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# Old Age Relief Policy Prior to 1900:

## *The Trend Toward Restrictiveness*

By JOHN B. WILLIAMSON\*

**ABSTRACT.** Between the 17th and the 19th centuries *old age relief* policy in America became increasingly restrictive. One indication of this was the trend toward greater emphasis on the *almshouse* as opposed to "outdoor relief" and other noninstitutional alternatives. This trend can be accounted for, in part, by the emerging *market economy* and the ideological concomitants of this change. Another important factor was the influx of *immigrants* who did not share a common ethnic background with those who had come during the colonial era. *Environmental factors* such as the abundance of *land* and the physical dangers associated with *frontier life* also had a major impact on the way in which English ideas about *poor relief* were adapted and how these policies evolved over the years. These differences led to an even stronger commitment to an ideology of *individualism* than in England.

### I

#### **Introduction**

IN RECENT YEARS a number of historical studies have described trends in the status of the elderly in colonial and 19th century America.<sup>1</sup> During the past several decades there has also been much historical research on the origins of social welfare policy in the United States.<sup>2</sup> But to date there has been no systematic attempt to trace the historical development of old age relief policy. Such an analysis is necessary as a foundation for understanding the development of 20th century public policy toward the aged.

We have also witnessed recently a major shift in attitudes toward poor relief, including policy toward the dependent elderly. The trend had been for the government to assume an ever increasing role in providing economic security for the elderly, but in the past decade many of the assumptions of the Welfare State have come under attack. Friends of the elderly had told us that the aged were poor, frail, socially dependent, objects of discrimination, and above all deserving. During the 40 years between the mid 1930s and the mid 1970s the elderly benefitted from these compassionate stereotypes. The vast array of federal

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programs for the aged enacted during this period attest to the benefits of these stereotypes. But after that the American public has come to accept the view that the elderly are relatively well-off, a potent political force that votes its self-interest, and more importantly a burden on the economy that will become overwhelming in the years ahead. In short, the elderly have become a scapegoat for America's economic ills.<sup>3</sup> However, this is not the first time the elderly have been scapegoated. It happened at several points during the 19th century in response to the economic ills of that era. If we do not pay attention to this history of public policy toward the dependent elderly, we may be condemned to repeat mistakes of the past.

During the 17th and particularly the early 18th century old age relief policy was more restrictive in England than in the American colonies. But by the middle of the 19th century that policy had become more restrictive in the United States than in England. This trend raises two related questions we will want to address: Why did relief policy in the United States become increasingly restrictive over this two hundred year period? Why did relief policy become more restrictive in the United States than in England by the middle of the 19th century?

The first of these questions will be easier to deal with. Although there will be important modifications, the analysis will for the most part parallel that for the corresponding period in England. Relief policies in America were based on the English model as the majority of colonists then originated in that country. In this analysis we will focus on the impact that an emerging market economy had on relief policy.

The second question will be more difficult to deal with. An analysis that emphasizes the role of an emerging market economy and capitalist economic structures cannot by itself account for the observed differences between England and the United States. Here we will have to take into consideration social and environmental differences. Such factors as the abundance of land, the isolation of frontier communities, and the influx of immigrants affected social structures and ultimately norms and values. Such social and environmental differences had a profound influence on the ways in which English ideas about poor relief were adapted and the direction in which they evolved in the New World.

## II

### **Poor Relief in Colonial America**

DURING THE EARLY PART of the 17th century the colonial population was made up of new arrivals who tended to be young adults, but by the end of the century

the proportion who were elderly was starting to increase. We have age structure estimates for only a few communities and it is likely that there were marked differences among them. With this qualification in mind we note that at the end of the 17th century approximately 6 percent of the population was over age 60 and approximately 2 percent was over age 65.<sup>4</sup> The population was much younger than that of 17th century England.<sup>5</sup>

It might seem that poor relief would rarely have been necessary for the elderly in colonial America. Not only was the population young, it was rural with more than 90 percent living on farms.<sup>6</sup> Many of the elderly had a farm to pass on to their children. In rural areas it was common for the elderly to be cared for in old age by one of their children (often the youngest) who in return was given the homestead and some land.<sup>7</sup> Those who owned a substantial farm typically had at least some economic protection in old age. But many, particularly laborers in the towns, did not have significant economic assets to pass along to their children.<sup>8</sup>

Early American colonists were primarily from England and brought with them English ideas about how to deal with the elderly poor, particularly those embodied in the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601 and the Law of Settlement and Removal of 1662. But the policies which evolved were a product of English ideas about poverty and an environment that was very different from that of England. In the colonies there was much more land available and a much more equal distribution of wealth.<sup>9</sup>

While the abundance of land provided economic protection for some of the elderly, it created problems for others. In 1703 at least 40 percent of the aged were not living in three generational households.<sup>10</sup> The young were continually moving west to seek their fortunes and settle lands. They were often disappointed in these efforts and typically had little or no extra funds with which to help out their aging parents back east.

Many of the colonists found themselves in small isolated frontier communities. For the alleviation of those in need there was no alternative to neighborly mutual aid.<sup>11</sup> During the early years this isolation and insecurity contributed to the suppression of certain aspects of Protestant individualism.<sup>12</sup> It also contributed to community solidarity and a sense of social responsibility. One form this took was a willingness to provide for needy persons who were members of the local community.<sup>13</sup>

The early colonial settlements were willing to provide for their own elderly poor in a way that was generally adequate given the standard of living available to the nonelderly working population, but they were often unwilling to care for poor outsiders.<sup>14</sup> This reluctance was particularly problematic for those

elderly persons who were displaced by natural disasters or frontier hostilities with the French and native Americans.<sup>15</sup> An older person, particularly one who was in some way disabled or showing signs of the infirmities of old age, was not a good risk. Such persons might end up dependent on the community without having first made a sufficient contribution to justify such support.<sup>16</sup> As early as 1636 an ordinance was passed in Boston requiring that anyone entertaining an outsider for more than two weeks secure official permission. This could be denied if it seemed likely that the person would become dependent on public support.<sup>17</sup>

During the 17th century the colonies all passed statutes for dealing with the poor. It was common to base the statutes on the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601.<sup>18</sup> These statutes specified that poor relief was to be organized at the level of the local community and to be paid for by a local poor tax. They established the right of the local poor to support, but residency requirements were included making it possible to deny support to the indigent who had not lived in the community for a specified length of time.<sup>19</sup>

In these colonial statutes changes were made to suit the special needs of the colonies. There was a tendency to omit certain sections that had little applicability to the colonies such as those dealing with charitable trusts and those requiring towns to build almshouses.<sup>20</sup>

Most communities were also quick to establish statutes based on the English Law of Settlement and Removal of 1662. These statutes called for such procedures as “warning out” and “passing on” to deal with the problems of indigents from outside the community.<sup>21</sup> If newcomers seemed likely to become dependent on the community, they were told to leave (warned away) by the selectmen or constable.<sup>22</sup> A related procedure was “passing on” in which the constable from one town would escort the person to the constable in the next town. This process continued until the person was delivered back to his town of legal residence.<sup>23</sup>

A variety of procedures had evolved during the colonial period to provide care for the elderly poor. As in the English case the elderly poor tended to get lumped together with other categories of the poor—the blind, the disabled, and those with mental disorders.<sup>24</sup> Various statutes would specify that the community was responsible for providing for its poor without any effort to define the term “poor.”<sup>24</sup> It was assumed that there was general agreement as to who the poor were.

The colonists differed from their 17th and 18th century English counterparts in that they did not attribute any special value to institutionalization.<sup>26</sup> Typically relief was administered during the colonial period in such a way as to disrupt the lives of relief recipients minimally.<sup>27</sup>

If an elderly widow had her own home or a place in the home of one of her children, her relief would often take the form of a small pension.<sup>28</sup> In many communities this was the most common form of relief. In others it was more common to pay a neighbor or some other member of the community to provide care. This alternative was generally used when the widow was unable to take care of herself and there were no close relatives able to provide care.<sup>29</sup>

The most common approaches to relief for the elderly poor were the two we have described, but there were others. One of the most controversial was to auction off the poor to the lowest bidder.<sup>30</sup> This tended to minimize the cost to local taxpayers, but it had unfortunate consequences for the living conditions endured by relief recipients. Another more common form of relief was an abatement of taxes.<sup>31</sup> Those experiencing serious economic problems often had their taxes reduced or eliminated.

In some communities, particularly the larger seaport towns, almshouses were constructed. This was typically the relief alternative of last resort.<sup>32</sup> If the relief recipient required more care than could be given by a neighbor or had serious physical (or mental) health problems, then the almshouse alternative was more likely. However, unlike the English, for colonial Americans the institutional alternative was infrequently used and it was not in any way a preferred alternative.<sup>33</sup>

Not only were colonists unwilling to provide relief for indigent nonresidents, they were also reluctant to provide for residents of questionable moral character. Those who had led a corrupt life were held responsible for their poverty and could be refused relief.<sup>34</sup> The lower people's long-term social standing in the community, the more likely they were to be considered shiftless rogues worthy of little if any relief.<sup>35</sup>

In many New England towns, laws were passed making those who brought servants into the community economically responsible for them in their old age.<sup>36</sup> However, it is likely that they had some trouble enforcing such statutes.

There seems to have been considerable variability in the treatment of elderly slaves. Some, particularly those who had been domestic servants, were well treated, but many more were poorly treated. One practice was to sell off slaves before they became a burden. Some tried to free their old slaves to fend for themselves. Another common practice was to send old slaves off to live in huts in the woods. If they were fortunate enough to have relatives in the area willing to help with the provision of food, it was possible to survive for a time in the woods. While there were exceptions, in general, slaves were not well provided for, particularly when they were no longer capable of work.<sup>37</sup>

There was a *gemeinschaft* character to these small pre-industrial communities due in part to ethnic homogeneity. During the colonial years a great deal of

aid was given and the aged were provided for. But public relief monies were disbursed with the knowledge that both those giving and receiving the aid shared a common ethnic background. These were for the most part social welfare institutions for white Protestant English-Americans who made up the bulk of the colonial population.<sup>38</sup> Those who were not of English extraction tended to avoid public relief and the prevailing hostile attitude toward relief seekers of non-English background.

Various ethnic groups began to establish alternative relief institutions. As early as the 1650s we find the beginnings of such alternative charitable societies among the Scots, French, and Jews. By the 1760s one Jewish group, Shearith Israel, had developed an old age pension system.<sup>39</sup> The needy of non-English background were given support from their mutual aid societies in much the same fashion as English-Americans were given support from public relief.

By the end of the 18th century some towns, particularly port towns, had substantial indigent populations. With the growth in the size of towns there was a subtle, but important shift in attitude toward the poor. The poor had originally been viewed as neighbors or peers who had fallen on hard times. Such persons unquestionably deserved support from the community. But they were now coming to be viewed as a lower class made up of rogues, vagabonds, and other disreputable types. According to this view they were in large measure personally responsible for their poverty and should be treated accordingly.

### III

#### **19th Century Relief Policy**

DURING THE EARLY PART of the 19th century there was a sharp increase in the number of people on relief and with this a corresponding increase in the poor tax. One of the most important factors contributing to this increase was the severe depression from 1815 to 1821 brought on by the Napoleonic War.<sup>40</sup>

As was the case in England this increase in the poor tax burden led to studies of the pauperism problem. The English Poor Law Reform of 1834 which was the outcome of the major English study of pauperism also had a significant impact on thinking and policy in the United States.<sup>41</sup> Many erroneously thought that the English had decided to eliminate all relief to persons outside of institutions.<sup>42</sup> The English "reform" was used to support the decision in the United States to put a much heavier emphasis on the institutional alternative.

But policy in the United States was even more influenced by a number of studies of pauperism that were carried out by individual states. One of the most important was an 1824 study by John Yates which came to be known

as the Yates Report. It was a study of poor relief policy throughout New York State.<sup>43</sup>

One conclusion of the Yates Report was that an overly generous relief system was contributing to idleness, crime, and other forms of social pathology. One recommendation of the report was to forbid public assistance to any able-bodied person between the ages of 18 and 50. Another was that the relief to the elderly, the blind, and other such needy groups should be given only in an institution, not in their own homes.<sup>44</sup> A third recommendation was that the administrative unit for poor relief should be the county, not the town.<sup>45</sup>

In response to this report the State of New York enacted the County Poorhouse Act (1824) which called for the construction of at least one almshouse in each county in the state.<sup>46</sup> Each state took a somewhat different approach for dealing with the sharp increase in the cost of relief, but the trend during the Jacksonian era was, as in New York State, toward the institutional alternative.<sup>47</sup>

This movement toward the almshouse for dealing with relief of the elderly poor and other needy groups was not confined to poor relief. It must be seen as part of a more general movement at that time toward institutionalization for dealing with criminals and the mentally ill as well as the poor.<sup>48</sup>

The extent of the shift from outdoor relief (relief to persons living in their own homes) to indoor relief (relief in an institution) did vary from state to state and from one community to another. But there was a very definite shift in policy toward the almshouse alternative.<sup>49</sup> During the colonial period almshouses were for the most part confined to the large port towns, but by the middle of the 19th century every town of any size had an almshouse.<sup>50</sup> By the end of the Civil War 80 percent of those receiving long-term relief in Massachusetts were in institutions.<sup>51</sup> In some states, particularly in the South, the proportion was lower. But in others, such as Maryland, it may have been higher.<sup>52</sup>

Between 1825 and 1860 in Boston from a fourth to a third of relief expenditures went to outdoor relief; the rest went to indoor relief.<sup>53</sup> From this evidence it is clear that more public money was being spent on relief in institutions than on outdoor relief, but it is also evident that a substantial fraction of relief expenditures still went to people living in their own homes.<sup>54</sup> In New York State during this same period outdoor relief accounted for between a third and a half of relief expenditures. But during periods of financial panic and depression the proportion receiving outdoor relief did increase considerably. For example, there was a sharp increase in outdoor relief in response to the Panic of 1857.<sup>55</sup>

While a significant proportion of the population, including many elderly persons, continued to receive outdoor relief, the tendency to emphasize indoor relief continued for the rest of the century.<sup>56</sup> By the end of the century most



of the almshouses had become heavily populated with the elderly. Even as early as 1848 thirty percent of those in the Blockley Almshouse in Philadelphia were elderly.<sup>57</sup>

#### IV

#### **Conclusion**

IT SHOULD NOT BE ASSUMED, HOWEVER, that the only sources of relief during the 19th century were those controlled by the state or county and financed with public tax monies. There were many ethnic mutual aid societies which had been established during the colonial period. There were, as well, several utopian and other communal societies established in response to the isolation of the frontier. These communities had their own means of caring for the elderly and needy. The Shakers, well established by 1742, had very carefully worked out laws governing family structure. All private property was given to the community for care and use; in return, the family received food, lodging, clothing, and assurance that each member would be cared for in old age.<sup>58</sup> The separatists at Zoar and the Amana communal societies grew out of groups of immigrants with a common heritage but greatly differing financial resources. It was due to the "practical necessity of looking to the temporal welfare of all the members" that they became communally organized.<sup>59</sup> Among the Amish a small home for elderly parents was often built on the farm of one of the children. If the elderly were unable to care for themselves they were cared for in their children's home.<sup>60</sup> If unable to care for their own, and if relatives were not available, the church would assist them. There was a great deal of security in joining these utopian communities as they assured members of having food, shelter, a job, education for their children, and care in old age.<sup>61</sup> Also in joining fraternal societies, like the Masonic Order, imported from England in colonial times.

