

THE DANGERS OF PERIODIZATION LABEL SCHEMES

IN THE GILDED AGE UNITED STATES:

DON'T FORGET THE LADIES

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I dedicate my thesis to my family and friends who kept me focused all of these years.

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ABSTRACT

Scholars have neglected to study the impact of women of the Gilded Age from 1865 until the outbreak of World War I in 1917 because of their uncritical acceptance of periodization labels that have maintained unintended stereotypes and reputations of the era. Despite efforts by revisionist historians in the recent decades to study women in historical periods such as wartime or civil rights eras, very little comprehensive research has focused specifically on the role of women in this economic, male-dominated era. This neglect has silenced the voices of women who influenced political, social, and economic developments of the United States as the country advanced into a modern industrialized nation. This study argues for a shift in the labeling scheme in historical academia to create a comprehensive recognition of the significance of women in the Gilded Age. This challenge will be supported by analyzing women's influence in society, economics, and politics beyond the traditional roles as municipal housekeepers and maternal guardians from 1865-1917.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: A HISTORICAL PROBLEM

Historians must make frequent decisions regarding the inclusion of historical information based on the significance of the person or the events under study. Undeniably, historians need to omit countless people and events in their decision-making process to present the past in a meaningful and accessible way. Consequently, traditional history presents a “top down” presentation of “great men” and dominant political leaders that define the political and economic development of countries and eras. Recently, historians have been slowly including the contributions of women in various periods of history, such as wartime eras and modern civil rights movements, to develop a gender-inclusive portrayal of the past. However, there are still gaps in the history continuum that are glaringly uncomfortable; scholars have not done enough to illuminate women authentically at the turn of the nineteenth century in the United States.

The current body of Gilded Age scholarship tangentially and superficially explores women in the central areas of society: politics, economics, and societal development. However, the research presents women in an exclusive discussion to compensate for past exclusions such as DuBois and Hamlin or focuses separately on women in certain areas such as women in labor (e.g., Ciani, Kannenberg, Kessler-Harris, Vapnek) or women and education (e.g., Cheney, Clifford, Leroux, Madigan, Sohn). Furthermore, scholarship focuses heavily on narrowly categorized groups of women, such as women who contributed to the suffrage movement and the Nineteenth

Amendment (e.g., Garland, Giddings, Griffith, Harper, May, Sherr) or women whose maternalistic efforts focused towards reform such as Hull Houses and Jane Addams. Moreover, recent popular history focuses on scandalous and sensational women in the fringes of society (e.g. Ignoffo on Sarah Winchester, or Slack, Sparkes, or Wallach about Hetty Green). Therefore, the inclusion of women in historical and scholarly research is incomplete, creating a misleading portrayal of the role of women, specifically at the turn of the century in the United States.

In her 2000 “Presidential Address” for the *Society for Historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, Elisabeth Israels Perry argues that part of the problem with the study of women in the Gilded Age is periodization. In her essay, “Men are from the Gilded Age, Women are from the Progressive Era,” she suggests historians allocate women to the “Progressive Era” perpetuating the stereotypes of women’s activism (Perry 43). In her essay, Perry argues that research of women focused on the late 1800s relegates women to their domestic role of social work and justice (Perry 29). This suggests that women were self-interested social reformers with little or no role in the shaping of society, politically or economically; women only expressed their value in the world of maternal nurturing or “municipal housekeeping” (Perry 31).

The stark exclusion of women in business, economic success, and education is grossly evident; discussion is limited to only a few paragraphs in the modern student textbook and largely neglected in scholarly research. In contrast, the study of the Gilded Age focuses intensely on men who ruthlessly engaged in big business and created economic empires. These Captains of Industry such as Andrew Carnegie, John D.

Rockefeller, and J.P. Morgan illuminate stereotypes suggesting that women were insignificant in the developing of the United States into a modern economic society.

Thesis Statement

The current labeling scheme of periodization of the United States from 1870-1915 creates a fragmented historiography that excludes women from historical memory. This study suggests that scholars and professional historians omit the significant contributions of women as a class because these contributions do not naturally promote the current stereotype associated with Gilded Age studies. Scholars are susceptible to periodization labeling limitations; they have uncritically accepted traditional labeling systems. This has created a great man narrative, focusing on the industrial statesmen who dominated the development of modern United States through industrialization and economic exploitation.

This study hopes to add to the historical discussion regarding women in the Gilded Age by illuminating limitations of the current periodization scheme. Furthermore, this study intends to incorporate a discussion of women's contributions to society within the Gilded Age to reveal that the period from 1870-1915 was a period of progressive modern reform holistically. Through an analysis of contemporary newspaper articles, journal and diary entries of prominent women, and scholarly research, a more inclusive appreciation of women in Gilded Age society can be formed that will argue women were integral members of a more progressive society at the close of the Nineteenth Century.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROBLEMS OF LABELS AND THE GILDED AGE

In 1983, Neil Harris argued that historical periods develop reputations over time: this is no less true for the Gilded Age in American History (Harris 1). When Mark Twain coined the phrase the “Gilded Age,” he inadvertently created a label that defines the last three decades of the nineteenth century (Twain, *Gilded Age*). Although coined by Twain as a political criticism of Civil War reconstruction, historians commandeered the phrase to characterize the last thirty years of the nineteenth century (Harris 8). Through the connotation of “gilded,” Twain depicted the image of an America in turmoil shrouded by the thin gold gilding of American wealth enjoyed by a small percentage of society (Twain, *Gilded Age*). Historians amplified the Gilded Age as an era of contradictions: the United States healed from the destruction of the Civil War and emerged as a global superpower. Consequently, the *laissez-faire* society grappled with new social problems never dealt with by American citizens. Harris argues, “by the 1930s the Gilded Age had become, for a whole generation, the symbol of a national loss of innocence” (12). Historical memory depicts the era as an age of corrupt politics and epic battles between government and individuals. The country faced an explosion of poverty and mass tenements in large urban centers juxtaposed against the wealthy elite who lived in gilded luxury and extreme wealth.

Furthermore, the United States experienced an eruption of modern technology and innovation. This period underwent the explosion of scientific discovery that clashed with the resurgence of religion as a response to a rapidly transforming society. Furthermore, the explosion of immigrants from Central and Western Europe migrating to new frontier in the west created new possibilities for the common *man* to chase the illusory “American Dream.” This era witnessed the rise of new corporate structures and a modern economy based on a capitalistic consumer culture. Corporate leaders pushed the boundaries of modern economics, created new rules, and conquered new challenges that pushed the U.S. into a new century. However, these leaders also manipulated the rules to benefit them leading to accusations of corruption and greed.

As early as the 1930s, historians, such as Mathew Josephson started debating whether these men were celebrated “captains of industry” or treacherous “robber barons” who manipulated and destroyed the American dream (Josephson, *Robber Barons*). Harris argues “connotations of corruption, reaction... high living and excessive expenditures... plutocracy and popular misery,” taint the Gilded Age in modern scholarship (Harris 9). Richard John recounts that in 1914, David J. Lewis, a Congressman from Maryland argued:

It is a notorious fact that since the Civil War the history of our country has not been the narrative of social institutions, but the stirring story of the gigantic achievements of individuals in the domain of private finance. It was easier to remember a half-dozen of this era’s financiers than to recall the names of the President of the United States. (John, “Gilders” 476)

Harris argues that the reputation of the Gilded Age has been a challenge to restore and has only been moderately successful by studying individual people and the development of technology with the transition to a modern United States (Harris 14).

There is No Such Thing as a “Gilded Age.”

Historian Rebecca Edwards argued that the term Gilded Age covers the “last third of the nineteenth century or thereabouts” (Edwards, “Politics” 463). This vague description reveals that there is no consistency or agreement regarding the periodization label. Elizabeth Israels Perry is not the first to challenge the periodization and labeling of the Gilded Age: she joins a long, unresolved discussion. In 2006, historians debated this topic in *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*. For example, in his commentary on periodization, Schneirov posits that the Gilded Age did not begin in 1877 as is traditionally accepted by mainstream historians and textbooks: instead, Schneirov argues that the demarcation for the start of the Gilded Age is four years earlier and focused on northern commercialization, the fiscal crisis of 1873, and the democratic presidential victory ushering a new political era (Schneirov 207-210). Coincidentally, this is also when Mark Twain famously coined the term Gilded Age in his political satire (Twain, *Gilded Age*). This lack of consistency creates a challenge to the rehabilitation of the Gilded Age since there is no consensus amongst historians regarding the defining dates for study. Other periodization schemes create challenges to the discussion regarding chronology; for example, the Victorian era spans several mainstream periods from the 1830s to the early 1900s. Furthermore, while historians use Victorian to

describe cultural attitudes and behaviors (specifically for women), historians reject this label for U.S. history in general (Ignoffo 1).

Additionally, some historians have suggested the Gilded Age does not exist. For instance, Richard John from Columbia University compares advancements during the Gilded Age to those of the Progressive Era and challenges how and what historians consider progressive during either period. Consequently, John argues that industrial modernization, as well as political and economic advancements, do not support the negative connotation associated with the reputation of the Gilded Age. Instead, John argues that the developments during this era are revolutionary and significantly far reaching for modern society (John, "Gilders" 474-475). Rebecca Edwards agrees that the term Gilded Age is not accurate because the term indicts the businessmen who amassed fortunes during the development of a modern United States and justifiably took advantage of the lack of restrictions on industry at the time (Edwards, "Politics" 463).

Furthermore, John argues that an analysis of the philanthropic activity of the era reveals "late nineteenth century businesspeople may well have been more civic-minded...[because] they invested their money in the United States," creating the opportunity for economic, industrial, and political growth (John, "Gilders" 477). In support of John's argument, Edwards concludes that by focusing specifically on the accumulation of wealth by the elite class, the term does not include the grassroots and intellectual movements by varied social classes and groups that developed during the period (Edwards, "Politics" 463). Moreover, Robert Paynter suggests that from the reconstruction after the American Civil War beginning in 1865 until approximately 1914

and the outbreak of WWI, this country experienced significant urban development growth and a reorganization of class stratification, as well as improved race and gender relations.

Therefore, labels for other eras are misnomers also: for example, Reconstruction focuses on Southern political policies solely; however, the results of Radical Republican reform in the south from 1865-1877 failed to suppress southern planter class authority or genuinely reconstruct society in a meaningful way for newly freed slaves. Furthermore, Reconstruction incorrectly suggests there is very little industrial or social development in the northern region of the United States until the twentieth century despite studies that reveal otherwise (Paynter 776-778). Consequently, when the labels Reconstruction or Gilded Age are replaced with something more hopeful such as Democratic Experiment, the last thirty years of the nineteenth century are brimming with progress and innovation: this recognition reshapes the perception of the United States and develops a more holistic, authentic analysis of the country in this period (John, "Elongating" 110-112).

Nevertheless, Richard John concedes that his suggestion to relabel the era the Democratic Experiment seems inadequate since there was very little notable political progress regarding the federal government or the expansion of inclusive democratic practices for women or minority groups despite the passage of three new Constitutional amendments (John, "Gilders" 479). Consequently, without consensus, it is more challenging to analyze the significance of gender roles in the Gilded Age since it is unclear when exactly the Gilded Age was and which women should be included in the analysis.

CHAPTER 3

THE PROBLEM IS PERPETUATED IN MODERN EDUCATION

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 65.9% of students in the U.S. enroll in college after high school (Norris 1). Of the approximately 66% that do attend postsecondary education, only 8% major in the humanities and history disciplines (Townsend). Therefore, according to Robert Townsend, director of the American Historical Association “[survey courses] ...are often the only college-level history courses taken by those not majoring in history” (Townsend). This means that more than 90% of people in the U.S. will likely never pursue scholarship that includes a more holistic conversation about women. Scholars who are likely to include scholarship that more relevantly conveys women in the era are significantly limited. Therefore, high school and college survey classes inadequately analyze positive gender relations throughout history that leads to gender misconceptions in modern society, and contributes to gender gap issues today. The Gilded Age is one place where proper scholarship is lacking.

Education Expectations and Establishing Standards

An overview of Gilded Age history is typically taught in the eleventh grade (year three) of high school; the course consistently begins with a review of the democratic foundations of the United States (introduced in elementary civics lessons), and quickly progresses to the post-Civil War era emergence of a modern nation. Each state

curriculum is guided by state and national guidelines; these curriculum expectations influence the content of textbooks and resources used in classrooms within that state. A review of a representative sampling of seven state curriculum standards for High School social studies across the United States reveals a lack of authentic inclusion of women in the historical narrative during this study. Even though women are not blatantly omitted in the standards, the way the standards are written inadvertently excludes or creates a victim narrative for women and minority groups. This instruction becomes the foundational historical knowledge students possess about the world and their relationship to each other that could affect them outside of the classroom environment.

For example, in 1998, the State of California Department of Education published the eleventh grade U.S. history standards beginning with the end of Reconstruction into the twentieth century. In standards 11.2-3, the curriculum covers the rise of industrialization and the shift to an urban culture and religion; these are the only standards that encompass the Gilded Age period. Within the fourteen strands of content to focus on in these sweeping years, the standards never address women, and the standards clearly establish a ‘great man’ history by requiring a study of the presidents and notable men such as “William Graham Sumner, Billy Sunday... and Hiram Johnson” (California, Dept. of Education 48-49). The first mention of women is in standard 11.5 that deals with “cultural developments of the 1920s by requiring the analysis of the Nineteenth Amendment and the ‘changing role of women in society’” (California, Dept. of Education 49). Despite the expectation to study “change,” there is no foundational understanding of how women changed. Although never explicitly stated, this standard

suggests that women changed from a traditional (stereotypical) role of homemaker and mother into a political force through their political voice granted by the Amendment; but this suggests women played no significant role in the previous periods of history. The revised social studies framework, published in the summer of 2016, did not address the oversight of women's inclusion in the history continuum.

The California Department of Education is not singular in its presentation of women; various states across the nation fail to require meaningful and inclusive teaching of women in their curriculums. For example, according to the 2016 Florida statutes for public education, students will study the democratic principles of the country including a study of ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping that includes modern civil rights. In addition, within a list of units of study focused on character building, students will analyze "women's contributions to the United States" and a study of "kindness to animals" (Florida Statute 1003). However, there are no specific standards regarding what is meant by women's contributions or how this will be covered. Incidentally, there is also no detail of what is meant by "kindness to animals" either. Moreover, the phrasing "women's contributions to the United States" connotes an outside entity giving to the United States rather than an inclusive discussion of women within the development of the United States. Finally, this analysis is included as a sociological examination and is not respected within the history courses, specifically.

Most states, such as Massachusetts (Massachusetts, Dept. of Education) and New Jersey (New Jersey, Dept. of Education) use women's suffrage developments during the Progressive Era in the twentieth century as the first significant topic for women's

inclusion. For example, the Arizona U.S. history curriculum's first mention of women is a brief bullet point inquiring how civil rights issues, "such as Women's Suffrage and the 19th Amendment", influenced American society in the Progressive Era in the early twentieth century (Arizona, Dept. of Education 11-12). This narrow inclusion of women's rights is part of a detailed list of expectations for the study of minority rights even though women comprise half of the U.S. population. Conversely, the Ohio State U.S. history curriculum standards, published in 2013, make no mention of the role of women or women's issues in the state standards. In contrast, the standards include a unit on African American rights and the rights of immigrants in the Gilded Age (Ohio, Dept. of Education 15-24). This is a consistent pattern of state curriculums throughout the Midwestern region of the U.S.

The Texas State history curriculum treats women only slightly better. According to the published statement by the Texas Educational Agency, the goal of Texas curriculum is to ensure students understand "traditional historical points of reference... from 1877 to present" by "identify[ing] major characteristics" and "major eras in U.S. History," (Texas, Education Agency 1). To accomplish these goals, students will evaluate "significant individuals, events and time periods" and "analyze social issues affecting women, minorities, children, [and] ...describe the optimism of the many immigrants," from 1877 to 1898 (Texas, Education Agency 2). This curriculum standard seems to demean all women and ethnic groups as naïve and susceptible victims to the exploitive characteristics of the growing urban environment in searching for the American Dream. Furthermore, in Texas U.S. course history Standard 6, students are

required to “analyze the causes and effects of events” [of the 1920s] such as “...the changing role of women,” (Texas, Education Agency 3) suggesting the same beliefs as California standards that women were passive victims who acquired their political power and voice only after they were given suffrage by the Nineteenth Amendment.

New York state curriculum exacerbates this victim role more fully in social studies standard 11.4b, by requiring students learn how “the 14th and 15th amendments *failed* to address the rights of women” and “examine [how] the *exclusion* of women [led to] the subsequent struggle for voting and increased property rights” (New York, Dept. of Education 37). The emphasis on the word “failed” and “exclusion” highlights the stereotypical presentation of women as powerless victims focused internally on exclusive selfish needs. To combat this, the curriculum requires an examination of New York native Susan B. Anthony as a token study of women activism towards suffrage rights in the Nineteenth Century. This perspective is reiterated in standard 11.5b that studies how “rapid industrialization and urbanization created significant challenges and societal problems that were addressed by a variety of reform efforts” including “woman’s suffrage movement after 1900” (New York, Dept. of Education 38). This standard does acknowledge important women such as Jane Addams, who founded Hull House, and Margaret Sanger, who pushed for birth control and women’s reproductive rights in the early 1900s. However, this focus on specific women’s reform perpetuates both a focus on a great person concept and the Progressive Era approach to history suggested by Elizabeth Israels Perry. Despite the effort to include women’s issues, the standards for the Gilded Age notably excludes women in the authentic, holistic discussion of economy,

technology, and the emergence of modern American systems (New York, Dept. of Education 38-39).

Within the sampling of Social Science standards across the country, the lack of women in the standards provides a possible explanation why women are not naturally included within the historical narrative of the Gilded Age. This lack of discussion seems to stem from a lack of acknowledgement regarding the significant roles and contributions women, as a group. This lack of inclusion in the standards correlates to a lack of learning about women in the educational environment.

High School Social Science Classes as a Consequence

Halle Edwards reviewed the most popular high school history textbooks for US Advanced Placement History courses for *Prep Scholar*, an online resource center that focuses on resources for the advanced placement program for the National College Board. Edwards determined *American Pageant* by David Kennedy, Lizabeth Cohen, and Thomas Bailey is the most popular textbook in U.S. history classrooms because of its readability and narrative prose presentations (Edwards *Prep Scholar*). This is reinforced by National Geographic Learning, the parent company of Cengage Learning, who claims “the *American Pageant*, the best-selling AP US history text, is a clear and approachable book for any student studying American History” (National Geographic Learning). Furthermore, the National College Board website promotes *American Pageant* as an approved and recommended textbook for preparation for the SAT exam. Cengage Publications published the sixteenth edition of the textbook in 2016 to align with the new

advanced placement framework released in 2015. Moreover, Daniel Cohen discovered that *American Pageant* is one of the more generally used textbooks in survey history classes in community colleges (Cohen 1410). Although it is unknown how many students use an edition of *American Pageant* in history classrooms today, a brief search of *American Pageant* online reveals that various editions of this textbook are included in hundreds of high school syllabi across the country, both in print and digitally. Since various state curriculum standards influence the content of textbooks such as *American Pageant* in order to be marketable to those state educational agencies, it is reasonable to suggest that the curriculum in *American Pageant* is a fair representation of curriculum introduced to students across the country.

In the thirteenth edition of the textbook found online, chapters 22-27 focus on the years that represent the Gilded Age. In the five chapters that focus 1865 to 1915, the woman's story is essentially silent. Despite the chapter title, "Political Paralysis in the Gilded Age," chapter 23 focuses on struggling male farmer in the great western frontier. The chapter tells the story of those battling against the encroachment of corporate takeovers and the expansion of the railroad snaking across the landscape of America and this battle uniting the country into one national entity (502). The battle of religion versus science and technology underlay a cultural discussion of immigration and the new modern American identity (Kennedy Ch. 22-27).

What is negligently missing from the textbook are the contributions of women in any significant way. The minimal inclusion of women in the introduction of history to students across the United States perpetuates the lack of scholarship of women in the era.

As students become scholars in higher learning environments, it is unlikely they consider that the story presented to them was incomplete and would not consider a need for further research. For example, in the same chapter 23, a word search for the words “women”, “woman,” “female,” “girl,” or “lady” found exactly four matches total. Furthermore, the text did not discuss women directly, but rather the hardship on Chinese male immigrants because they lacked female companionship, “Without women or families, they were marooned in a land where they neither were wanted nor wanted to be” (Kennedy 514). The textbook went on to clarify that “women of good repute rarely made the passage. Of the very few Chinese women who ventured to California at this time, most became prostitutes. Many of them had been deceived by the false promise of honest jobs” (Kennedy 516). This suggests that early pioneer women who helped establish the west coast region were prostitutes who were exploited sexually and financially. This is a gross misrepresentation of women in the region; this dismisses women such as Sarah Winchester, Caroline Livermore, Mammy Pleasant, and Julia Morgan who helped figuratively and literally build the west coast California region. This marginalizes women such as Mary Atkins and Susan Tolman Mills who established Mills College, providing higher educational opportunities for women as one of the topped ranking colleges in the United States both then and today.

American Pageant continues its study of the Gilded Age with chapter 24, “Industry Comes of Age: 1865-1900.” Interestingly, the textbook challenges the traditionally accepted years of the era by expanding the period of study to match Paynter’s argument for the Gilded Age beginning at the end of the Civil War rather than

seventeen years later as most historians suggest. However, chapter 24 begins with the statement, “As the nineteenth century ended, observers were asking “Why are the best men not in politics? One answer was that they were being lured away... talented men ached for profits, not the presidency. They dreamed of controlling corporations not the Congress” (528). Despite a more authentic year span of study, this chapter epitomizes the stereotype of the Gilded Age with discussions of the industrial boom and the role of man in the economy.

What is clearly missing is *her* role in the American Dream. This chapter attempts to include women in the conversation with reference to “women” eighteen times in twenty-eight pages of text. This chapter discusses women moving from “the confines of her home to industry” as “number please” women [who were] attracted from the stove to the switchboard” and replaced male operators because “[men’s] profanity shocked patrons” (539). This first mention of women immediately perpetuates this role of women in a shifting domestic role and caricatures the Victorian gender stereotype. The chapter highlights women in the factory as “cheap labor” with children and destitute farm-fugitive families and women who were radically pictorialized as “hello girls” with new social opportunities and a “romantic ideal of the age” (547-548). Regarding social development and the contribution of women, the textbook posits:

For middle-class women, careers [as switchboard operators, stenographers, and “hello girls” in magazines] often meant delayed marriages and smaller families. Most women workers, however, toiled neither for independence nor for glamour, but out of economic necessity...

they earned less, as wages for 'women's jobs' were usually set below those for men. (Kennedy 548)

This depiction diminishes the significant role of women in education both as educators and as students. Further, it portrays women as domestic martyrs trapped in an exploitive economic system who sacrificed their proper roles as wife and mother in society to work. On page 550, under an illustration of a "Gibson Girl" the caption states "the image of the 'Gibson Girl' inspired new standards of female fashion as the twentieth century opened, and came to symbolize women's growing independence and assertiveness" (550).

However, the text fails to articulate what exactly women are experiencing regarding "independence and assertiveness" beyond a new fashion trend. The chapter discusses only one actual individual woman: "Mother Jones" is the "fiery" agitator for women, nominally participating in labor strikes with minimal success or respect in the closing decade of the century (554).

It is not until chapter 25, the formidable textbook genuinely infuses women into the discussion of the development of US society; however, the inclusion of women justifies Elisabeth Perry's statements that women only found their place in society as exploited victims or fierce domestic reformers in the Progressive Era. Women are first introduced in context of American consumerism, "urban middle-class shoppers... provided urban working-class jobs, many of them for women" creating cyclic job opportunities that stereotype American consumerism (559). However, there is no discussion regarding the power of consumerism and the economic revolution that occurred from the female consumer demands of new innovative goods, technology, and

services that created a demand based economy and pushed the industrial revolution into the twentieth century.

The first female mentioned by name is in reference to a *fictional* character. The text discusses Carrie Meeber in Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* as a woman swallowed up and exploited by the gilded urban life; this novel depicted women as vulnerable, consumer creatures preyed upon by a treacherous capitalistic society (560). When the textbook discusses women again, middle class women have become maternal reformers "deeply dedicated to uplifting the urban masses" (568). For example, Jane Addams "never bore children of her own [but] she 'mothered' hundreds of youngers" in hull houses and settlement houses (568). The implication that Addams's efforts provided her with surrogate motherhood overshadows the powerful impact of female activism in developing modern society. Furthermore, the rest of the page discusses how these projects became "centers of women's activism and social reform" (568). Women like, "Black-clad Florence Kelley, a guerrilla warrior in the urban jungle... [who was] armed with insights of socialism and endowed with the voice of an actress" (568) used these attributes as weapons to fight the terrible injustices of exploitation of the fairer sex and weaker members of society. "These reformers vividly demonstrated the truth that the city was a frontier of opportunity for women, just as the wilderness had been for men" (569).

The book clarifies that these new opportunities included white-collar jobs for white women in retail and social work. Immigrant women found factory work in garment industries, earning "enough money to... enter a new urban world of sociability- [including] excursions to amusement parks [and] Saturday night dances with the "fellas,"

(569). Presented this way, the textbook suggests that these reform efforts were nothing more than women's selfish, opportunistic attempts to develop careers for themselves to earn entertainment money. The book fails to illuminate the dangerous social deterioration of the urban regions or analyze any true contributions or lasting reform by women in the United States. Instead, the textbook credits the men in the journalism and writing industry as the "apostles of reform" (consequently ignoring women writers and journalists such as Ida Tarbell) (579). The book argues this reform includes Dreiser's work that portrays his "realistic narrative of a poor working girl" (579); of course, this portrayal of realism is his heroine's blatant "disregard for prevailing moral standards" through the creation of a morally loose woman who engages in inappropriate sexual liaisons and develops a stage career (585).

The next subtitle in the chapter is "The New Morality." This section launches into a tirade of Victoria Woodhull, "Pure-minded Americans... championed by... Comstock," needed to resist the shenanigans of the "real flesh and blood" Woodhull sisters (586). In this portrayal, the textbook presents the Woodhull sisters as dangerous sinners blamed for the rise of divorces, abortions, and an increase in pornography and drug abuse. While referenced as a "stockbroker" and "feminist propagandist" the message is that these women were inappropriate deviants ushering "sex o'clock in America" (586), corrupting society through their behavior rather than presenting a message of these women as political reformers and suffrage champions that represent a society seeking social reform. By acknowledging these women as stockbrokers and activists within the context of being immoral, the text inadvertently suggests their actions

in these areas as negative and inappropriate also. The book never mentions these women's bid for political offices, their reform work for protection of exploited women, their integral role in the socialist movement in the United States, nor their economic success as stockbrokers with other women such as Hetty Green.

The discussion of women includes a brief account of growing divorce rates, a shrinking family size due to the hardships of urban environments, and the woman's role as moral gatekeeper of her pathetic family in a hostile world. However, the book does not analyze the story behind *why* divorce rates were climbing during an era codified by Victorian values. Despite mentioning that one out of every three college graduates were a woman by 1880 (576), the textbook does not discuss what became of these women, their contribution to society, their new professions as teachers, or that the financiers of many ivy league schools, women's colleges, and institutions of higher learning were women such as Olivia Sage.

The section names only six women, each earning less than a sentence for some- and up to a paragraph for others. As suffragists and radical reformers, they throw off their "feminine frills" (in reference to Gilman) and their campaign is granted the right to vote to "fix" the family structure and halt the growing divorce rates (586). The textbook describes these few women with blatant aggressive and derogatory connotations: for example, Elizabeth Cady Stanton is described as a "fiery feminist," (588), Susan B. Anthony and her supporters are depicted as "spitfires" (589), and the textbook uses "militant" to describe Francis Willard and Carrie Nation (590).

According to this textbook, it would be reasonable for young students to conclude that woman's only major accomplishment was suffrage rights in the western region of the United States where populist supporting men were willing to give her the vote in exchange for her courage in the wild frontier (582-586). Her story is not included again until the Progressive Era at the opening of the twentieth century. Even so, her story is limited to her role as a moral crusader in the twentieth century who the book blamed for the prohibition debacle. According to the book, woman's only great achievements are the development of reform houses, some factory reform laws, and suffrage as a defense of her place within the home (669-670).

However, these reform efforts undermined the classical Victorian values of womanhood; she defied her place within society by daring to demand her place at the polling booths. She audaciously took away men's alcohol to protect morality in society after she destroyed morality to begin with by trying to become more independent. The chosen adjectives used to describe women connote these women as defiant outliers engaged in scandalous behavior rather than adhering to their proper roles within society. Furthermore, what little is included in these textbooks is potentially detrimental to gender studies because of its limitations in depth and scope and the perpetuation of the female exploiter and victim. With high schools failing to provide a balanced history, the burden falls to the university system as a last possible chance to correct the narrative through US History survey courses.

The *Promise* of Higher Learning

As part of the general education requirements for the 65% of students who will move on to a higher institute of education, Daniel J. Cohen, assistant history professor at George Mason University, analyzed U.S. History course syllabi from universities throughout the United States. He found that over 90% of universities use a textbook in their courses and supports that “textbooks are the single most important written resource through which college students learn about the past,” (Cohen 1405). According to Cohen, the most widely used college textbook in 2005 was *The American Promise* written by Stanford professor James L. Roark, et. al.; this textbook is utilized in more than 12% of university US survey history courses and in over 17% of community college US survey courses (Cohen 1410).

According to the authors of *The American Promise*, the objective of the text is to “write a comprehensive, balanced account of American history, [by focusing on] the public arena... to show how Americans confronted key issues of their day and created far-reaching historical change” (Rourke preface). A brief survey of the table of contents reveals that the chapters that cover 1860-1915 span chapters 16 through 21. It is also apparent that the authors of the textbook grappled with the challenges of periodization. Instead of one comprehensive chapter that spans the period under discussion, the authors split into themes, beginning with Reconstruction history in the South treated as a separate topic; however, unlike most historians, Roark uses a different period demarcation by analyzing the era from 1865 (end of the Civil War) to 1900 and the opening of the

Progressive Era. Roark further breaks the country down into regions and themes to evaluate the unique demands of each region more relevantly.

Roark's treatment of women seems promising at first glance because there are inclusions of women in several places, such as a section called "Gender, Race, and Politics" and "Women's Activism" in chapter 18, overall titled "Business and Politics in the Gilded Age, 1865-1900," (Roark TOC). Further, in the chapter, "Dissent, Depression, and War, 1890-1900" there is a section dedicated to "Women's Activism." However, a deeper analysis reveals that this textbook still has problems; specifically, women are often separated into separate sections, treating them as separate spheres of social, political, and economic development in the United States.

Throughout the chapters dedicated to the late 1800s, Roark and his fellow contributors attempt to portray a balanced history. For example, he dedicates a chapter to the plight of the Native Americans at war with the US federal government. Within the chapter, he includes phrases to acknowledge women and families, "Geronimo's band of thirty-three Apaches, including women and children, managed to elude troops... fought two thousand soldiers to a stalemate" (547). Furthermore, there is a discussion of women ghost dancers that analyzes the vital role women had in protecting native culture (547). In this same section, there is a paragraph about Geronimo's sister Lozen who is described as "strong as a man, braver than most, and cunning in strategy" (548). However, Roark makes a point of revealing that Lozen never married after her brother's death; while this is an attempt to illuminate Lozen's strength and independence, it is a subtle reminder of the gender role expectations for women (547-548).

In the following section on the development of the western region of the United States and homesteading, Roark recognized women again through an inclusion of quotes regarding their experiences in the west. These memories include the challenges of travel and survival in the harsh, unsettled western climates.

For women on the frontier, obtaining simple daily necessities such as water and fuel meant backbreaking labor. Out on the plains where water was scarce, women often had to trudge to the nearest creek or spring.
(Roark 557)

Roark even includes a two-page activity section for students to analyze primary documents highlighting the women's experience in the West (558-559). While it is refreshing to see women acknowledged in the settlement of the West, the text emphasizes their domestic roles; they are helpers to the men who are responsible for the true settling of the land. Women are never mentioned in the greater political development of the region such as their participation in the Grange or Populist politics.

In the most disappointing section of the textbook, the authors analyze the development of industrial America and the rise of statesmen in the Gilded Age. The first mention of a woman in this section is in a two-page section about Alva Vanderbilt's ostentatious spending on her house as an example of gilded luxury and spoiled personality (574-575) without a single mention of Vanderbilt's philanthropic efforts and charities. The portrayal of Vanderbilt is a spoiled detached matriarch instead of the strong, independent woman represented in the upper-class elite of society (Stuart 72). In contrast, Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas

Edison, and J.P. Morgan are each dedicated a full section to analyze their business successes and their impact on society (Roark 573-587). Moreover, the section does not discuss important women of finance such as Hetty Green, despite that she was a contemporary equal to the great statesmen of the era; she contributed to the development of the stock market and the prosperity of the nation as well as challenged stereotypical beliefs of women in economic endeavors.

Whereas women were not deemed relevant enough for inclusion in the discussion of the economic developments of this country, they are given a section on women's political activism instead. The chapter analyzes greater political challenges of the era including political corruption, the fight for the silver standard and the emergence of third party political groups such as the Populists and the Mugwumps (590-598). However, in this conversation, there is no recognition of women's involvement in politics such as women's growing influence in western states, or women, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton or Victoria Woodhull, who ran for political office despite their disenfranchisement. Instead, the text dedicated approximately a page to women's efforts towards suffrage, the emergence of women's civic clubs, and the women's temperance crusade (588-590). In one paragraph, "Editor and journalist Ida M. Tarbell's 'History of the Standard Oil Company,' ...largely shaped public's harsh view of Rockefeller" (578) giving women journalists a minor voice. Even when acknowledging Tarbell's excellent journalistic skills, the section focuses heavily on the impact her work had on a man. Furthermore, Ida B. Wells is included as a "courageous black editor [who] launched an anti-lynching movement and revealed the devastation of lynching and rampant racism in the Jim Crow

south” (588). Both female writers are included in response to their role in a greater analysis of a man instead of being included in a larger discussion about yellow journalism and muckraking journalism.

In chapter 19, Roark discusses the plight of the working class in the US because of industrial expansion using immigrant labor in a booming urban region. “By 1900, almost 75% of the new immigrants were young, single men” (608). While this is undeniably true, the chapter continues into a several pages discussion regarding immigration; the text argues the influence of female immigrants was minimal and traditional,

Women generally had less access to funds for travel and faced tighter family control. Because the traditional sexual division of labor relied on women’s unpaid domestic labor and care of the very young and the very old, women most often came to the United States as wives, mothers, or daughters, not as single wage laborers. Only among the Irish did women immigrants outnumber men by a small margin from 1871 to 1891. (Roark 608)

Immediately, the labor discussion focuses on men and minimizes the impact of women. Despite women’s significant roles in the textile industries and in the new growing white-collar industries, this quote relegates women into the traditional roles expected for women in society as wives and mothers rather than an integral part of the growing labor force in the United States. Roark deals with these topics later in the text, which is unique, compared to most textbooks; however, he misses the opportunity to challenge the

stereotypical presentation of women by separating the discussion. Only later, Roark recognizes that “in 1900 as many as 64% of working-class families relied on income other than the husband’s wages to make ends meet. The paid and unpaid work of women and children proved essential for family survival...” (616).

The highlight of this textbook occurs in the section regarding white-collar employment and the new role of women in an emerging social class. Roark is willing to acknowledge the duality of women in the work force and their challenge to the traditional stereotypes, “When white middle-class women entered offices... issues of class and gender clashed. Could a ‘lady’ work? And if she did, did her economic independence threaten men and marriage?” (618). Unfortunately, the textbook leaves these questions unanswered instead of exploring this topic on a deeper level. This topic needs more scholarship to understand the implications and influences of women in these new roles. Scholars need to further study to what extent family and marriages were altered based on these new opportunities. Instead of exploring this more deeply, the text switches to consumer culture and then into union organizations where women are conspicuously silent once more. The text largely undoes the conversation begun in the earlier chapter by focusing directly and ruthlessly on women in the “cult of domesticity,” and women’s place as maternal protectors of domestic respectability and reform (624).

In the last chapter about this era, Roark focuses on the close of the nineteenth century. The chapter begins with an anecdote of Frances Willard’s trip to a convention in Tennessee in 1892. Her purpose was to advocate for temperance and suffrage during the convention. Willard is portrayed as a zealot, ruthlessly focused on unsuccessful self-

serving reform. Although Roark suggests, “no American woman before her had played such a central role in a political movement” (639) this anecdote is detached from the ensuing discussion. The purpose for her inclusion is unclear except to have token recognition of women; instead, the text shifts to a lengthy analysis of the rise of third party politics in the United States with the Populist Movement. Throughout the chapter, women are once again silent in the main narrative; women are included in small vignettes that highlight certain specific women, such as Frances Willard, Mary Elizabeth Lease, and Nellie Bly. However, Roark disconnects these vignettes from the larger discussion of political reform the domestic battles between labor unions and corporate power houses even though women were integral in these labor disputes and resulting confrontations (639-651).

Roark attempts to balance this presentation with a one-page discussion regarding women’s activism in the Gilded Age. Roark states, “like men, women sought political change and organized to promote issues central to their lives, campaigning for temperance and woman suffrage” (652) indicating these issues were not important to the male population of this country and women ignored issues that were critical to the larger country, such as labor and political disputes. He offers a brief discussion regarding the activism of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and National American Woman’s Suffrage Association (NAWSA), ruthlessly focusing on suffrage and prohibition as the only interests of women in the US during this era. Even though the text acknowledges NAWSA membership exceeded two hundred thousand members, the

significance of this grassroots movement and the commentary of social problems leading to alcohol issues are lacking any development.

Even accepting this narrow focus, the discussion is superficial, focusing on “home protection” issues. Suffrage is three analytical paragraphs regarding the complex topic of suffrage; instead of tackling the deeper questions, the textbook discusses the rift between NWSA and AWSA in the 1880s without any context and undermines the deeper objectives of suffrage. WTCU is discussed as an effort for women to protect themselves from evil, drunk men diseased with alcoholism without context for these concerns and accusations. The opportunity for a richer and more meaningful discussion regarding why women demanded greater civil rights during this time, and their abilities to organize and engage in the greater political arena, is lost.

However, as Elizabeth Perry predicted, by chapter 21, Roark’s analysis of the Progressive Era reveal women find their significant voice as progressive reformers. The text launches into an exploration of the reform efforts and activism of women in all areas of social development including philanthropic enterprises. Women become grassroots activists for the rehabilitation of working women in exploitive textile industries; they are the protective and nurturing leaders of labor. Roark acknowledges talented, educated women who suddenly emerge as social and political leaders on a regional and national level who “encouraged women to put their talents to work in the service of society” (675-683). This sudden emphasis on women’s reform movements in this chapter underscores the stereotypes of both eras. Women who were singular or exceptional in the late 1800s suddenly become part of a greater community of proactive women in the preceding

decades. These topics reinforce Perry's accusation that women's inclusion evolves around municipal housekeeping and self-interested civic reform rather than meaningful contributions in the world of politics, economics, and finance from 1865 to 1900.

By analyzing the treatment of women in curriculum standards for the Gilded Age across the nation, it is not surprising that textbooks neglect women in their coverage. However, after evaluating the adopted curriculum within two leading textbooks at high school and college levels, it is notable that the scholars attempted to include women despite the lack of emphasis in legislative expectations. Unfortunately, the understanding of women in this era of history is inadequate from an early age and only minimally addressed in higher-level scholarship. Without a foundational appreciation for women in pivotal historical eras, it is likely that male and female students will find it difficult to anticipate that this era warrants further attention. This limits the ability to appreciate the importance of women in the Gilded Age and marginalizes their significance in the emergence of the U.S. as a modern political power. The next chapter will analyze key areas where stereotypes of the Gilded Age influenced historians to neglect women in their study of the era and will argue why women should be included in a holistic understanding of the era.

CHAPTER 4

DO NOT FORGET THE LADIES

Richard Benseel suggests that titles and labels are dangerous in historical scholarship: “Titles tell the reader what to expect... the author anticipates that expectation from the reader, they become a kind of sieve or filter when the author goes about gathering and synthesizing material for that text” (Benseel 481). Nancy F. Cott and Drew Gilpin Faust argue that historians cannot understand the past without looking at women and men together, including the differentiation between womanhood and manhood and masculinity and femininity. To do so, they suggest that history must re-conceptualize prevailing periodization and reassess preconceived stereotypes of history (Cott 3). While historians have attempted this through cultural studies such as a reevaluation of African American history in the United States, it is largely missing in other periods of history, specifically in the era of the Gilded Age.

For example, Cott and Faust point out prominent historical figures during the antebellum period and the Civil War, such as Harriet Tubman, suddenly disappear during the more masculine succeeding era. Only through a reevaluation of gender and periodization can a holistic and accurate portrayal of the past emerge (Cott 3). Historians such as Julie Des Jardins minimize women’s roles in other spheres of influence; for example, on the Gilder Lehrman Institute website, Des Jardin discusses “at the turn of the [twentieth] century there was a resurging impulse toward social and political reform (Des Jardins “Politics”). She continues to compare reform efforts in the

early twentieth century to similar efforts in the early nineteenth century, aggressively ignoring any activism or reform efforts in the Gilded Age. “By 1920 suffragists... succeed in winning formal political rights, just as other reformers had regulated monopolies, improved living conditions of immigrants, and checked the exploitative practices of industrialists” (Des Jardins “Politics”). By using the phrase “other reformers,” Des Jardins implies women were not involved in these reform efforts and their activism was limited only to suffrage. Des Jardins reinforces Perry’s accusation that women are only included in the reform discussion as municipal housekeepers seeking benefits to elevate their own status in society.

Despite Elizabeth Perry’s assertion that scholars use the Progressive Era to incorporate female engagement in the twentieth century, the label of Progressive Era is misleading regarding the root and progression of women’s activism. The progress of the twentieth century is the outcome of growth and success in the nineteenth century despite the obstacles and set backs of the Gilded Age. Nevertheless, the Progressive Era label honors a periodization scheme that allows inclusion of feminist activism while ignoring chronology. Ruth Crocker argues there was more progress in the latter half of the nineteenth century than in the twentieth century, “a three-decade process of feminization beginning in the 1870s was followed by a rather brutal process of de-feminization under the guise of ‘higher standards’ in the 1900s” (Crocker 244).

For example, New York University stopped admitting female undergraduates in the early 1900’s after a major increase in enrollment in the 1880s and 1890s, reflecting a national trend (Crocker 244). Furthermore, from 1880-1910, women organized and

managed philanthropic work and the advancement of higher learning institutions. The general historical narrative of the Gilded Age largely overlooks contribution to the development of the United States by women such as Olivia Slocum Sage and Helen Gould because the money came from a male dominated economy. Alice Kessler-Harris argues that women's union participation dropped drastically after 1902 (Kessler-Harris 92-93) providing another example of a lack of progress in labor activism. Furthermore, despite passages of protective legislation and anti-trust laws, administration failed to enforce these laws against corporate domination in either era including under the Roosevelt administration. Moreover, the narrow focus of reform via the Nineteenth Amendment ignores the controversial development of temperance legislation considered a feminist success in this same period or the successes of suffrage through state-by state campaigns in the close of the 1800s.

Rebecca Edwards challenges the current periodization scheme most directly in *New Spirits*; Edwards argues in favor of removing the Gilded Age label completely and calling the entire era an era of progress (Edwards, *New Spirits* 5). Historians should consider women's post-Civil War achievements in business development, innovative industrial expansion, and political expansion of power through legal rulings and interstate regulations as progressive developments. Edwards further argues that women's activism began long before their activities are credited, including the opening of Hull House in 1889 and the development of women's clubs throughout the 1880's. Suffrage was a controversial topic in the United States fifty years before the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment (Edwards, "Politics" 465). Edwards posits that the 1880s and early 1890s

were decades of great activism and political creativity including in the development of women's property and voting rights as forms of political activism. She further argues that the Progressive Era as it is defined now is a culminating point of a series of successes for activism that began during the Gilded Age, therefore the phrase has no legitimate role within the lexicon of history (Edwards, "Politics" 467-468).

Moreover, despite efforts in modern historical dialog to be mindful and inclusive of women, it is reasonable that historians must evaluate women's contributions regarding how they perpetuate the development of the discussion within the historical period. These decisions of who to include or omit seem to be influenced by the accepted stereotypes of the period; therefore, some women seem to be overlooked because of their "less feminine" qualities that do not conform to periodization stereotypes. For example, Susan B. Anthony is frequently included for her feminine pursuits of the ballot and as a suffrage activist; however, the narrative ignores her willingness to break the law, and her subsequent criminal record. Anthony's more extreme behaviors are downplayed, such as speeches and activities advocating for greater social revolution, or her international influence through the International Congress of Women (Harper 614-616).

Some scholars use periodization labels that suggest different eras, complicating the narrative. For example, in Mary Jo Ignoffo's biography of Sarah Winchester, she states Winchester's life spanned the Victorian Age, referencing the Queen of England's reign (Ignoffo 1). Scholars seem to use this adjective in reference to defining values and culture within the United States; but the use of "Victorian" is not as popular in defining eras in United States history, perhaps because of the Anglo-centric nature of the label in

an era of U.S. history that is creating a separate identity from its colonial roots. However, in classifying Winchester as part of the Victorian Age, Ignoffo minimizes Winchester's influence and role in Gilded Age studies. Furthermore, Ellen DuBois refers to the period as the postbellum period in her writings (DuBois *Through Women's Eyes*). This label uses the Civil War as a demarcating event; however, according to dictionary.com, the word antebellum is a reference generally used in the United States to address the southern US prior to the Civil War; therefore, using the word postbellum could be just as confusing as it addresses only southern issues after the war. Furthermore, postbellum is a reference to any period after any war and is therefore too generic to address U.S. history when considering the nature of war in the twentieth century.

Without consensus amongst historians regarding the overall periodization process, these different labels contribute to confusion and avoid addressing the problem of exclusion. For example, some of the most successful developments for women's equality occurred from 1865-1900. However, by 1905, new militant activists pushed out leaders from the late 1800s to the status of dowagers by labeling them as too conservative. In contrast, there are volumes of political memoirs, documents, newspaper clippings, and records that reveal a different kind of feminism in the nineteenth century United States. These women pushed boundaries and challenged gender expectations to create new opportunities for women in all classes who society marginalized to second-class status. The written narrative is incomplete due to a lack of primary records and the irresponsibility of yellow journalism that focused on sensational reporting, including salacious gossip over accuracy and inclusion, and especially regarding women's activity.

Therefore, periodization labels do not establish a clear understanding of progress in either historical era. Classifying the Progressive Era to a narrow twenty years overemphasizes minimal, self-aggrandizing achievements of women. Current periodization presents progressive developments in a vacuum rather than within the holistic understanding of the United States as it developed after the Civil War.

CHAPTER 5

HISTORY IS INCOMPLETE WITHOUT HER STORY

Irresponsible Journalism and the Lost Women

Historian Michael Lewis Goldberg argues that “one cannot understand [Gilded Age developments] without integrating gender into their story” (Goldberg 4). Unfortunately, the existing accounts of women in historical scholarship are skewed and present women in limited view. There are significant examples of women who were razing successes in economics or traditionally male dominated areas until inflammatory journalism and scandals destroyed their reputations. Controversy mired their successes so that their legacies focused on sensationalized history rather than embracing a viable alternative dialogue to the traditional understanding of women’s roles. Conversely, when not destroying reputations, past media labeled women who epitomized American female virtue and society as “Lady Bountiful;” by the media doing so, women, such as Olivia Slocum Sage, were undermined by their gilded wealth and richly described lifestyles that superseded their role as champions for equality and education (“Mrs. Russell Sage as Lady Bountiful”). Important women have lost their voices because they became victims to sensationalized stories that reduced them to caricatures of themselves.

Women who significantly deviate from periodization tropes are usually omitted from the traditional discussions even though they may represent an important segment of women who should be studied further. Consequently, a narrow and skewed understanding of women emerges. For example, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other

“freethinking” women are overlooked in favor of women such as Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone because these women present a more traditional caricature of women holistically. Moreover, media censors their accounts of women to focus on feminine activities rather than on the non-traditional behaviors; for example, Susan B. Anthony focuses on her speeches and writings but minimizes her political arrests or other deviant behaviors. On the other hand, the reputations of women are exaggerated or unfounded by media records. Over time, repetition perpetuates these stories rather than a more balanced portrayal of their behaviors, inadvertently leading to an incomplete presentation of women in the era. For instance, in frequent cases, media vilified successful women with labels such as “the Witch of Wall Street” (Sparkes) regarding Hetty Green or the “the “Scarlet Sisters” Victoria Woodhull and Tennie Claflin (MacPherson). These nicknames establish reputations for some women that are unfounded, yet could play a role in their selection of historical study today.

For example, after Hetty Green’s death, newspapers across the country published the obituary for the wealthiest American woman and information about her career as a financier. Some were complimentary about business dealings, acknowledging her shrewd investment practices and her fairness when dealing with other people. However, other newspapers used her image for sensational headlines. For example, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* published an entire page article about Hetty called “Hetty Green—Super Woman or Brain Warped Miser?” Leonard Hirschberg presented a scathing, pseudoscientific explanation that Hetty Green was psychologically ill with a condition of “miserliness.” The article uses her physical features to prove she was mentally ill:

...Deep-set, narrow eyes... furtively roaming from side to side” and “peculiar seams and wrinkles which indicate the atrophy of the thyroid, adrenal, and other ductless glands. In misers these glands shrink and become atrophied in an early stage of the mental illness, and as a result the miser becomes incapable of normal love, joy, sympathy or other kindred feelings. (Hirschberg)

The article refers to her as “insane,” an “imbecile” and “half-witted” with a warped brain because she did not give to charity in an outward and ostentatious display of wealth like other millionaires. In fact, the newspaper incorrectly reported that she did not donate at all, which is untrue based on her personal financial records and records of various charities and educational institutions. Interestingly, the article even acknowledged her charities towards the end of the article despite initial claims (Wallach 223-228). The article feebly attempted to provide a “balanced” perspective of Hetty Green by ending the article with a completely different woman of benevolence:

It is a matter of history... on more than one occasion her insistence on honest, conservative methods prevented serious disaster. Many a struggling householder or businessman... will testify that... Mrs. Green granted him a liberal extension or lowered the rate of payment... All these little acts of charity were done, as Mrs. Green herself expressed it, “without any fuss or feathers.” The recipients often never met face to face the grim-visaged but kind-hearted old woman to whom they owed their financial salvation. (Hirschberg)

Clearly, the media sensationalized reputations of women like Hetty Green because she captivated the imagination and defied common expectations. Sensationalized newspapers can find readership easily by publishing “news” that reinforces reader’s expectations.

Hetty Green was a woman who epitomized the spirit of the American Dream, a hard-working, independent woman invested in the future of America; she was a moral, ‘Christian woman’ who lived her life by the ‘Golden Rule’ and believed in honesty and integrity, all the characteristics that gilded the other captains of industry (Wallach 292). However, to include her would mean that the stereotype of women in the Gilded Age would need reconsidering. As a woman, Hetty Green defies the “male dominated” evaluation of the Gilded Age and proves that women were involved in the economic development of the country. The historical memory of the Gilded Age is a narrative tale of great economic giants battling against nature and the government for supremacy over society. There is no room for a potentially insane, controversial, female tycoon. If she were the only one, her omission could be tragically justified. However, Hetty Green is one of many exceptional women in the second half of the 19th century.

Like Hetty Green, Sarah Winchester’s wealth made her a celebrity and a target for media sensationalism. Because Winchester chose to live a secluded lifestyle, yellow journalists often targeted her as being eccentric, an oddity, and a miser. Mary Jo Ignoffo notes that:

Newspaper stories about Winchester are more mean spirited than reports of [other contemporary women]. Winchester fueled gossip and criticism by refusing to participate in society... by ignoring the press... and by shutting

herself off from the world... Winchester's refusal to participate in society contributed to her misunderstood personality, but gun money coupled with silence, at least in the eyes of the press, added up to a mysterious misfit. (Ignoffo 144)

Winchester was plagued with false reports and nonsensical stories that lacked substantiation. For example, in 1908, the *San Francisco Examiner* reported that Sarah Winchester intended to sell her house and was planting sunflowers in front of her house to appease ghosts that haunted her for her husband's sins. According to Mary Jo Ignoffo, this is the first time the story of Winchester using her house to appease spirits appeared in the media. "After this, Winchester was described as braving the wrath of spirits for *any* decisions about her big house" (Ignoffo 163). For the final years of her life, newspapers published numerous articles speculating about Winchester's haunted house and Winchester's mysterious occult behaviors.

Malignant rumors about Winchester spread so quickly that no amount of truth telling could rein them in. The press implied in the clearest possible terms without libeling her that Winchester suffered from instability. Insanity kept company with superstition, guilt, and fear. (Ignoffo 163-164).

Within six months of Winchester's death, her home opened as the legendary tourist trap it is today; to bolster tourism, *The San Jose Mercury News* and other local newspapers perpetuated the sensationalism around the house. The newspaper published an extensive article calling the house the "House of Usher" and highlighting unfounded stories of

hauntings and mysteries of the house to help build the reputation of the house (Ignoffo 208). In 1929, advertisements for the Winchester Mystery Tour emphasized the number thirteen and Winchester's obsession with the occult despite carpenters who worked on the house denying any incorporation of the number thirteen in construction design. One carpenter even argued that the new owners of the house added some occult items specifically for the house tour after Winchester's death (Ignoffo 208-209).

Since then, Sarah Winchester's legacy is a distorted caricature of the woman she was; she is overshadowed by her house and the twisted myths created by sensationalizing storytellers. Today, these stories, repeated by journalists and historians, are the legacy of a woman who contributed significantly to the financial development of the Santa Clara Valley. Even though there are no other documents to substantiate any of these claims and accusations about Winchester's beliefs, these are the stories that remain and define her memory. In fact, Ignoffo is nearly alone in her defense of Sarah Winchester's memory. Using city records, personal papers, and testimony and memory of people close to Winchester, Ignoffo refutes many of the superstitious claims and blatantly fabricated stories (Ignoffo 210). Despite efforts to correct such a distorted legacy, journalist Merle Gray warned, "younger generations accepted this version from their elders without a doubt as to its authenticity and have repeated it as the truth, and in time to come it will probably remain a legend explaining one of the most curious structures in the valley" (Ignoffo 213).

In a time of ascending yellow journalism by global newspapers run by Pulitzer and Hearst, women such as Hetty Green or Sarah Winchester, who valued their privacy

and refused to cooperate based on the media mogul rules, were harshly attacked in commercialized newspapers. Sensationalism sold papers more than honest news reporting and truth often fought side by side (and lost) for newspaper headlines that were more glamorous or ridiculous (Rodgers 74-76). If Green and Winchester cooperated with the press, as did the Woodhull sisters, it is likely that historical records would still distort their legacy in the same way as Victoria Woodhull and Mary Hayes Chynoweth who are remembered as caricatures of their success.

These women challenged the stereotypes and expectations of society; they dared to be intelligent, shrewd, and independent in a time when women were challenging the boundaries of gender norms. Their only crime was refusing to participate in their own sensationalism with the media and the public; as individual human beings, they attempted to avoid the masses and in doing so incurred the wrath of media giants. These innovative women became the victims of irresponsible journalism and a society that used these figures to fuel the imagination rather than adhere to social integrity or honor the legacies of such remarkably different women. Over time, these biased newspaper articles have become the only accessible documentation to the women since personal records have been stored away from public access or destroyed. This type of irresponsible journalism reveals why it was critical for women to actively tell her story through diaries, memoirs, and engaging in public journalism to have her voice heard, set the record straight, and create an archive for women's activism.

Women Tell Their Own Stories

Women's organizations and clubs created popular weekly newspapers and magazines such as *The Woman's Journal* (AWSA), *The Revolution* (NWSA) and *Woodhull and Claflin's, The Weekly* (the New Departure movement). These newspapers gave women a powerful civic voice that swayed public attitudes across the nation despite their lack of enfranchisement in official political votes. Through NWSA's newspaper, *The Revolution*, the quest for equality became about redefining women and men in an understanding more significant than simply about voting (Rakow 3). In their analysis of the newspaper, Rakow and Kramarae remind their audience that during the Gilded Age:

Women were pronounced to be less evolved than men, incapable of intelligence and rationality, helpless and physically inferior to men, in need of men's protection and, in fact, the property of their father's or husbands. They were, in short, neither citizens nor fully human persons (Rakow 2)

This summation of women has remained in the archives and in the memory of people for centuries despite evidence contradicting these beliefs. However, writings by women at the turn of the century reveal women of extreme intelligence, wit, and humor. We discover women of eloquence who chose to engage in the national dialogue despite the social and political rules. The newspapers, magazines, and women's periodicals reveal a clash between women's thoughts and the dominant voices of men that often battled. If we consider these newspapers and periodicals as the voices of women who wrote them, they become "richer context of women's history and women's communication" (Rakow

4). These newspapers were not a vehicle for the selfish rantings of a few: newspapers, such as *The Revolution*, are an archive that reflects the deleted voices of the masses and restores their place in the historical conversation (Rakow 4-6).

“For most academics and twentieth-century feminists, this nineteenth-century woman’s rights newspaper is little more than a footnote” (Rakow 1); however, Rakow and Kramarae argue that understanding the newspaper is critical for understanding the points of the women’s movement in the late nineteenth century. According to the newspaper, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony argue that they published their paper because

The demands for women everywhere to day [sic] are for a wider range of employments, higher wages, thorough physical and mental education, and her civil rights of person, property, wages, and children. ...we make the broader demand of women’s enfranchisement as the only way by which all special privileges can be permanently secured. No class of citizens, either men or women, can ever feel proper self-respect, or command the respect of others, until their political equality—their citizenship be fully recognized... We specially desire that *The Revolution* shall be the mouthpiece of women, that they may give the world the feminine thought in politics, religion and social life; that ultimately in the union of both we may find the truth in all things. (Stanton and Anthony, “Prospectus”)

As such, their newspaper became an editorial proponent for women in a variety of spheres. Their primary focus was obtaining the ballot to empower women to engage in a

greater sphere of political influence. Nevertheless, they fought for rights beyond the ballot, including marriage equality, legal protection for women, and access to advanced educational opportunities. These women promoted civil equality, divorce rights, free love, and sexual reproductive rights.

These newspapers are significant because they reflect the ideas of the women who led the movements and become an authentic archive of their thoughts. More importantly, the newspaper brought together liberal and conservative opinions from across the country. Elizabeth Cady Stanton declared, “We shall not have masculine and feminine ideas alone, but united thought on all questions of national and individual interest,” (Stanton, “Salutatory”). As a women’s newspaper, activists discussed ideas critical to the nation and engaged in an indispensable debate that influenced political and economic policies and ignited social movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These women united a “spectrum of individuals” and became “a piece of evidence to [readers] that they were not sick or evil in their discontent, a source of encouragement and legitimation to boost their morale” (Rakow 6-7).

Women from across the nation participated in these papers either as regular paid contributors or as women who wrote in editorials on the issue and created a community for women who were otherwise isolated, geographically and emotionally. They championed women’s causes outside of the home, humanizing the plight of women and rallying support for better working conditions, higher wages, and overall recognition of women in industries and professions.

Our mission is with that large, ill-treated, barely tolerated class, the working women of New York. It is not alone the limited fields of labor open to them of which women complain, but the stinted, grudging, remuneration doled out for faithful service. It matters not that the pittance may be the only support of a wretched family, the laborer is a woman- God help her- and she must take whatever they give her. (“Working Women Ill-Treated,” Rakow 69)

Through this advocacy, women worked towards the creation of labor protection and child labor laws. These advancements are victorious examples of women’s contributions to society.

The National Women’s Suffrage Association (NWSA) led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony are precursors to powerful groups such as the Women’s Trade Union League (WTUL) that formed in 1904 and influenced reform in the twentieth century. Furthermore, non-suffrage women’s organizations formed such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union beginning in 1874. The existence of non-suffrage groups confirms women focused on more than their own political enfranchisement, including an overall improvement of their society and moral turpitude

These women’s journals and weekly periodicals are critical because they offer an alternative archive to mainstream newspapers such as the New York Tribune who did not authentically cover women’s events, even on “women’s pages.” For example, the press recorded the events of the Emma Willard Association meetings as fashionable gatherings of feminine elite and buried the objectives and message of the meetings. The reporter

wrote about what all the women were wearing and made a brief note that the guest speaker was the President of Vassar College; however, there is no account of the topic of the meeting, nor what Mr. Taylor addressed regarding women, education, or Vassar College (“Emma Willard Association” *NY Tribune*).

Based on accounts of women’s progress in the late 1800s, it is evident that the newspapers of the day were successful in burying the progress of women in the “women’s archives.” Without newspapers and writings such as *The Revolution*, we would have few records to reveal the motives of women’s activism or reflect their goals and inner-workings as organizations. These newspapers and documents provide historians with resources that encourage historians to include women in the Gilded Age discussion as integral contributors to society. These women’s publications reveal thoughtful, engaged, and well-educated women in the Gilded Age and defy the traditional stereotype perpetuated by modern scholarship.

CHAPTER 6

SO MUCH MORE THAN A PRETTY FACE

The Gilded Age provided more opportunities for women in education than any previous era. When educational institutions closed their doors to women after the turn of the century, it took more than fifty years to reopen those opportunities that were available to women in the late 1800s (Crocker 244). Educational advocates developed modes of equality without the suffrage amendment that challenged feminine barriers; this allowed women to engage in society in new innovative roles previously relegated as male roles. Consequently, women's education became as necessary for the general reform of society as woman's suffrage. As an educated class, women were successful through advocacy of women's centers and support groups including day cares, education access to secondary level institutions, and the successful management of women's institutions. They created more research in women's health, medical care, and a greater voice in political affairs.

Women as an Educated Class

The discussion of women in education is relevant because the modern education system developed relatively concurrently regarding civic institutions and vocational education for males and females. The educational system was always a community system that expanded to state level oversight funded by taxpayer money after Horace Mann created official school system in Massachusetts (Stoddard 173). A publication by the National Center for Education Statistics states that when the government created the

Department of Education in 1867, 50% of girls attended grammar school, equal to boys at the time; however, girls did not have access to high school education initially (Snyder 6). In 1870, only 11,000 females attended an institution of higher education (high school level). One decade later, 33% of females in the United States attended high school. By 1890, 56,000 girls were graduating from high school and moving beyond high school attending higher levels of education-- equaling 36% of all students enrolled in schools (Crocker 31). Therefore, even though the expectations for girls to attend school varied by state and region, the growing participation of girls created a critical need for educational opportunities and led to the creation of single-gender institutions in the United States; the opportunity for girls to pursue an education expanded significantly in the late 1800s (Madigan 12).

By the twentieth century, most public secondary schools were coeducational but maintained separate gender tracks. These higher institutions did not support female higher education outside of traditional vocational training in typical female dominated fields and limited fiscal budgets for female education opportunities (Madigan 12). Educators and advocates focused on equal educational opportunities for women through female institutions and co-ed schools and higher education programs by ensuring the development of an enriched curriculum that allowed women to be competitive. Schools developed in the late 1800s that provided vocational education opportunities for working class women in urban centers.

In response to the lack of opportunities for girls beyond local primer schools, a single gender academy system developed. These institutions became “finishing schools”

run by women such as Catherine Beecher, Mary Lyon, or the Troy Seminary School run by Emma Willard (Madigan 12). Many of these early institutions modeled their schools based on Emma Willard's model; her school mission was to train girls to earn their own living and ensure their financial independence. Her institution focused on modern scholarship: reading and literature, higher mathematics, and biology. She eschewed learning domestic labor, such as housework and needlework, arguing these activities were feminine pursuits that could be taught at home by other female relatives (Crocker 35).

In turn, these academies led to the first exclusive women's colleges such as Mount Holyoke Seminary and Mills College in Oakland, California or affiliate colleges at elite universities. Madigan argues that this system of single-gender education created limited opportunities for women to study in one of four categories: secretarial, nursing, teaching, or motherhood that would last until the 1960s (Madigan 12). This created a demand for higher learning institutions such as Wellesley College. In 1871, Boston College became one of the leading co-ed institutions; other schools followed over time, (Cheney). This new level of education challenged the concept of a "weaker sex" because women were knowledgeable in sciences, and other "male topics," and became confident public speakers. Despite resistance from male administrators, women attended universities across the country including prestigious schools such as Stanford, the University of California at Berkeley and all women's universities such as Loyola and Mills Colleges (Crocker 37).

In addition, these exchanges established influential women organizing to create reform and opportunities during the Gilded Age. Regarding the significant opportunities created by the association, Ruth Crocker contends,

At a time when some of the most powerful arguments for women's public activity were articulated around *otherhood*, the identity of 'educated woman' suggested an alternative identity, one based on merit.... (Crocker 136) [The biographical list] of notable educated women provided incontrovertible evidence of women's advancements in education and professions [as well as publicly and privately] despite the silence of historical narratives who dismiss women in the Gilded Age. They wrote themselves into the nation's history. (Crocker 142-143)

This mission to push women to higher levels of education and training in society mobilized leading women to support the emerging female educational opportunities. These new opportunities led to breakthrough careers in the professions for women in the late 1800s. The same rapid and extensive system developed for manual training schools for working class girls, (Cheney "Evolution"). Middle-class and upper-class women, such as Olivia Sage, Hetty Green, and Phoebe Appleton Hearst, supported these vocational and university schools because they believed in the need for educational reform while also providing a moral and safe environment for young women.

Upper and middle-class women in the late nineteenth century had expansive new wealth at their disposal; yet they inherited antebellum values for Christian women defined by volunteerism and helping the sick. Ruth Crocker argues, "For wealthy women

who had inherited or married into fortunes... philanthropy opened a space for activism, institution building, and reform... The philanthropy of Olivia Sage [and other wealthy women] took place in a culture ill at ease with the relation between women and money” (Crocker 2-3). Scholars have suggested that charity allowed nineteenth century, white, middle-class women to enjoy a more expansive public life and to overturn some of the barriers to women’s opportunities by law and custom; thus, women of philanthropy and charity are feminists in their progressive vision of actively influencing society and slowly breaking down gender norms (Crocker 96). Prominent female activists and leaders started as teachers in their early years, including Ida Tarbell, Mary Livermore, Susan B. Anthony, Frances Willard, and Olivia Slocum Sage (Clifford 7).

Women as the Educators: Gatekeepers of Citizenry

After the Civil War, teaching was one of the few job positions consistently open to women with higher levels of education outside of the factory wage system. In 1904, nine out of ten Berkeley women planned to become teachers; 43%-64% of women graduating from universities became teachers after school (Clifford 10). Unmarried women and widows entered the teaching profession to replace male teachers lost in the war. Southern genteel families who lost their fortunes after the Civil War determined that teaching and becoming nannies were acceptable occupations for young women from middle-class families (Ignoffo 103).

In 1860, sixty percent of teachers in the United States were single women averaging the age of twenty. However, over the next sixty years, the percentage of

female teachers escalated to 84% by 1920, and the average age increased to twenty-seven (Sohn 930). “Some taught until she married, but others saw in teaching a potential alternative to marriage and family life. After the Civil War, the prospect of living apart from family was becoming a real... life choice for women” (Leroux 170), reflecting a change in attitude in women’s rights regarding marriage and the gender norms of women. In 1880, the average teacher on the east coast remained in the classroom for a mean average of fourteen years. Susan B. Anthony was an educator until she turned thirty years old and retired; then she turned her attention to suffrage and civil rights full time, (Harper 607). Over the next two decades, the average number of years increased, debunking the stereotype that women only stayed in the classroom to kill time until they were married (MacDonald 428).

Teaching became a unique semi-profession; this is the only profession that expected well-educated, single, or widowed women to remain single as educators. They needed financial independence despite little community support and low wages, implying teaching was a public service rather than a respectable profession (Leroux 171). The role of teacher was complicated in a society demanding reverence for her piety and dedication to her students. She also represented the single “spinster” woman that became the object of satire and scorn in society (Clifford 9). Young single teachers moved to large urban cities in search of higher paying schools contradicting the argument that teachers did not need to be self-supporting because they lived at home and showing movement among women who chose to pursue the teaching profession after completing school.

Catholic teachers were usually nuns; therefore, public school teachers became a symbol of defiance against religious schools run by either the Catholic or Protestant Churches. This was especially challenging in an era of clashes between Church and State with the growing revivalism movement conflicting with the scientific movement launched by Darwin's theory of evolution (Leroux 177). Teachers were expected to "supplement work of mothers who 'neglected' their home responsibilities to earn money" and they were expected to build character and develop citizenship in the younger generation of both native-born and immigrant Americans (Leroux 178). As educators, women influenced society through their students; they were the messengers of productivity and ability in a rapidly advancing society. They were responsible for developing skills, character, and citizenship of students at a time when the composition of the United States citizen was changing based on the high immigration numbers and the changing relationships between workers and the economy. Communities entrusted women to instill values and work ethic. Teachers taught students the skills needed to function in a modern industry. They were the gatekeepers of democratic practices even though they were not directly trusted with the political power of the government or given unrestricted access to the economic systems themselves.

Society expected teachers to embrace the role of *noblesse oblige* and accept their roles as the protectors of social character and quality based on traditional norms despite their actions and influences being very liberal (Leroux 182). Interestingly, Victoria MacDonald discusses "The Paradox of Bureaucratization" in the teaching profession from 1880-1900; however, she labels this period the Progressive Era, reinforcing

Elizabeth Perry's assertion that historians relegate women's history to the Progressive Era despite chronological contradictions. In such a position of "character respectability," female teachers were often required to downplay or conceal their feelings and involvement regarding politics such as suffrage rights because they feared losing their positions.

Olivia Sage is an example of an upper-middle class woman who represented education, Victorian values, and philanthropy coalescing into a leading female advocate for women's progression in the Gilded Age. As a young middle-class woman, she entered the teaching profession to contribute to her family income. She met and married Russell Sage and became an elite socialite. Her life reveals the conundrum of wealth in the United States and the role that female philanthropy played in the building of America during the Gilded Age. Her \$35-\$45 million philanthropic work created new opportunities for the next generation, including women of all class levels (Crocker 1). As an educated woman in her own right, Olivia Sage did more than donate money; like many of her colleagues, she took an active role in day-to-day charity work:

Women organized to do the work left undone in an age of reluctant government... Constrained by law and custom and denied access to most of the major institutions by which society governed itself and created its culture, [women] used voluntary associations to evade some of these constraints. (Crocker 112)

She became a lady manager at the women's hospital overseeing the daily operations and admissions of women; she represents a new class of empowered women who entered new

areas previously closed to females. Although her efforts focused on female health, this was an area previously dominated by men and women worked diligently to influence health care and other areas that affected women and families. As fundraisers, patrons, and day-to-day managers, upper class women gained confidence that enabled them to challenge men's control over women's health. In these roles, women could advocate for women's rights and health by fighting for the women as nurses and assistants in the hospital as well as advocating for gynecological research challenging the brutal practices of the era as well as typical gender norms (Crocker 105-112). Women like Olivia Sage reveal a more civic minded, liberal, and ambitious woman who fully engaged in movement for a more progressive society in the nineteenth century.

MacDonald argues that rapid urbanization in the nineteenth century of the United States "altered the economic, political, and social landscape of the country" (MacDonald 427), yet it is only recently that historians have studied this period and have begun to recognize the impact of female teachers and women holistically on society. With the inclusion of female teachers in the discussion of the Gilded Age, it is apparent that women were well educated, organized, and influential despite the traditional depiction of women at the turn of the century. It is reasonable to assume that women may have had a notable influence in other aspects of life such as property rights, politics, and the economy than given credit for currently.

CHAPTER 7

ACTIVISM WITHOUT THE BALLOT:
LAWS OF THE LAND
AND PROPERTY

As a challenge to the acceptance of women in conventional gender roles, an analysis of women's participation in the legal courts system reveals that women had more protected rights than traditionally believed. Furthermore, women fought for equality through their actions and the legal system, to create independent economic opportunities for themselves. Women participated in the legal system by pursuing property rights and creating farms as a means for self-sufficiency. Therefore, even though the study of the Gilded Age often focuses on the male farmers' battle against the encroachment of industry, women were part of this battle on both sides of the field. Furthermore, women also participated in the legal system to protect their accumulation of wealth and challenge male-dominance over female autonomy.

For example, prior to the American Civil War, throughout the eastern and southern parts of the United States and organized territories, coverture laws dictated that married women could own property under the oversight and protection of their husbands. In other cases, property rights were limited so that women could manage or control property in lieu of their husband if their husband suffered from incapacity such as a prolonged illness or injury (Braukman 59). Except for land ownership in the Oregon territory, husbands could attach their credit to most property owned by women and had management of the land even though the title was in the woman's name.

Women challenged coverture laws in the United States and earned the *Married Women's Property Act* in every state between 1830 and 1870 that allowed women to own property sole and separate from their husband's property (Braukman 59). California's initial state *Constitution of 1849* also protected property of married women in certain conditions and eventually changed the laws to be comprehensive by 1880 (California, Const. Art. XI, Sec. 14). Furthermore, state governments further protected women through "privity investigations" to make sure husbands did not coerce wives into giving up their ownership of land when husbands attached their debt to the mortgage or property titles (Braukman 59). Although these property laws were designed to ensure men were not violating tax law rather than true protection laws for women, these laws are clear progress in women's protections and rights across the country and reflect efforts to undermine the concept of "separate spheres" between men and women (Braukman 62).

Furthermore, these property marriage laws extended beyond physical land during the Gilded Age to include wage earnings; women became major contributors to household incomes. These laws opened pathways for women to become independent through land ownership and other financial investments in stocks and business. Throughout the country, women owned and managed property from, New York City rentals and other housing to farms in the newly developing territories of the frontier. Municipal Suffrage advocacy focused on local and regional voting rights based on property. The most vocal argument came from propertied women who paid taxes; they argued that like their forefathers, they deserved the right to vote based on taxation with representation (Wallach 180).

For example, Hetty Green owned significant property in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco that was all legally separate from her husband's estate. She followed similar mortgage acquisition practices as J.P. Morgan and Andrew Carnegie; consequently, she became the wealthiest female tycoon in the United States. However, she had no voice in government despite paying property taxes in excess of \$100,000 per year (Wallach 180-181). Furthermore, Wallach points out that many women throughout the country, including large cities such as New York city, owned and operated boarding houses, often private homes that were opened to the public to allow women to make ends meet (Wallach 158).

Women were also able to defend their property in courts of law. For example, Hetty Green used the legal system frequently to protect her investments and defend her property. In 1885, Hetty Green was embroiled in a battle with Cisco and Son's bank who demanded she pay her husband's debt with the bank even though no other creditor was obligated to cover another creditor's debt. The court ruled in favor of Hetty that she was under no obligation to pay her husband's debt of \$702,000 because of property laws that protected women's land and independent financial investments (Slack 92-94).

Another example of women's inclusion was the *Homestead Act of 1862* that did not use gender as a qualification for land ownership. Ellen DuBois estimates that women controlled 15% of homesteads in the late nineteenth century (DuBois, *Through Women's Eyes* 349). DuBois further argues that through the National Grange organizations in states such as Kansas and other western territories provided women with opportunities for

inclusion and equitable participation in local political decisions by requiring female participation.

Local chapters were required to have nine female members for every thirteen male members, and women served as officers and delegates to the national meetings. The sense of community that the Grange created prepared the way for more overtly political expressions... including the Farmer's Alliance in the late 1880s and the Populist movement of the 1890s. (DuBois, *Through Women's Eyes* 350)

The Farmer's Alliance became one of the more powerful venues for the female voice and organizing ability on a national level as writers, advocates, and officers in the Alliance. Later, largely through the cooperation and organizational efforts of women, the Alliance and the WCTU merged into the People's Party within the Populist Movement. In addition to the Farmer's Alliance, DuBois also reveals powerful organization amongst black farmers in the Colored Farmer's Alliance where half of the members were black women (DuBois, *Through Women's Eyes* 362).

Charles Slack argues an alternative form of feminism in his book, *The Genius and Madness of Hetty Green*: “[Hetty's] skill, tenacity, and fearlessness made her a feminist long before the term became a rallying cry for generations... her money gave her power over men...” (Slack 111). Slack discusses how she advocated for equality through her actions as a financier rather than through political activism. She was an independent world traveler who oversaw her vast holdings herself, from her gold stake in Sutter Creek, California to her mansions on Fifth Avenue. “She was considered the single

biggest individual financier in the world... worth an estimated \$100 million (Wallach xix). Financiers and women of the economy defy the Gilded Age stereotype of the U.S. economy by being participants within a male dominated system. These women challenge the argument that women were not intelligent enough to handle their own economic affairs by becoming equally wealthy to male tycoons in the United States.

Women's ownership and operation of farms, businesses, and investments reveals that women had a greater influence on the economy and accumulation of wealth than previously acknowledged by scholarship of the Gilded Age. Furthermore, women's participation in the legal system reveals an educated female population capable of challenging a male-dominated political system. Despite inclusion, it is likely that women played a notable role in all levels of the economy; therefore, other areas of the economy, such as labor and working-class women, need to be revisited to determine women's influence in this predominantly male discussion.

CHAPTER 8

EQUALITY AND NOTHING MORE

Women in the Work Force

During the North American Labor History Conference in 1991, Alice Kessler-Harris argued that “‘historians of women and historians of workers are sometimes the same people’ suggesting that class and gender are not exclusive categories of analysis” (Kannenber, et al. 94) even though they have been treated separately in Gilded Age discussion. An analysis of the labor statistics reveals that women had a notable influence on the labor force in the late 1800s. The booming industrial developments of the second half of the Nineteenth Century provided working class women with new job opportunities not previously available to them. For example, working class women participated in new job opportunities in factories, manufacturing, and teaching in response to the devastating losses of men during the United States Civil War and later during the Spanish-American War of 1898 (Kannenber, et. al. 94). Women were specifically a mass force of unskilled labor in the United States as new labor systems and advanced technology revolutionized the United States economy and modern industry.

According to Lara Vapnek, more than three million women worked in the factory labor force from 1870-1890 totaling approximately 1/6th (nearly 17%) of the total labor force (closer to 25% in major urban areas such as Chicago and New York City) (Vapnek 34-35). According to Ellen DuBois, the women’s work force increased to 5.7 million

women by the 1900s (DuBois, *Through Women's Eyes* 284). Women held unskilled labor positions in textile and garment factories; they also operated telephones, telegraphs, and typewriters in clerical settings. New electric-powered technology allowed women (and children) to assume jobs as spinners and other positions that previously required skilled workers or extreme physical labor. Ciani points out that in 1900, nearly 16% of Detroit residents were industrial workers, but 73% were “working class” when women were considered in the discussion; 25% of women held “gainful occupations” that did not include day labor in statistical analysis (Ciani 28).

When considering the labor discussion of the Gilded Age, it is simplistic to overlook or minimize over a quarter of the labor force as an insignificant factor in the development of the industry or economy of the United States. Furthermore, statistics estimate in Detroit, Michigan in 1880, 46.6% of women earned wages as domestic labor and day labor in addition to the women who worked in the industrial sectors (Ciani 31). Moreover, these statistics do not include younger female children who worked alongside their mothers in day labor to help contribute to piecework wages. By 1892, 95% of the women in the industrial workforce of Detroit were single; 63% were under the age of 20; and 84% of them were still living at home with family (Ciani 33). If Detroit is a representation of most developing urban cities, then 71% of women were in the work force as contributing wage earners to the family; this statistic changes the labor discussion significantly.

In addition, 60% of women worked in domestic labor positions as “day workers” and were never capable of organizing or improving their working conditions. Cultural

norms shut older or married women out of working in factory conditions. According to Ciani, “day work crossed the boundaries of race, ethnicity, citizenship, and marital status... day work is the principal occupational field of an increasing number of wives of wage-earning husbands and women with dependent families,” (Ciani 25-26) allowing women to earn wages and supplement their household incomes when they were not welcome in industrial environments. Additionally, women who worked in organizations such as day care programs, kindergarten programs, resource centers, charity organizations, and educational facilities are also not included in the labor statistics:

A broad examination of the Detroit labor scene [as a case study for most urban developing centers] must include the central role played by mothers in using day work to feed their families. As such, it is the other side of the... presentation as a masculine labor zone. To include the day worker forces us to reassess our understanding of wage earning. (Ciani 50)

Consequently, when we reassess wage earning in the Gilded Age, we must also reconsider the important contributions of women in multiple categories of economic development in the United States.

Labor statistics largely omit day work and domestic labor because there was very little oversight to the labor agreements between women and the households they worked for; usually these agreements were unofficial and informal arrangements between housewives on both sides of the contract. Furthermore, “husbands downplayed the role their wives played in keeping the family financially afloat” and often refused to include their women’s labor in the household statistics (Ciani 26). Consequently, statistics

categorized these women as “dependent mothers” rather than “productive workers” in labor records indicating their role as mother was more relevant than their income to the survival of the family despite the realities of the situation (Ciani 26). “Alice Kessler-Harris has argued... men were paid as individuals who supported families, while women were paid as supplementary workers supported by men” even if this is not a reflection of reality for women who were the main source of income (Vapnek 42).

Organized Women and Strikes

Arguments against women in the workplace suggested working women eroded fundamental family values. Dissenters to women in the work force forecasted that working women would lead to generations of children without proper care, guidance, and citizenship (Kessler-Harris 99-101). The male dominant attitude represented by AFL leader, Samuel Gompers, argued:

It is wrong to permit any of the female sex... to be forced to work, as we believe that the man should be provided with a fair wage in order to keep his female relatives from going to work. The man is the provider and should receive for his labor to give his family a respectable living.
(Kessler-Harris 97)

However, this argument perpetuates the stereotype that women were subjugated to the authority of their male relatives. It also assumes that these women had male relatives to take care of them and that these women were passive victims to circumstances rather than determined to earn a fair living for themselves and their families.

This instability motivated women to organize and assist women of all social classes with the hope of creating more economic stability (Vapnek 2). Susan B. Anthony argued in her famous speech, “Woman Wants Bread, Not the Ballot,” that “In the crowded cities... they are compelled to work in the shops, stores, and factories for the merest pittance. In New York alone there are over 50,000 of these women receiving less than fifty cents a day....” (Sherr 138). It became critical that women organize for their protection and for the protection of their families’ survival. Organizing into labor organizations also became critical to reinforce that demands of their male counterparts rather than being used a weapon to undermine the unification of labor organizations as a cheaper labor force.

According to the National Women’s History Museum (NWHM), women did not initiate a strike until the “Rising of the 20,000” in 1909 and the “Bread and Roses” strike in 1912 (NWHM, “Reforming their World”). The museum article focuses heavily on the contributions of women in the “progressive era” but is silent on the role of women, labor, and unionization involved during the Nineteenth Century. However, according to Kessler-Harris “female[s]... ran highly successful sex-segregated unions” in the 1870s and 1880s (Kessler-Harris 94). Furthermore, women were ardent supporters of organized labor in western states and territories such as Colorado; wives became involved in the Western Federation of Minors by forming auxiliary unions and “mop and broom brigades” to challenge strikebreakers and support successful mining strikes for higher wages and safer working conditions (DuBois, *Through Women’s Eyes* 352). The *Chicago Tribune* also reported, “the women still break past the patrol lines and go where

no man dares to step” during the Pullman Strike of 1894 (DuBois, *Through Women’s Eyes* 366). According to DuBois:

Women were part of all the dramatic strikes and labor conflicts of the late nineteenth century. In 1877, during the nationwide rail strikes... women were among the mobs that burned the roundhouses and destroyed railroad cars. Women’s involvement in such violent acts underlined the full fury of working-class resentment at the inequalities of wealth in the postbellum America. (DuBois, *Through Women’s Eyes* 289)

The inequity of working conditions encouraged union organizations such as the Knights of Labor to include women in their struggles to improve the position of women and to remove the competitive threat to men in the work place. Therefore, 65,000 women joined the Knights of Labor by 1887 (Vapnek 43). DuBois argues that at the peak of Knights of Labor membership, there were 750,000 members and women comprised 10% of total membership. In addition to the Knights of Labor, the development of the Women’s Trade Union League (WTUL) and the Working Women’s League (WWL) both revealed a significant need for women to organize to demand better working conditions including equal pay, safer working conditions, and protections from sexual harassment.

However, by 1900, only 3%-6% female workers were unionized (Kessler-Harris 92) showing a reversal in progressive inclusion of women in unionized activity:

Women labor reformers imagined themselves at the intersection of the women’s movement and the labor movement. Historians have generally seen the Gilded Age as a low point of agitation for women’s rights. By

expanding out the field of inquiry beyond suffrage to include economic rights, we may instead see this period as a vital moment in considering the social, political, and domestic implications of women's increasing presence in the labor force. (Vapnek, 10)

This could be largely due to the violence of strikes and the intervention of government through new anti-monopoly policies that broke down union activity.

Arguments from organizations such as the American Federation of Labor and other groups have created historical records that allowed women to disappear from the conversation in today's archives. This reflects male-dominated culture protecting Victorian traditional "home and family values" and not a reflection of the realities of women in the work force and their contribution to an industrialized United States.

CHAPTER 9

THE BALLOT AND NOTHING LESS

In conventional studies of the era, the fight for the ballot is usually one of the very few areas where historians and scholars focus on women's activism significantly. This is true when considering the textbooks used in high school and college courses in the United States. However, historical scholarship presents women's suffrage as an isolated movement for Progressive women of the early 20th century. Even though the women's groups were ultimately successful in the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920, significant strides towards suffrage occurred by women's groups such as NWSA, AWSA, and NAWSA in the second half of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the escalation for political reform became an avid focus of women's rights groups in reaction to the exclusion of women in national unions and the constant fight for their rights within the legal system. The ballot became a tool sought to provide protection for exploited women to be part of the social changes they saw as necessary to improve the overall health and safety of all people of the nation.

The political rights of women were a question from the inception of the United States as the founding fathers contemplated a new democratic experiment: on 31 March 1776, Abigail Adams reminded her husband:

I desire you would Remember the Ladies [sic], and be more generous and favourable [sic] to them than your ancestors... If perticular [sic] care and attention is not paid to the Laidies [sic], we are determined to foment a

Rebellion [sic], and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation. (Adams, “Letter”)

When the founding fathers failed to include women in suffrage or civil rights, women immediately began fighting for inclusion and equality.

Women as an Organizing Power

The women’s question of suffrage developed structure and a program as early as 1848 at the Seneca Falls Convention; women aligned themselves with the tumultuous national questions prior to the Civil War regarding whether the U.S. Constitution protected all men and women. For women, society harshly answered negatively when the federal government (theoretically) granted newly freed black men the right to vote with the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution but excluded all women. The passage of the amendments became the catalyst that ignited a separate women’s movement. Phoebe Couzins summed up the argument succinctly when she wrote in *The Revolution*:

...The male advocates of the Fifteenth Amendment tell us we ought to accept the half loaf when we cannot get the whole. I do not see that woman gets any part of the loaf, not even a *crumb* that falls from the rich man’s table. (Couzins “Half a Loaf”)

Conventional historical accounts focus on the 1900s-suffrage movement and the failed push for the national amendment to the Constitution. The ruthless focus on the failure for

a national suffrage amendment unjustly portrays the movement for a political voice as a total failure.

DuBois challenges this concept of failure by examining the connotation of “Reconstruction” after the Civil War and argues that not only was the nation reconstructing itself along political and economic principles after the Civil War, women were also reconstructing their role in society and their collective political and social power (DuBois, *Through Women’s Eyes* 271). Ruth Crocker argues women’s activism escalated concurrently with the reconstruction of the nation after the Civil War. Women were a greater part of a wider reorientation of class and gender:

The significance of parlor suffrage meetings [throughout the 1890s by prominent women in society] will remain elusive until [historians] restore the context of this transformation... By politicizing private space elite women exposed the fiction of ... home and space... and transformed identities and consciousness...” (Crocker 162)

Suffragists and reformers during the Gilded Age focused on the political development of the United States by advocating for women to have a greater voice in the moral authority of the country. This has perpetuated the accusations of municipal housekeeping and a narrow interpretation of women’s purpose; however, this was the strategy where women could gain traction and support from male dominated political systems. Women first petitioned Congress in 1865 to protest the use of the word “male” in the Fourteenth Amendment; women argued voting rights were critical to protect the families and help fortify the morale of the country. Furthermore, women demanded

recognition for their contributions to the formation of the United States as a republic and for their participation in the Civil War. These women defied the stereotypical, misogynistic arguments that women were not intelligent enough to comprehend the political debate; they challenged the national conversation by actively participating in the political system and exercising their freedom of speech despite their legal disenfranchisement.

In Susan B. Anthony's most famous lecture, "Woman Wants Bread, Not the Ballot," Anthony argued that the ballot was a means to an end. She posited that women really wanted security and the ability to provide for her family daily:

The question with you... is not whether you want your wives and daughters to vote... but whether you will help to put this power of the ballot into the hands of the 3,000,000 wage-earning women, so that they may be able to compel politicians to legislate in their favor and employers to grant them justice. (qtd. in Sherr 138-139)

She proceeded to argue that women wanted the same equalities and freedoms granted to men on the same foundation that men had fought for these rights one hundred years prior.

She challenged:

It was wicked to allow white men absolute power over black men. It is vastly more cruel... to give to all men—rich and poor, white and black, native and foreign, educated and ignorant, virtuous and vicious—this absolute control over women. Men talk of the injustice of monopolies. There never was... a monopoly so fraught with injustice, tyranny, and

degradation as this monopoly of sex. Therefore, I... agree with Abraham Lincoln... but I say also that no man is good enough to govern a woman without her consent.... (qtd. in Sherr 139)

NWSA, under the leadership of Anthony and Stanton, organized and collected 80,000 signatures for female suffrage. By 1876 that number increased to over 100,000, this shows tremendous coordination and dedication of time and resources. More importantly, this reveals that a growing portion of the population supported a movement towards greater equality between the sexes despite the political machine of this country ignoring them (Harper 611-612). Susan B. Anthony argued that out of experiences and frustration of an ineffective federal government, men and women began to consider the need for women to obtain the ballot believing:

When women vote, they will make a new balance of power that must be weighed and measured and calculated in its effect upon every social and moral questions, which goes to the arbitrament [sic] of the ballot box. Who can doubt that when the representative women of thought and culture... sit in counsel with the best men of the country, higher conditions will be the result? (qtd. in Sherr 140)

These women balanced the idea of femininity with a fierce and intelligent political movement: later militant suffragists would obliterate the stereotype of women and push suffrage to new levels that would have been inaccessible without the foundational support of the early suffrage movement.

Individual Women as Political Symbols

Individual women became prominent advocates for women's rights: their activities challenged understanding of gender behaviors and women's willingness to engage in deviance to promote their beliefs. However, the women who deviated from the norms are the women we celebrate today as American heroes. Two of the best-known American suffragists, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, are acknowledged as founders to the Progressive reforms of the twentieth century and the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment; in fact, the amendment is known as the Susan B. Anthony Amendment. However, both women were dead or retired by the opening of the twentieth century and neither were directly involved in the passage of the amendment. This reinforces the claim by Elisabeth Israels Perry that women are part of the Progressive era in modern scholarship periodization despite chronology.

For example, Victoria Woodhull became the first woman to run for President of the United States beginning on April 2, 1870 when she announced she was putting her name up for nomination. Woodhull earned the nomination as a third-party candidate in 1872 on the Equal Rights Party platform even though she was ineligible due to age and gender (MacPherson 50). MacPherson notes:

Woodhull earned a footnote in history as the first woman to be nominated for president...Woodhull had hoped to gain attention and support for her equality-based coalition in a time of dissatisfaction with the two major political party candidates. (MacPherson 168)

The high volume of spectators at each of Woodhull's speeches for several years reveals a growing dissatisfaction with the status quo political scenarios and overall pain experienced in society, especially after the economic crash of 1873. Their presence may also reveal a more liberal and open acceptance of political change than previously considered in past historical discussion (MacPherson 212).

Woodhull was not the only woman to challenge political leadership roles; Elizabeth Cady Stanton ran for New York Congress as an independent in 1866 (Griffith 119). Although she only received twenty-four votes total, Stanton was the first woman to run for political office in the U.S. Jeanette Rankin is the first woman elected to office in 1916 in Montana (Brown "Women's Milestones").

The active but quiet participation of social elites such as Olivia Sage and Alva Belmont supports the notion that a "quiet revolution" had occurred in the political consciousness of elite women before the turn of the century; "ladies of leisure" were grassroots activists before the Progressive Era (Crocker 167). Unfortunately, by 1898, the "New Woman" was adopting more aggressive and militant strategies and categorizing women like Olivia Sage and other activists as conservative and reserved:

A generation or more separated the early women's rights advocates from the new women and the debate over the proper role and decorum of women still closely associating with Victorian values even while rejecting those limitations through activism that conflicted with the bold behaviors of the "new woman. (Crocker 182)

However, the early political pioneers were successful in their own objectives before the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. State and regional voting rights granted between 1865-1900 reveals a dramatic victory for suffrage development starting in western states and territories and progressing east towards the federal capital and the more traditional, established colonial communities. These victories laid a necessary foundation for the later works of suffragists in the 1900s Progressive reform movements.

Voting Rights and Progress for Gilded Women

An analysis of a US map (see Fig. 1) provided by the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia reveals that women had voting rights on a state-by-state basis long before the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Women could vote in state, regional, and local elections in more than half of the territory that comprised the United States by 1920.

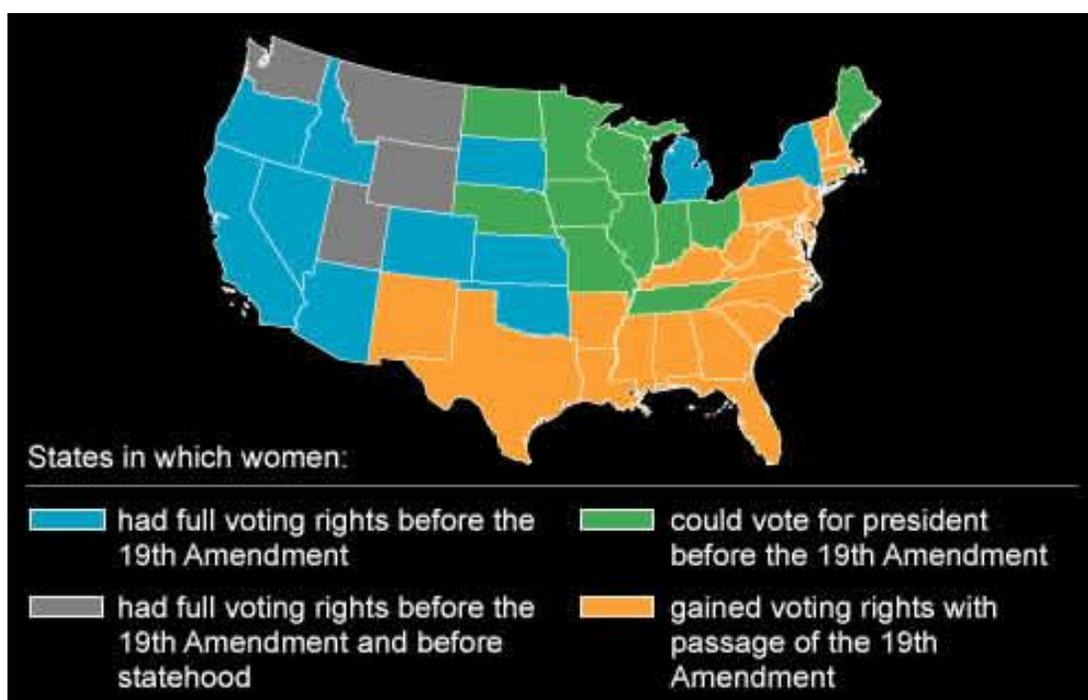


Figure 1: “January 1, 1919: States Grant Women the Right to Vote.” *National Constitution Center*

Women first gained the right to vote in regional elections in 1869 in the territory of Wyoming, followed by Utah in 1870 (DuBois, *Through Women's Eyes* 272). As these territories converted to states, they included formal suffrage legislation in their state constitutions, starting with Wyoming in 1890. Four states (Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Idaho) and two territories (Washington and Montana) granted women the right to vote before 1900. Eight additional states and one territory granted the right to vote prior to 1915. By the time of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, thirty years after Wyoming statehood, women had some level of voting rights in twenty-seven states (out of forty-eight) and could vote in Presidential elections (through the Electoral College) in eleven states (“January 1” *National Constitution Center*).

When National and American Women's Suffrage Associations joined together in 1890 to form the National American Women Suffrage Association (NAWSA), they grew to over two million members and became the largest volunteer organization in the United States (NWHM “Causes”). Women such as Alice Paul and Lucy Burns were successful in the final push for the federal amendment because of the trailblazing efforts of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Carrie Chapman Catt and so many other forgotten women who fought tirelessly for the right to political participation at all levels of political society (NWHM “Causes”). Suffrage became a victory for women; however, the rapid ascent of such powerful and educated women became a symbol of the national shift to a more inclusive culture for women by the 1940s (May 188). Historical discussions after 1940 and World War II will include women more consistently and faithfully as a result.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION: CHANGE THE NAME

Historians must be more mindful of periodization labels to ensure that the multifaceted levels of society are included in the historical dialogue. When women are included in the discussion of the development of the United States in the Nineteenth Century, the conversation changes to a more progressive understanding of the era. Historians are recognizing the power and value of women, individually and collectively, at various intersections of historical periods; they are producing scholarship in academic journals and mainstream books that focus on the individual characters that influenced society. Unfortunately, this recognition has yet to infiltrate the reputation and teaching of the Gilded Age in standard scholarship programs. The conversation of the “Gilded Age” needs to be altered; women are worthy of inclusion because thousands of women were driving factors in the development of a modern social welfare system, a modern political machine, and a modern economy.

If a more appropriate label replaces the label of “Gilded Age,” the inclusion of women becomes more viable. Rebecca Edwards champions Richard Schneirov’s proposal for the “Age of Incorporation,” inclusive of all subgroups who contributed to the development of the United States (Edwards, “Response”). Edwards alternately suggests an elongated “Early Progressive Era” beginning in 1865 with a full inclusion of women blended in the historical narrative (Edwards, *New Spirits* 6). Richard John concurs and suggests that Edwards’ title, *New Spirits*, “highlights what other historians have

missed...” and provides an “unsentimental neo-populism...[to] contrast the condescending elitism that has shaped historical writing” (John, “Elongated” 111).

Edwards reasons:

Many Americans worked energetically between 1865 and 1900 to purify politics, restrict the power of big business, and fight injustice... At the same time, problems that plagued the so-called Gilded Age continued and even intensified during the so-called ‘Progressive era... Whatever we call it, we are heirs to the decades of the late nineteenth century in ways we often forget. (Edwards, *New Spirits* 6)

Most importantly, these historians who challenge the current periodization labels propose to restructure the discussion to be more inclusive of the masses as a “bottom up” history and a more accurate reflection of society holistically. This creates an opportunity for celebration of new, progressive ideas and successes championed by women and other groups in the modern United States after the Civil War. This change would open opportunities for the histories written by Ellen DuBois and others to become part of the teachings in American classrooms across the nation and could change the landscape of modern political and social dialogue.

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