

Jane Addams

Born in 1860 in Cedarville, Illinois, Jane Addams later became known as the mother of social work. Jane's father was a gentleman and owned grain mills. He was also a state senator for 16 years. Jane's mother died when she was only 3, so she was very close to her father who remarried 5 years later. Jane

attended Rockville Female Seminary where she became very involved in her schooling and began realizing her potential. She aspired to become a doctor. Jane's parents were concerned with her goal because they worried she would never get married or have a family which was expected of young ladies. To combat her ambitions, her parents took her on a tour of Europe for a year. Jane began to get very sick during this time. When they returned from Europe, Jane's father died, sending Jane into severe depression. She became a near invalid and required surgery for a curved back.

After she recovered from her depression and illness, she again went to Europe with some friends. It was on this trip that she saw Toynbee Hall, a settlement house in the slums of London. This caught Jane's eye and she decided with Ellen Starr to create a settlement house in Chicago. This became known as the Hull House, which opened on September 18, 1889. In 1893, during a depression, the Hull House was serving over two thousand people a week. They were taking care of children of working mothers, providing medical care to the sick, and fighting against waste and garbage in the streets to stop the spread of disease.

This adventure led Jane to become a social advocate. She advocated for the right of women to vote and became the first vice-president of the National American Women Suffrage Association in 1911. Jane also advocated peace and lobbied America to stay out of World War I. Jane was a founder of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Jane became the author of 11 books on varied reform issues. All of this led to numerous awards, including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931.

Jane always struggled with poor health, but she continued her work until her death in 1935.