Quakers and the Founding of the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendicancy

Victorians, living in an urban industrialized society qualitatively different from that of their parents, were the first modern generation. Although they joyously celebrated the nation’s centennial and progress in 1876, they faced problems still disturbingly present a century later: social dislocation, control of corporate power, corruption in government, pollution of the environment and the oppression of Indians, blacks, and women. Then, as now, the poor were a major social problem, and the Gilded Age had its version of a war on poverty. Two widely heralded and allied reform movements, charity organization and scientific philanthropy, bravely proposed to eliminate poverty by attacking its roots; proponents, describing their proposals as “radical,” believed themselves to be in the vanguard of progress.¹

Charity organizers advocated moral uplift of the poor through intensive counseling by volunteer women called friendly visitors. They believed that poverty was caused by pauperism, a cluster of negatively defined personal traits that included idleness, intemperance, and thriftlessness. Consequently, they attributed mass industrial poverty, steadily increasing throughout the nineteenth century, to the spread of pauperism.

Scientific philanthropists held the relief system partly to blame for pauperism and, as the name “charity organization” implies, they desired to check its spread by rationalizing relief administra-

tion. The "unworthy poor," they argued, were supported in idleness by indiscriminate almsgiving at the same time that funds were diverted from "worthy poor." Not only indiscriminate almsgiving but unnecessary duplication of aid and administrative expenses inflated relief expenditures. In their view, agencies failed to give regular, dependable, and adequate subsistence to those unable to support themselves, such as the aged and infirm. Agencies also failed to provide the rehabilitative services that would prevent the descent into pauperism of able-bodied poor by enabling them to become self-sufficient. The remedy was investigation of all applicants for aid, imposition of strict eligibility requirements, maintenance of centralized records that would permit the quick identification of impostors, planned, coordinated services and, in the words of the charity organization slogan, "Not alms, but a friend." Scientific philanthropists argued that relief administration required skill and expertise, and that charity workers should be trained and supervised, basing their practice in social science rather than sentiment.

Opposed to municipal outdoor relief as corruptly administered by machine politicians and as fostering the "socialistic" belief that relief was a right rather than a privilege, scientific philanthropists desired to rationalize and strengthen the voluntary charitable system to make it a viable alternative to government welfare. Partly as a result of their agitation, public outdoor relief, a heritage of the 1601 Elizabethan poor law transmitted to the New World during the colonial period, was abolished in several localities, including Philadelphia and New York City.

Charity organization legacies to the contemporary welfare system include modern professional social work, an expanded and strengthened voluntary social service system and the commitment of social welfare professionals to social science as a base for policy and practice. The movement's emphasis on individual rather than social or economic change as a means of combating poverty contributed to social work's traditional casework emphasis. That profession's reliance on psychiatric rather than sociological or economic theory as a basis for training and practice also stems from the charity organization focus on individuals. The promise of systematic reform of poor relief through efficient administration was not unlike con-
temporary efforts to resolve the welfare crisis through the application of systems management techniques.

The charity organization emphasis on pauperism as the cause of poverty and on the need for character reformation of the poor was rooted in early nineteenth-century poverty approaches that emerged with the decline of mercantilism and the rise of laissez faire. At that time, economic conceptions of the causes of poverty and economic remedies, such as employment of the poor by government, that had been characteristic of the earlier period were abandoned. Charity organization was a conservative and backward-looking movement that advocated a program ill-adapted to mass needs for economic security in an urban, industrialized society. During the Progressive period, charity organization opposition delayed the enactment of government pensions for widowed mothers and the aged; the advocacy of services contributed to the incorporation of mandatory requirements for casework service in some economic security legislation enacted subsequent to the Great Depression.

A variety of factors, including the increase of mass industrial poverty, social unrest manifested in periodic strikes and violence, the secularization of American society and the desire of leisureed women to live socially useful lives, contributed to the emergence of scientific philanthropy after the Civil War. It emerged early in Philadelphia, and the Philadelphia agency became one of the nation’s leading charity organization societies.

Established February 17, 1879, after a year of intensive organizing activity, the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendicancy (SOC), now Family Service of Philadelphia, was the third charity organization society in the United States. The first was the Germantown Relief Society, founded in Philadelphia’s Twenty-second Ward in 1873, followed by one in Buffalo, New York, in 1877. In Philadelphia, the SOC gained

2 The impact upon poor relief of the decline of mercantilism and the rise of laissez faire is discussed in Samuel Mencher, Poor Law to Poverty Program: Economic Security Policy in Britain and the United States (Pittsburgh, 1967), 49-153.
4 In 1879 the agency’s name was changed to the “Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity.”
numerical and financial support of a magnitude previously denied the city's voluntary poor relief agencies. In 1881, claiming 9,000 contributors, the SOC was far and away the largest charity organization society in the United States. The Cincinnati agency ran a poor second with 2,000 members and the Buffalo group, usually touted by historians as spearheading scientific philanthropy, trailed behind with 300 contributors. Its large membership and relative wealth enabled the SOC to publish the *Monthly Register*, the first journal of social work to have a national circulation. Through the *Monthly Register* the SOC exerted leadership during the first early proliferation of charity organization societies. By 1893 the movement had spread to 92 American cities. By 1900 it dominated American philanthropy, with units in 125. In that year, Mary Richmond, author of *Social Diagnosis* and the mother of modern professional social work, joined the SOC as Executive Secretary. Miss Richmond's varied achievements during her nine years in Philadelphia gave her national stature, and reinforced the SOC's leadership among charity organization societies.

Quakers were indispensable to the SOC, although there were only 1,601 Orthodox and 3,344 Hicksite Quakers in Philadelphia in 1881. Less than a tiny .006 per cent of the population of a city once dominated by them, their impact upon Philadelphia philanthropy was disproportionate to their numbers. Friends' religiously based charitable imperatives meant that Philadelphia was unusually rich in benevolent institutions. The Quaker community provided people ready to give, not only their money, but themselves, to charity

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5 Charles E. Cadwalader, "Organization of Charities in Cities: Report of the Standing Committee," *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction* (Boston, 1881), 109. The SOC membership claimed by Cadwalader, a member of the SOC executive committee, was probably inflated by inclusion of all persons who had contributed to the agency since 1878, and by a multiple count of persons who contributed more than one time. The research which this paper partially reports obtained a membership of 3,042 persons in 1880. Although this number probably is less than the actual membership in that year due to inability to locate annual reports for all ward associations, the SOC membership in 1880 is believed to be underenumerated by only a few hundred. Even so, the SOC was still the largest charity organization society in the United States in that year. Most reported only one or two hundred members.

6 Mary E. Richmond, *Social Diagnosis* (New York, 1917).

work. Unlike relief agencies which hired paid workers, usually ministers, to work among the poor, Quaker charities were typically run by volunteers; they were sympathetic to a program which advocated volunteer visiting. Friends' charitable involvements made them aware of stresses on the relief system caused by the nineteenth-century increase in poverty which, when the SOC was founded, had been exacerbated by the depression of 1873, the worst depression the nation had known.

Administrative stress on Quaker poor relief agencies led directly to the founding of the SOC. Concern with practical administrative problems differentiated Quaker philanthropists active in the SOC from other active supporters, such as social science oriented professionals, who were not typically affiliated with poor relief agencies. Such men were attracted to scientific philanthropy partly on ideological grounds unrelated to direct experience with poor relief administration. 8

The SOC was initiated by some "gentlemen connected with the Soup Houses and other charities" who conferred February 18, 1878, about ways "to protect their charities from the countless impositions practiced upon them." 9 At least eighteen of these twenty-five initiators of the SOC were associated with the city's Quaker-dominated soup societies. With a mean age in 1880 of 61.9, a median of 60.5 and a range of 39 to 89, these initiators were, on the average, a decade older than the average male contributor to the SOC, who was 50.3. 10 Initiators' ages are striking; five were seventy years of age or older; only three were forty-nine or younger. Their perspectives on charity were rooted in the antebellum period; they were administering agencies under stress partly because the relief system

8 The research which this paper partially reports included determination of SOC contributors' affiliations with a variety of voluntary organizations. A primary finding was the existence of subgroups within the active SOC membership linked by organizational affiliations and differentiated from each other. Julia B. Rauch, "Unfriendly Visitors: The Emergence of Scientific Philanthropy in Philadelphia, 1878-80" (doctoral dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, 1974).

9 "Dear Sir: At a meeting of gentlemen . . .," circular, Feb. 18, 1878, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Society for Organizing Charity Papers (hereinafter cited as SOC Papers).

10 Data about the characteristics of contributors to the SOC were obtained from United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census (June 1, 1880), Schedules for Philadelphia, photocopy, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Social History Project. The author is indebted to Theodore Hershberg for granting access to the schedules.
as a whole had not adapted to the requirements of an industrialized society.

Perhaps the man who best symbolized the soup societies was John M. Ogden, a Quaker born in Philadelphia on January 19, 1791, during the presidency of George Washington. Ogden was a descendant of a family that had come to Pennsylvania with William Penn on the Welcome. The son of a coachmaker, he was apprenticed to a carpenter and became a respected architect and builder, helping to supervise the construction in the 1830s of the Philadelphia Almshouse, a facility that by 1878 was an antiquated, rotting, overcrowded snakepit. A Whig, and later a Republican, Ogden served in the Pennsylvania legislature in 1832-1833. In 1853 he helped to found the Spring Garden Soup Society, serving for decades as its president. His manifold charitable affiliations included the Northern Dispensary, the House of Refuge, and the Pennsylvania School for Feeble-Minded Children. His business interests included the presidency of the Northern Liberties and Penn Township Railroad Company. "Greatly interested" in the SOC, he served as chairman of the organizing commission. Despite his age, he remained actively affiliated with it until his death on October 29, 1882.\(^\text{11}\)

Like Ogden, soup societies were products of the early nineteenth-century Philadelphia of artisans, home industry, and bustling communities in which rich and poor were jumbled haphazardly together in neighborhoods huddled against the waterfront, which was then the city's life blood, and in which opportunities for artisans meant that men could, to some degree, control their economic fate. Soup societies were among the first forms of voluntary charity to emerge during the early nineteenth-century burgeoning of voluntary relief agencies. They were a form of organized neighborly help based on the agrarian conception of destitution as seasonal in nature and due to circumstances rather than personal fault. The first, the Southwark Soup Society, was founded prior to 1805.\(^\text{12}\) In 1814, eight Quakers met at the South Third Street home of Mordecai


\(^{12}\) Due to destruction of records by fire, the exact date of the founding of the Southwark Soup Society is unknown. Manual for Visitors Among the Poor With a Classified and Descriptive Directory to the Charitable and Beneficent Institutions of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, 1879), 88.
Lewis to form the Philadelphia Soup House for “relieving the poor and distressed by the sale and distribution of cheap and wholesome soup during the winter months.” They planned a wholly volunteer agency; managers, for whom the leisurely rhythms of vocational life still gave freedom for a wide range of activities, were required to rotate the duty of attending the soup house when it was open.13

Over a period of time, the number of soup houses increased to twelve, including four founded as late as the 1870s.14 Numerical expansion was unaccompanied by change in the basic policy of seasonal, temporary relief through distribution of food. However, administrative changes, including rudimentary professionalization of staff, occurred.

Population increase, which raised the numbers of the poor, and the emergence of residential segregation were two factors contributing to administrative changes. By 1861, some soup society managers lived in neighborhoods other than those in which their charities were located.15 At the same time, the poor were becoming increasingly concentrated in specific areas. The Central Soup House was opened in 1861 because existing kitchens were not accessible to the needy who crowded together in the “old city.”

