks to form the National Association of Colored Women to not only form an organization to unify all of their clubs, but to also combat racism and to assert their desire to affiliate with white women’s clubs. For more information about this see Anne Rugles Gere *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Cultural Work in U. S. Women’s Clubs, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997) 5-6.

<sup>278</sup> Scott 2.

<sup>279</sup> For more information see Chapter 1 of this thesis.

<sup>280</sup> Scott 112.

<sup>281</sup> Derek Ali, “Study Club has Unique History,” *Dayton Daily News* September 29, 1990

“recognized” Literary Club was established in Dayton.<sup>282</sup> The purpose of this club was “to uplift the cultural level of the colored community.” On Friday January 1, 1886 callers were received at a reception at the Odd Fellow’s Temple located on the corner of Third and Jefferson Streets in Dayton Ohio. The club, known by some as the “Colored Reading Room” had 31 members.

The second black literary society formed in Dayton is the Unique Study Club, which still exists today. Founded in 1900 by a group of Dayton women, the wives of Dayton’s black community leaders and professionals studied the writings of Frederick Douglass, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and W. E. Dubois.<sup>283</sup> One of the founding members of the club, Jewelia Higgins, was motivated to found the club so that black women might “edify themselves spiritually and intellectually,” but the club evolved into more than a study club, as the women became a force for social and political action.<sup>284</sup> One interesting fact about how this club has continued to grow and be active is that the mothers would bring their daughters to the meeting when they were mature. Theresa Edwards, president of the Unique Study Club in 1990 said, “The mothers really believed so strongly in the organization that they would coerce or urge their daughters to belong. They wanted the organization to keep existing.”<sup>285</sup> Another member, Adelaide Hand, who was the oldest member of the club in 1990 at age 96, said that the women of the club

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<sup>282</sup> The Woman’s Literary Club is recognized as the first literary club by Charlotte Reeve Conover and other historians, see Chapter 1. The following information about the African American Literary Clubs was taken from the Charles M Austin Collection located at Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University unless otherwise noted.

<sup>283</sup> Ali, “Study Club had Unique History” *Dayton Daily News*

<sup>284</sup> Derek Ali, “Dayton Club to Observe 95<sup>th</sup> Year” *Dayton Daily News* November 15, 1995

<sup>285</sup> Ali, “Study Club has Unique History” *Dayton Daily News*

were intellectual women with a purpose in life, “to help others see the better side of life.”<sup>286</sup>

Music was also an important part of the black community. Black women organized, lead, and promoted music, including classical music traditions and more ethnic music.<sup>287</sup> They performed music, founded and directed ensembles, and organized clubs.<sup>288</sup> The church was an essential place for the promotion of music in the black community. “As centers of social as well as religious activity, the churches were main support of concert life.”<sup>289</sup> The church provided the auditorium for concerts and church clubs and committees sold the tickets.<sup>290</sup> In Dayton, the role of black women in music clubs is sparsely documented. However, there is evidence of women’s activism in other cities.

Classical music was especially thought of as a high art in the black community. In Cleveland, Ohio a newspaper article from 1909 reads: “There is great hope for a people who enjoy and appreciate first-class music. Ragtime and popular music have their place, but a taste for the classical prevails where intelligence is highest.”<sup>291</sup> Cleveland, Ohio was the birthplace of two African American composers as well: Leslie H. Adams and Hale Smith.

In Columbus, an all women instrumental group called the C. D. C. Band consisted of twenty leading Columbus women musicians, and an article from 1920 reveals that the band wanted to expand membership to 36 members, “and to accomplish

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<sup>286</sup> McGinty 217.

<sup>287</sup> McGinty 214.

<sup>288</sup> McGinty 215.

<sup>289</sup> McGinty 216.

<sup>290</sup> McGinty 216.

<sup>291</sup> “Musical Achievement and Appreciation in Cleveland,” *Cleveland Journal* April 24, 1909

their aim... by securing [women of Columbus] good employment and the advantage of good employment.”<sup>292</sup>

Little is available about the extent to which black women in Dayton promoted music through clubs. However, music clubs were an important part of the black communities where they existed. Doris McGinty writes that in the 1820s black formed the first musical societies in Philadelphia and Boston.<sup>293</sup> These associations were responsible for promoting high quality music to the community. Music teachers were also important to the community. They not only provided musical training in the community, but also musical programs for the literary and debating societies as well.<sup>294</sup> This being the case it is not a leap to think that music teachers as well as churches in Dayton may have also contributed in this way.

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<sup>292</sup> “Columbus, Ohio, and Its Relation to the Musical World” *Ohio State Monitor* April 24, 1920

<sup>293</sup> Doris Evans McGinty, *A Documentary History of the National Association of Negro Musicians* (Columbia: Columbia College Chicago, 2004) 7.

<sup>294</sup> McGinty, *Negro Musicians* 7.

