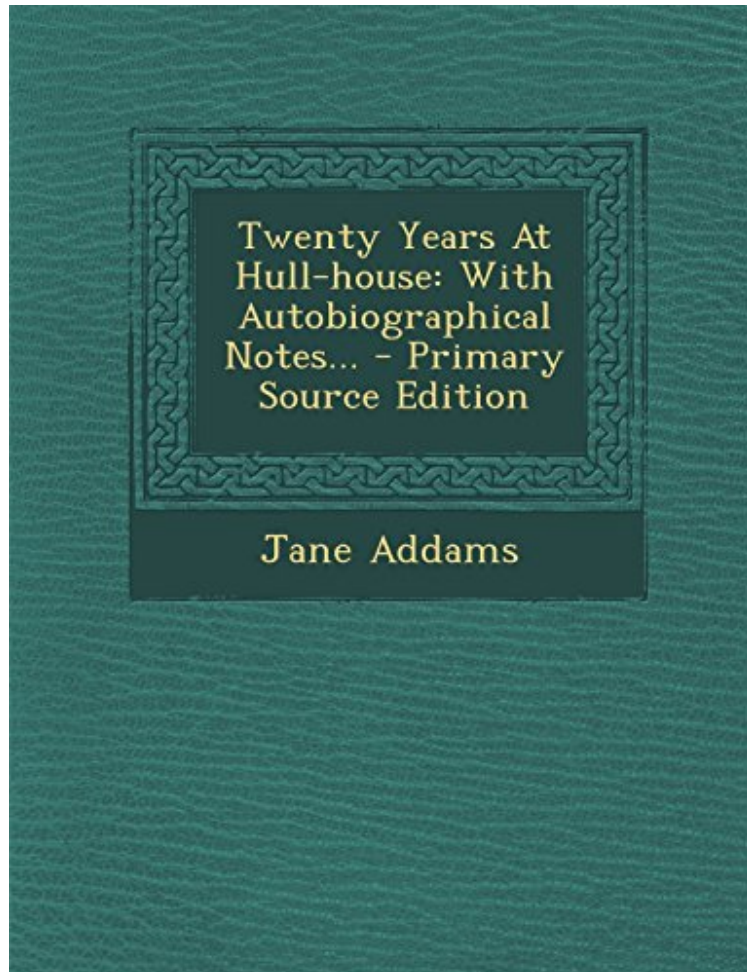


## Twenty Years at Hull-House: With Autobiographical Notes... - Primary Source Edition

Jane Addams

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2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. then this is a good book to readBy Timothy BurdickIf you are interested in the life of Jane Addams, Sociology, or in turn-of-the-century Christian Humanism, then this is a good book to read. The book has the pre-WWI optimism still found in the Social Gospel movement, but clearly written by an anti-evangelical author. Great insights into not just the work that was done at Hull House, but also a lens into all of humanity's collecive reponse to marginalized populations.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. 100+