At the same time that soup society managers had ceased to relieve neighbors perhaps personally known to them, the number of relief applicants and recipients increased. In the decade immediately prior to the Civil War, the Philadelphia Soup House fed thousands of persons, rather than the hundreds characteristic of its earlier years.17 The poor had become an army of strangers, rather than a handful of neighborhood families; their relief was a major undertaking. One result was the employment of paid superintendents. In 1860 the managers of the Moyamensing Soup Society

14 The twelve soup societies in 1878 and their dates of founding were: Southwark Soup Society, prior to 1805; Philadelphia Soup House, 1814; Northern Soup Society of Philadelphia, 1817; Moyamensing Soup Society, 1835; Western Soup Society, 1837; Spring Garden Soup Society, 1853; Kensington Soup Society, 1853; Central Soup Society, 1861; Northwestern Soup Society, 1871; Northeastern Soup Society, 1874; Richmond Soup Society, 1875; Twentieth Ward Soup Society, 1878. Manual for Visitors Among the Poor, 86-88.
15 Philadelphia, Soup Houses, Map (1861), Haverford College Library, Quaker Collection.
16 Editorial, Friends Intelligencer, XXXIV (Jan. 19, 1861), 712-713.
17 Philadelphia Soup House, Constitution and By-Laws, 16.
hired a visitor “to inspect the character and wants” of applicants. That same year, the managers of the Southwark Soup Society hoped that its employment of a superintendent to obtain character references and information regarding the age, residence, and occupation of applicants for aid would lessen imposture and weed out unworthy poor.18

In 1861 soup society managers conferred about their lack of coordination which, they believed, resulted in wasteful duplication of aid and imposition upon their charities. A map was prepared delimiting the geographical responsibility of each kitchen and a committee appointed to assure continued harmony of action. To facilitate fund-raising, Edward Parrish was named to collect donations for all eight societies.19

After the Civil War, each kitchen remained responsible in principle for the poor living in the ward in which it was located. However, certain areas, such as Germantown and West Philadelphia, were without this form of relief and nonneighborhood poor would sometimes seek food from existing soup kitchens. Relief of transients also became important. After the 1873 depression, particularly, Philadelphia was flooded by transients in search of work. This increased the facelessness of recipients and made managers, suspicious of paupers and tramps, concerned that they were supporting willful idleness. In addition, soup societies, except during economic crisis, usually dealt with the most pauperized poor concentrated in slum areas.

Because of their “indiscriminate aid” to apparently “unworthy” poor, soup societies slipped into disrepute. In 1879 the managers of the Twentieth Ward Soup Society noted the “prejudice” against soup houses and the diversity of opinion as to the proper methods of offering relief. They believed, however, that kitchens were of “inestimable value” and “almost indispensable.” They were unwilling to dissolve the agency, as had been suggested to them.20

However inadequate they were, soup societies offered immediate subsistence at a time when the poor relief system as a whole was

19 Moyamensing Soup Society, Annual Report (1862), 3; Soup Houses, Map.
unequal to the demand for relief; managers were overwhelmed by pleas for help. As occurred with other relief agencies during the depression, increased demand was coupled with decreased income. In 1874 the Spring Garden Soup Society was forced to go into its capital, spending all of a $1,000 legacy.\(^\text{21}\) After the depression, the income of the Northwestern Soup Society remained at or below pre-depression levels while its caseload increased. The winter of 1876–1877 was particularly critical for expenditures were more than $1,000 above income. Managers' belief that charity organization would relieve fiscal stress proved correct; in the winter of 1878–1879, the soup society's caseload dropped because investigation by SOC agents "discouraged" unworthy applicants.\(^\text{22}\)

The administrative and fiscal stress upon the soup societies required the establishment of priorities and adherence to procedures for determining which applicants would receive the limited aid available. This practical problem, however, was deflected through the prism of pauperism, resulting in strident insistence on weeding out tramps, beggars, and other "unworthy" poor. Rather than pressing for expansion and liberalization of the relief system in response to economic crisis, as occurred during the Great Depression of the 1930s, aid was defined as morally corrupting. One soup society manager called the kitchens a "most dangerous charity," granting relief "without a thought as to the character of the applicant or the consequences that may follow upon the giving." This "oversight" made soup societies the "most demoralizing and corrupting of all our Charitable Agencies." In his view, the "frightful pauperism" of the Fourth, Fifth and a part of the Seventh Wards, that "burning disgrace of our city," was due to that neighborhood's soup house. His argument boiled down to blaming conditions in Philadelphia's black slum, to which former slaves ill-equipped for industrial life were flocking, on the dispensation of soup. It was not uncharitable, he felt, to refuse nourishment for "many a valuable lecture, or sermon, too" was preached in the denial of soup to the "vicious."\(^\text{23}\)

Because the administrative stress on the soup societies was inter-


\(^{22}\) Northwestern Soup Society, \textit{Annual Report of the Board of Managers} (1879), 3.

\(^{23}\) "Twenty-five Years A Manager," \textit{Monthly Register}, I (Feb. 15, 1880), 2-3.
preted through a framework of antipathy toward the poor, the SOC initiators desired to “protect their charities from the countless impositions practiced upon them” by extending to the relief system as a whole their earlier efforts to tighten eligibility requirements and to coordinate charitable work. To do so, the cooperation of non-Quakers was required.

As a result of the February 18, 1878, meeting, the SOC initiators issued a call to a public gathering scheduled for March 1, 1878. At this meeting, the membership of a committee to draw up plans for a charity organization society was announced. This committee included Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Unitarians, Lutherans and a Roman Catholic. It was not representative of the relief system as a whole, lacking delegates from municipal welfare institutions, charities conducted by women, and Jewish agencies. Put together in less than two weeks, the membership was composed largely of initiators and of persons known to initiators through shared membership on the boards of charitable agencies. Consequently, Friends dominated this planning committee. Two, Phillip C. Garrett and William W. Justice, were Quakers affiliated with the Germantown Relief Society.

The Germantown Relief Society (GRS) was the immediate model for the SOC. It brought to life European writings and examples, such as that of the London Society for Organizing Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendicancy, founded in 1869, and seemed to offer concrete proof that European methods were applicable, with modification, to conditions in the United States. It was also the Germantowners and other Quakers who opposed proposals to create a centralized agency, resulting in the decentralized structure of the SOC, unique to charity organization societies.

The stated purposes of the GRS were to render prompt and judicious relief in cases of helpless suffering not otherwise provided for; to detect imposture and prevent the waste and misapplication of charity; to put an end to promiscuous begging; to promote good understanding among Germantown’s charitable societies; to collect and diffuse information concerning the extent of destitution in the ward. Its principles were to investigate carefully each case to avoid helping those able to help themselves, to give relief in kind rather

24 Hereinafter referred to as the GRS.
than in cash, and to encourage the poor to obtain work rather than to receive gratuitous aid.\textsuperscript{25}

Because the Germantown Board of Guardians of the Poor was independent of municipal authority, the GRS, after five years of steady pressure, was able to obtain authority to distribute tax-supported outdoor relief in that ward.\textsuperscript{26} According to Phillip C. Garrett, a local and national spokesman for scientific philanthropy, the Germantown experiment demonstrated that voluntary charities were more economical and efficient than publicly administered aid. In his view, "the moral effect upon the people of receiving charity as a gift" was "markedly beneficial."\textsuperscript{27} The GRS also entered into cooperative relations with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Germantown Dispensary, the Germantown Employment Society and some parishes.

From an office in the Young Men's Christian Association hall, the agency's paid superintendent, Robert Coulter, investigated relief applicants and decided upon the initial disposition of cases. When relief was given, it was administered by friendly visitors who "opened lines of friendly communication with the poorest classes . . . cheering them through dark passages of sickness and trial."\textsuperscript{28} Visitors were not, however, particularly sympathetic to their clients. One visitor found that closer study of the character and modes of life of the poor confirmed that there was a large and growing number of human beings who fulfilled no purpose but "that of preying upon the worthier members of society."\textsuperscript{29} Despite unemployment due to the depression, the GRS managers found that "real destitution" in Germantown was "limited and easily manageable."\textsuperscript{30}