## **Conclusion:**

### **Women and Integration into “A Man’s World”**

Women’s clubs had an immense effect on the cultural atmosphere of America. In many cities, rising urban landscapes were places of commercialism and industry. Educated, affluent women, wanted to improve their lives and their communities by studying literature, art, and music. These women used their internal conflict between “the cult of true womanhood” and their desire for enrichment to create clubs. While white women used the club to “uplift the already uplifted,” the few “already uplifted” African American women used a culture within a culture to strengthen their largely uneducated communities. Ultimately these clubs were the vehicles that brought institutions such as libraries, museums, and orchestras into communities across the nation.

Women who participated in the club movement achieved more than establishing cultural institutions in their cities. Many women assimilated into positions alongside men, joining forces in many cultural institutions. Historian Kathleen D, McCarthy referring to the visual arts, called the women who served on museum boards with men “assimilationists.”<sup>295</sup> This term can also be associated with the music world, as women managed orchestras on the boards with men. In Dayton, Ohio several members of the Dayton Music Club including Katherine Talbott served on the executive board for the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra.

The music clubs themselves also became integrated, and men and women pursued their amateur talents and managerial skills together. Rose Fay Thomas, recommended as

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<sup>295</sup> Quoted in Locke and Barr 38.

early as 1895 that men should be included in music clubs.<sup>296</sup> The women of the Dayton Music Club opened their club to men in 1914.

The inclusion of women in professional orchestras alongside men was not common. However, women have held positions within the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra since its inception in 1933. Ann Kirk, harpist, and Gwenn Garber, first violin, were members since the beginning of the orchestra.<sup>297</sup> By 1949, 14 women were members of the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra, and the cello and horn sections were led by women. The *Journal Herald* reports “Seldom does a woman occupy the position of first horn player – Miss [Elizabeth] Snook does.” Women of Dayton had gained entry into the professional arena of the orchestra, and were praised for their accomplishment by the media. This triumph was a direct result of their pursuit for musical fulfillment. From the amateur Mozart Club to the professional Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra, women had sought to bring culture to the city of Dayton. Their success is evident in the many music institutions which thrive in the Miami Valley today.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Whitesitt 68.

<sup>297</sup> The following information about women in the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra is taken from Merab Eberle, “Introducing the 14 Philharmonic Ladies” *Journal Herald* Monday, October 16, 1949.

<sup>298</sup> For a list of music groups around Dayton and the Miami Valley see Appendix 1.

## Appendix I

### A List of Music around Dayton and the Miami Valley Today<sup>299</sup>

#### **Orchestras**

Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra  
Springfield Symphony Orchestra  
Miami Valley Symphony Orchestra

#### **Choruses**

Dayton Philharmonic Chorus  
Coventry Green  
Miami Valley Chorale  
Musica  
Sweet Adelines

#### **Bands and Wind Ensembles**

Dayton Philharmonic Concert Band  
Air Force Band of Flight  
Kettering Civic Band  
Ohio Valley British Brass Band  
Tipp City Civic Band

#### **Opera and Musical Theatre**

Dayton Opera  
Springfield Opera  
Dayton Playhouse  
Victoria Theatre  
Dayton Theatre Guild  
University of Dayton Theatre Program  
Wright State University Department of Theatre Arts

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<sup>299</sup> This list was compiled with the help of University of Dayton website:  
<<http://udayton.edu/~music/mvmusic/>> accessed 7/26/2005



### **Chamber Music and Piano**

Chamber Music Yellow Springs  
Dayton Classical Guitar Society  
The Dayton Music Club  
Huffman Prairie Winds  
Soirees Musicales  
Marian String Quartet  
Springfield Symphony String Quartet  
UD Faculty Brass Trio  
Vanguard Concerts  
Wright Brass

### **Ballet and Dance**

Dayton Ballet  
Dayton Contemporary Dance Company  
Rhythm in Shoes  
Miami Valley Folk Dancers

### **Early Music**

Wind in the Woods  
Ohio Viols  
Musici Anonymi, a Consort

### **Church Music Organizations and Series**

American Guild of Organists, Dayton Chapter  
Dayton Choirmasters  
Miami Valley Catholic Church Musicians  
Music at Westminster Series  
Shiloh Church Concert Series  
Seaholes Concert Series at First Baptist Church  
Xenia Westminster Concerts

## **Arts Series, Organizations**

Culture Works  
Cityfolk  
Darke County Center for the Arts  
The Muse Machine  
University of Dayton Arts Series  
Miami Valley Community Concert Series  
Wright State University Artist Series

## **Jazz**

Dayton Jazz Orchestra  
Hauer Swing Band  
Gem City Jazz Band  
Jazz Centra Big Band  
Johnny Mack Super Big Band  
Generation X  
Miami Valley Jazz Labs  
Night Flight  
Systems Go  
UD Faculty Jazztet  
Pacchia's Jazz Room  
Jazz Central  
"Just Jazz" Series at Dayton Art Institute  
Annual "Women in Jazz" Festival  
Annual "Jazz at the Bend" Festival  
Annual Dayton Blues Festival  
Annual Third World Reggae Festival

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