By the middle of the 19th century indoor relief predominated in the United States while outdoor relief predominated in England.<sup>62</sup> This reflected a significant difference in relief policy between the two nations. Policy in England was now more restrictive than it had been during the Elizabethan era, but it was less restrictive than in the United States. This difference is particularly noteworthy in light of the generally less restrictive policies in America during the early colonial era.

With the evidence that we have considered to this point we are now in a position to address the two central questions of this paper: Why did the institutional response to relief that was advocated both in England and the United States come to be so much more extensively used in the latter country? Why

did relief policies in the United States become so much more restrictive between the early colonial era and the Jacksonian era? We will address the second question first.

Various theories have been offered to account for the dramatic shift toward institutionalization during the Jacksonian era. One suggested by Andrew Scull is that it was a response to the imperatives of the developing capitalist market economy.<sup>63</sup> A market economy produces structural pressures to get as much work from labor as possible at as low a wage as possible. If certain categories of deviants and dependents are isolated in institutions, this frees a greater proportion of the labor force to participate fully in the work force and allows them to support their families on lower wages.<sup>64</sup> At the time it was assumed that a greater emphasis on the almshouse alternative would also make the administration of poor relief more efficient and economical. The harshness of this approach would discourage all but the most needy from seeking assistance.<sup>65</sup> Institutions served as a mechanism to discipline the labor force. They served as reminders to those who would consider refusing to accept work at the going rate.

This line of argument can be used to account for the trend toward institutional care in both England and the United States. But it does not adequately account for the evidence that by the mid 19th century the practice was more common in the United States than in England. At the time England had a much more fully developed capitalist economy than did the United States.

To account for this difference it is useful to take a more Weberian approach by considering the influence of the Protestant ideology that the early colonists brought to the New World.<sup>66</sup> The individualism and work ethic of the Protestant ideology were present in both England and the New World, but the social and environmental contexts were very different. In England there was less opportunity for the poor to significantly improve their lot through individual effort and initiative. In colonial America there was an abundance of land, a high demand for labor, and a more fluid social structure.<sup>67</sup> This difference in opportunities for social mobility made it more likely that the poor would be held responsible for their poverty. To remain poor in America where so many opportunities existed suggested that the person must be very lazy or unusually inept.<sup>68</sup> The American environment—the abundant land and the fluid social structure—contributed to a harsher stand with respect to the poor than was found in England.

Shifts in land policies and holdings in the 1800s made it increasingly more difficult, however, for outsiders to settle and set up traditional subsistence farms. The panic of 1837 found landowners unable to resell their lands at a profit as

they had intended, and money lenders could not collect on their mortgages.<sup>69</sup> Land renting, which began as early as 1823, became quite customary by 1836.<sup>70</sup> The rising value of land made it difficult for settlers to move as they had hoped to from laborer or tenant, to part owner, and eventually to full owner which had been a common means of upward mobility during the 18th century.<sup>71</sup> By 1850 new American settlers without capital were virtually denied the option of ownership. Thus the myth of the land of opportunity, where anyone could settle and prosper, was maintained, while that opportunity in actuality was rapidly decreasing. It is estimated that by 1860 approximately 20 out of every hundred persons engaged in agriculture were farm laborers, and this average grew to 33 per hundred by 1870.<sup>72</sup> Although warned not to emigrate from Europe or the east without capital, many found themselves on the edge of the frontier destitute and unable to start their own farms.<sup>73</sup>

The impact of this change in land availability and its attendant land policies on the aging American population was significant. Unlike the traditional family organization mentioned earlier, wherein the family homestead provided security for the aged, many who had presumed they would come to own their farms found themselves unable to meet mortgage payments and others had rented land sold out from under them. As a result many elderly settlers became drifters without any source of economic security in their old age.<sup>74</sup> There were large wealth differences between laborers, tenants, and estate owners which tended to break down the unity and homogeneity of the frontier society. The mutual support and community identification of the colonial era gave way to more individualistic alternatives for self preservation. Privilege, individualism, and opportunism became as predominant as principles of social life on the frontier as in the east.<sup>75</sup>