Years YoungBy Cambiara5Jane Addams is the best of the best American heroes. Her writing sparkles with wit, kindness, and the sobriety of lived experience. If you think of Jane Addams as a Christian do-gooder from the dark ages before the Great Society think again. She was a flesh-and-blood freethinker and truth-teller for the ages who walked her talk with rare courage and humor. Read this book if you want to see how much like 2017 the first decades of the 20th century were. There's nothing old-fashioned in her thinking--20 Years at Hull House is one of those back-to-the-future stories that should be required reading before you cast a vote.6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A great woman in her time and for ours started a work that still needs to be done todayBy Michael ForetJust over one hundred years ago when she wrote this memoir, Jane Addams was an internationally famous social reformer, speaker, and writer. At a time known as The Gilded Age, when wealth was celebrated by so many as a sign of God's favor, and you couldn't be too rich or powerfulthe days of the Carnegies, Vanderbilts, Rockefellers, and their ilkJane Addams dedicated her life to improving the lot of the people who actually made all that wealth and power possible: working people and their families at the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum from the oligarchs and the plutocrats. For Jane Addams, a native of northern Illinois, that would mean living among the European immigrants and their families who lived in one of the largest and most diverse cities in the United States, Chicago. But she did it in a new and different way. Based on a then new model of social improvement created in England and known as the settlement house movement, in 1890 she and a few like-minded souls established Hull-House.Hull-House started out literally as an old if large residence, and would grow into quite a complex of adjacent and nearby buildings covering parts of several blocks. Settlement residents were largely, like Jane Addams, educated professionals who were either independently wealthy (like Addams herself, though modestly so) or who supported themselves in their professionslaw, education, medicine, business, etc.and did their settlement work in their off-duty hours. And that settlement work was varied, to say the least. The residents and volunteers engaged in a dizzying array of activities. They did child-care, taught English to immigrants from all over the European world, engaged in training for various trades, taught former rural peasants basics like cooking and sewing, taught classes at almost every level from kindergarten through graduate school, and they served the city, county, and state in many different capacities, including ground-breaking work as social workers, probation officers, health inspectors, and more. Because they understood something lots of people today seem to have forgotten or never learnedthat humans are more than just what they do for a living, more than the sum or the lack of a bank accountthey took a very holistic approach to living. In other words, they had lots of clubs and made sure there were lots of activities for people of every age and interest. To make that possible, they built spaces for gymnastics, plays, concerts, and other kinds of activities, including spaces both for art production and display. Their clubs covered every possible interest from sewing to debating to science, folklore, and almost anything else you can think of; they took field trips to local and regional museums and even did excursions on the Rock River and other nature settings.And because they were in the neighborhood they were, they did it in an almost unbelievable variety of languages and dialects. From our vantage point today, most Americans think of immigrants as Italian or German or Spanish. In fact, each of these countries had different dialects or even languages, so there was no guarantee that two people that Americans saw as Italians could understand each others' speech. Chicago was a veritable Babel! What a place and time.The same year that Jane Addams opened Hull-House, the pioneering photojournalist Jacob Riis published another one of the landmark studies of that age, *How the Other Half Lives*, which told and showed what life was like in the tenements of New York City. *Twenty Years at Hull-House* takes a different angle, but does indeed help us to learn about the other in important ways. Yes, Industrialization and its effects, including urbanization, led to improved lives for lots of Americans. But it had its dark underbelly too, and those should not be ignored. The people who helped us to see that dark underbelly should be better-known than they are.Reading this book a hundred years after it was first published, I can't help but be struck by a strong and very sad feeling of *deja vu*. Within a few decades of this book's publication many of the terrible things wrong with society that were cataloged in this remarkable memoir either improved significantly or even largely disappeared because of the concerted efforts of people like Jane Addams. The country experienced terrible calamities, hardships, and two world wars, but out of these Franklin Roosevelt and so many who had been admirers and supporters of Jane Addams fashioned the New Deal. Addams died before that work was done, but it began to right so many of the wrongs that she wrote about so forcefully in this book and other writings and speeches.Folk wisdom warns us that good times and success are not always ultimately good for us. Post-war success eventually, too put it baldly, took us from Franklin Roosevelt to Ronald Reagan and the rolling back of so much of the New Deal and its successor, the Great Society. And then, of course, came more wars, and then the great crash of 2007. Reading *Twenty Years at Hull-House* today is a very different experience than it would have been in 1957, 1967, or 2007. It is sobering to see how much of what she says about economic, political, and intellectual realities from 1890 to 1910 sound like they are hot off the press, or, more likely in our time, the internet.Today we often hear that one person or even a group of people just can't make a difference, and shouldn't even try. Jane Addams and the others who took up residence at Hull-House, and all the people in Chicago, and across the county, and around the world who supported the work of Hull-House proved just how wrong that kind of thinking is. This book is not only a valuable glimpse into the lives of our long-ago ancestors, it is also a place for us to look for good ideas about how to deal with the problems so many are facing today.I haven't

mentioned anything about Jane Addams personally, but she was an inspiring individual in so many ways, and she tells us enough of her life story for glimpses of it to shine through. Her father was a friend and political ally of Abraham Lincoln during the creation of the Republican Party. Her mother died when she was young, and she suffered from curvature of the spine. She grew up non-denominational but in the Quaker tradition, which influenced her in profound ways. Her love for learning and experiences in the kind of schools and education available to females of her age and social class are very interesting to learn about, as well as how that was changing during her young adulthood and later. Because of her socioeconomic status she was able to travel across the country and Europe, also interesting. And I'll let the curious reader discover on her or his own how interesting her private life was by reading this book, and hopefully more about her. In trying times and places for so many, Jane Addams was part of the solution, not the problem. Her life and work deserve to be better-known and emulated. This book is as important today as it was when it was published.

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