The GRS imposed strict eligibility requirements. William W. Justice reported that GRS investigations revealed that "a great many people receiving help" were "impostors and other professional

\textsuperscript{25} The Germantown Relief Society (Philadelphia, 1874).
\textsuperscript{26} Germantown Relief Society, \textit{Annual Report of the Board of Managers} (1878), 11.
\textsuperscript{27} Phillip C. Garrett, "The General Results of Charity Organization," \textit{Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction} (Louisville, 1883), 149-150.
\textsuperscript{29} Lily H. Kay, "Summer Relief Committee," Germantown Relief Society, \textit{Annual Report} (1878), 8.
beggars.” The GRS helped only those who “deserved” help.\textsuperscript{31}

“Little is given,” wrote another member of the GRS, “and that with caution.”\textsuperscript{32} In 1878 the GRS aided 95 families representing 424 persons, but the firmness of its superintendent was reflected in the refusal of aid to almost one-third of the applicants. Forty-four families were turned away. The average expenditure per recipient came to $2.13 that year with the GRS doling out 165 pounds of sugar, 7,557 pounds of flour, 2,524 pounds of cornmeal, 16 tons of coal, 572 bars of soap and a pair of shoes.\textsuperscript{33} Such a stringent program was “not much encouragement to lie idle through the summer in the hope of being cared for through the winter!”\textsuperscript{34}

The GRS introduced a change in traditional relief practices later incorporated into the SOC. As was then characteristic of relief agencies, the GRS was initially open only during winter, but in 1877 the office remained open all year. Less important than any desire to relieve the poor during summer was the hope that its superintendent could maintain an “effectual check” upon begging, for the GRS credited itself with an alleged reduction in begging and total relief expenditures in Germantown. In addition, in order to prevent relapse into dependency, the GRS instituted summer supervision. Persons who had received aid the previous winter were visited and a record kept of their summer employment, their income and their expenditures to ensure that they spent wisely and saved against the winter.\textsuperscript{35}

At the same time that the GRS claimed that its program was successful, it complained that the needy streamed in from other areas of the city. Its managers came to believe that a city-wide system of charity organization was necessary.\textsuperscript{36} Garrett and Justice both spoke at the March 1, 1878, meeting held to generate support for charity organization in Philadelphia and helped to plan the new agency.\textsuperscript{37}


\textsuperscript{32} Ames, \textit{Wisdom in Charity}, 13.

\textsuperscript{33} Germantown Relief Society, \textit{Annual Report} (1879), 10-11.

\textsuperscript{34} Ames, \textit{Wisdom in Charity}, 13.

\textsuperscript{35} Germantown Relief Society, \textit{Annual Report} (1877), 7.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Ibid.}, 3.

They were instrumental in determining the SOC structure. The planning committee met regularly for a period of three months, its sessions, sometimes being held on consecutive evenings, often lasting until midnight. Feeling ran high, for committee members differed over the structure and purposes of a charity organization society. Conflict centered around the degree to which the agency should be centralized. Some felt that the principles of scientific philanthropy were so new and unique, and old habits of indiscriminate charity so strongly engrained, that volunteers could not be entrusted to carry out the work. They desired a centralized, hierarchically organized and professionalized agency. Quakers, however, committed to volunteerism, more democratic in their orientation and rooted in neighborhood life, opposed centralization and looked to cooperation among volunteers as a means of implementing charity organization. The importance of Quaker support, if the agency was to be successful, and threats on the part of the managers of the GRS that they would not cooperate resulted in a decentralized structure.

The final plan was presented at a public meeting held June 13, 1878, at St. George’s Hall. The committee report, delivered by D. Otis Kellogg, an Episcopal clergyman, noted that Philadelphia was behind “no other . . . as regards the number and excellence of its voluntary societies for charitable relief,” but that benevolence was misdirected because agencies acted without “concert of action.” If benevolence was to operate efficiently and effectively, it was necessary that the entire city be covered by a plan of visitation to facilitate the use of “more disciplinary methods.” The committee proposed formation of an agency that would not administer relief from its own funds but would serve existing charities by investigating all applicants for relief and by maintaining centralized case records. The agency’s primary purposes, the proper relief of deserving cases and the suppression of fraud, deception, and street begging, were similar to those of the GRS.

38 Diary, entry for Nov. 22, 1894, recalling the founding of the SOC, Haverford College Library, Quaker Collection, Joshua L. Baily Papers (hereinafter cited as Baily Mss.).
The day-to-day work was to be conducted by ward associations located in each of the city's thirty-one political subdivisions. Each was to have its own board of directors, corps of friendly visitors, and membership. Each association was to hire a superintendent to maintain records, investigate relief applicants, communicate with other agencies and exercise general superintendence over "all the workings" of the ward associations.

Heading the agency was a central board composed of two delegates from each ward association (sixty-two persons) and representatives of selected agencies, including the presidents of the Board of City Trusts, Board of Guardians of the Poor, Board of Health, managers of the House of Correction and inspectors of the County Prison. The mayor was ex-officio president.

Not only was this organizational structure unwieldy, but it failed to take into account the degree to which residential segregation had developed in Philadelphia. One result was that ward associations were founded in those areas in which wealth was concentrated, such as the wards surrounding elite Rittenhouse Square, while associations were either not viable or not founded in poor areas of the city where need was greatest. Failure to adopt proposals for an agency that would create district offices centrally funded and administered, prevented because of Quaker opposition, had the result of undoing the purpose of city-wide coverage.

It also made organizing the SOC a major undertaking and was one factor accounting for its large membership. At the June 13, 1878, meeting, the composition of the "Commission to Organize the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendicancy" was announced. It began its work almost immediately, not dissolving until the official founding of the SOC on February 17, 1879, by which time several branches were in existence.

41 Twelve, or less than one-half of the city's thirty-one wards, accounted for 95.4 per cent of the SOC membership. These wards encompassed the neighborhoods described as elite by a student of Victorian Philadelphia. See E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class* (Chicago, 1971), 181-187, 193-195, 197-201, 264-265, 280-282. The largest single ward association was that located in the Eighth Ward which embraced wealthy Rittenhouse Square.

42 Minute Book, Commission on Organizing Charity, entries for June 24, 1878, and Feb. 17, 1879, SOC Papers; Minute Book, Commission on Organizing Charity, Executive Committee, entries for June 24, 1878, and Feb. 17, 1879, *ibid.*
Pointedly designed to be representative of the city’s relief system, although women and municipal welfare officials were not members, Quakers did not dominate the Commission to the degree they had dominated the initiating and planning groups. However, they still played an instrumental role.

Not all Commissioners actively helped to organize the new agency; some were chosen to lend prestige rather than energy to the endeavor. However, a band of dedicated and zealous workers emerged. It included Joshua L. Baily, chairman of the Commission executive committee and later SOC president; Nelson Evans; Phillip C. Garrett; Samuel Huston; William W. Justice; Benjamin Shoemaker, later SOC Treasurer. All of these men were Quakers. They solicited the support of their fellow Friends, who proved to be a responsive audience. One result was that Quakers were represented on ward boards and in the corps of friendly visitors in a ratio disproportionate to their numbers in the general population. Of the directors for whom religious affiliation was ascertained, 19.8 per cent were Friends, and of visitors, 29.4 per cent. Quaker organizers of the SOC also used their positions on charitable boards to win agencies’ cooperation with the SOC. Quaker-dominated agencies, such as the soup societies, were more likely, both formally and in practice, to support the SOC than were non-Quaker charities because of the value Quakers attached to charity work. However, the reason why scientific philanthropy was to them a palatable reform was because it was socially conservative.

Friends had long belonged to Philadelphia’s wealthy elite. One authority has found that of the 365 nineteenth-century Philadelphia Quakers in his sample, for whom data about wealth were available, twenty left estates valued at more than $500,000; of these, ten were millionaires, including SOC president Joshua L. Baily. Another sixty-one left estates worth between $100,000 and $500,000. Friends attributed their prosperity to their adherence to caution, honesty, diligence, thrift, and avoidance of debt, principles of economic behavior which were enforced by their Discipline and by Meeting. The reverse was that the poor were poor because of their failure to cultivate the economic virtues. This linkage of economic

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status to personal morality meant that Friends viewed economic questions, such as poverty, through a rigid moralism. Joshua L. Baily, for example, blamed unemployment on liquor.

Baily was born in Philadelphia on June 27, 1828, a descendant of a Quaker family that had emigrated to Pennsylvania in 1684. He attended Friends’ schools until the age of sixteen when he entered the dry goods business. Baily’s firm went bankrupt during the Civil War due to his inability to collect southern notes. However, he paid his debts by selling some of his extensive real estate holdings and successfully re-entered business. A devout Orthodox Gurneyite Quaker, Baily served on the boards of several Quaker charities. At the age of twenty-two he began his active philanthropic life by joining the Society for the Employment and Instruction of the Poor, a poor relief agency. In 1851 he joined the Society to Alleviate the Miseries of Public Prisons whose members were required to regularly visit and counsel prisoners.  

An ardent advocate of prohibition, Baily founded the Model Coffee House, located at 15th and Market Streets, near the new City Hall construction site, to offer workers an alternative to saloons. He served as chairman of the State Temperance Committee of Pennsylvania.

Given Baily’s piety and his bankruptcy during the Civil War, his linkage of economic disaster to sin is puzzling. No doubt personality dynamics affected his economic analysis. However, his viewpoint was not idiosyncratic. The nineteenth-century equation of sin and poverty, when carried to its logical conclusion, implied that the 1873 depression was God’s punishment for societal sins. Many religious conservatives believed this to be the case. Rejecting impersonal social and economic forces as a cause of the depression, their theological premises led them to search for human agents of evil, who could be easily found among the allegedly conspiratorial


ranks of corrupt politicians, greedy speculators, foreign agitators, liquor manufacturers and even professional beggars and tramps. Concern about lack of faith, materialism, intemperance, crime, slums, corruption in business and politics heightened.46

Devout conservative Christians held themselves responsible for the growth of these evils. The innocent poor, for example, suffered because of Christians’ failure to fulfill commandments to be charitable. Consequently, charities based on religious impulses proliferated early during the depression. However, Christians had also sinned by allowing pauperism to spread. Consequently, at the same time that religious imperatives caused the devout to redouble their charitable work, they believed that indiscriminate almsgiving was also sinful. The result was to reinforce distrust of agencies, like soup societies, which offered relief en masse. If Christians were to be truly charitable, it could only be through personalized benevolence that eradicated pauperism by uplifting the poor.

Philadelphia Quakers participated in this search for a truly Christian charity, and many eagerly supported the SOC. Unfortunately, their perspectives on charity were limited by their class, their moralism and the charitable practices to which they were accustomed. Quakers failed to recognize that many were poor because work was not available, or because they had not been given the vocational and work skills necessary for an industrial society. Friends also failed to recognize that many employed workers received barely subsistence wages. Opposed to workers’ demands for the eight-hour day, minimum wage scales, and the right to organize and strike, Friends were unready to accept alternatives to existing industrial practices that would have enabled workers to live in dignity and comfort. Despite the stresses on their charities, Quakers did not recognize that an urban, industrialized society required social insurance and other economic security programs on a wholesale, rather than retail, basis. Imbued with a rigid moralism, they harshly judged other groups.

Although more liberal than the rabid Social Darwinists, who would have left the “unfit” to die altogether, and motivated by a

genuine desire to be charitable, Philadelphia Quakers active in the SOC ended up supporting a conservative, backward-looking program, one which was repressive toward the poor. It was not until a younger generation, responsive to the sweep of Progressivism, recognized the failure of moral reform to address social and economic causes of poverty that the Philadelphia Quaker community rediscovered its heritage of creative and innovative social service.

Philadelphia

Julia B. Rauch