During the early 1800s attitudes towards the poor began to shift in part due to the changing ethnic composition of this segment of the population. These new immigrant groups were not only culturally different, but they were also failing to conform to the American norm of caring for their own.<sup>76</sup> The dramatic influx of immigrants during the 19th century had a profound impact on both the size and ethnic composition of American cities.<sup>77</sup> With this increase public assistance for the first time became relief primarily for those with non-English backgrounds.

Americans began to change their attitudes concerning the community's responsibility to meet, adequately and nonpunitively, the needs of dependent segments of the population. The poor and the aged began to lose their status as deserving of aid. This reaction among the English-Americans who dominated government and public policy making was one of the main factors resulting

in the rapid growth of almshouses and the trend towards indoor relief.<sup>78</sup> There was much less support for outdoor relief and indoor relief became the norm. The changing ethnic composition of the poor must be emphasized in any effort to explain why relief policies became more restrictive in America than in ethnically more homogeneous England.

Labor force statistics on employment by industry for the years 1800 to 1900 indicate a trend towards manufacturing and trade with a corresponding trend away from agriculture.<sup>79</sup> An increasing number of immigrants were entering the country and staying in the large cities to work in the textile industry as well as such heavy industries as iron and steel. With industrialization and the growth of large cities, the gap between the wealthy and the poor increased. Immigrants were stranded in the east without capital to buy land in the west. Without property of their own, elderly workers were often left without any means of support when they became too old for the available jobs.

During the period between the Civil War and the end of the century, public policy toward the elderly poor did not become more generous. It was an era of unsympathetic attitudes towards the elderly as well as the poor.<sup>80</sup> The social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer became very influential in the United States.<sup>81</sup> In fact, the ideas of Herbert Spencer received an even more favorable reception in the United States than in England.<sup>82</sup>

The social Darwinists not only opposed all forms of public relief to the poor, but also went so far as to oppose private charity as well, although not so strongly.<sup>83</sup> The social Darwinists were callous in the public policies they suggested for all categories of the poor, including the elderly poor. Relief to the elderly poor, so they believed, would undermine the incentive for the nonaged to work hard and to be provident.<sup>84</sup>

The scientific charity movement was another important English influence on relief policy in the United States. The first American Charity Organization Society (COS) was established in 1877.<sup>85</sup> The ideology of the COS movement was clearly influenced by social Darwinism.<sup>86</sup> The stated goal was to organize charity in a scientific manner. The COS leaders made it a point to assert that they would not be giving out any relief funds. Instead the COS would serve as a clearing house for persons seeking relief. They would screen applicants and where appropriate refer them to other relief granting agencies.

The decision to be referral agencies did not itself reflect a restrictive relief policy, but their views on the granting of relief did. Relief was viewed as at best a necessary evil.<sup>87</sup> The mission of the scientific charity movement was to encourage people to be self-sufficient and to make do with as little relief as possible. They sought to substitute counseling and moral uplift for the direct

distribution of relief funds.<sup>88</sup> The destitute elderly who decided to forgo relief so as to avoid the stigma of becoming paupers (public dependents) were praised for their choice.<sup>89</sup>

Chapters of the COS spread throughout the country. By the turn of the century there were 138 COS organizations around the nation.<sup>90</sup> While the movement does not seem to have changed what was already a very restrictive attitude toward relief, it was one factor that reinforced a continuation of restrictive relief policies.

#### Notes

1. See W. Andrew Achenbaum, *Old Age in the New Land* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978); David H. Fischer, *Growing Old in America*, expanded edition (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978); John Demos, "Old Age in Early New England," in Michael Gordon, ed., *The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective*, second edition (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978).

2. See David M. Schneider, *The History of Public Welfare in New York State 1609-1866* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1938); