The Short North
Flytown and Godman Guild

Historical Context and Overview

In the early 20th century, reform movements spread throughout the United States in response to problems created by industrialization, immigration, and urbanization. Progressivism, an urban, middle-class reform movement, supported a more active role for government in addressing public health and welfare issues.

The settlement house movement was an approach to addressing problems faced by immigrants in urban industrial cities. The primary role of settlement houses was to help immigrant families adapt to life in American cities. Settlement houses were typically run by college-educated middle-class women. The most famous one was the Hull House in Chicago, founded by Jane Addams in 1889.

Godman Guild in Columbus, Ohio was founded in 1898 by Anna Keagle, a teacher at North High School and a Sunday School teacher in the Flytown neighborhood. Flytown was the beginning place for many immigrants coming to Columbus seeking work in the newly industrial city. In 1900, trustees raised $6,000 to buy land for a settlement house. Henry Godman of the Godman Shoe Company gave $10,000 for the building fund. The Godman Guild provided a variety of services including sports and recreation clubs, English classes, cooking and sewing classes, youth camps, and milk distribution to young mothers.

Standards Alignment

Ohio's New Learning Standards: K-12 Social Studies
HS American History Content Statement 14: The Progressive era was an effort to address the ills of American society stemming from industrial capitalism, urbanization and political corruption.

Learning Objectives

- Analyze the "pull factors" that led immigrants to settle in Columbus and other urban centers around the turn of the 20th century.
- Describe the living conditions in industrial cities in the early 20th century.
- Describe the origins and purposes of the settlement house movement.
- Discuss the social services provided by settlement houses such as Godman Guild.
- Explain how the settlement house movement illustrates the goals of Progressive-era reform movements.

Discussion Questions

1. What theories explain how Flytown got its name?

2. Where did Flytown's residents come from?

3. Describe the living conditions in Flytown.

4. Why did Anna Keagle establish the Godman Guild?

5. What were Keagle's main concerns about life in Flytown?

6. What services did Godman Guild provide to the Flytown community?

7. What was the purpose of the camps established by Godman Guild? What does this tell us about perceptions of city life around the turn of century?

8. How does the work of Godman Guild illustrate major themes of the Progressive Era?

9. What "pull factors" led people to migrate to Flytown?

10. What type of work was available to newly arriving immigrants in Flytown?

Extension Activity

Have students identify the location of major settlement houses in the United States. Next, have students examine historical census data to track increases in immigration to cities where settlement houses were located. Students can use the Historical Census Brower from the University of Virginia Library: http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/ to compare the number of "foreign-born" residents in a particular county from one census to the next. Students can compile this data in MS Excel and generate a bar graph to show the increased immigration. This activity can help students see the relationship between increased immigration and the settlement house movement.

Additional Resources

Columbus Neighborhoods: http://www.columbusneighborhoods.org/content/godman-guild
- A collection of historic photographs from the Godman Guild archives

Godman Guild website: http://www.godmanguild.org/about-2/historical/
- Provides a detailed history of Godman Guild, including a 22-minute video documentary

Funding provided by: