



Practice Exercise 8-f

Jane Addams and Chicago's Hull House

Jane Addams was a leader in women's suffrage and many other social movements. Hull House, founded in 1890, was one of the first social settlements in the United States. It is now a historic house open to the public.



Addams, founder of Chicago's Hull House, was born only months before the Civil War began. Raised in the small town of Cedarville, Illinois, more than one hundred miles from Chicago, she was two when her mother died. Jane idolized her father, John Addams. He was a prosperous miller who was active in community affairs, organizing the construction of a local railroad and serving as a state senator.

After a village school education, Jane hoped to attend Smith College in Massachusetts. Instead, her father insisted she study at Rockford Seminary in Illinois. Enrolling in 1877, Addams studied Greek, Latin, French, history, and literature. She was elected class president and named editor of the school magazine. During that time she developed a close friendship with Ellen

Gates Starr.

When John Addams died in 1882, Jane decided to study medicine in Philadelphia. Severe back pain forced her to stop her education. Following an operation, Addams was bedridden for six months and had to wear a back support for another year.

In 1883, Addams traveled to Europe with family and friends in 1883. In her journal, she recorded despair at seeing the "masses of ill-clad people." In 1887 she went back to Europe with her college friend, Ellen Gates Starr. They visited Toynbee Hall and the People's Palace in England, their first encounters with community education and recreation centers, or settlement houses.

On their return to Chicago, Addams and Starr discussed what they had seen. Seeing herself as a "missionary," Addams decided to rent a house in a poor neighborhood, although money was no problem. She had inherited an income from her father. She spoke with clergymen and officials from local charities to gain support for a community center. However, Addams's family did not believe in careers for woman and were against her moving into a poor area. "It has always been difficult for the family to regard the daughter, other than a family possession," she noted.

Addams and Starr toured the city for days, looking for a suitable place.

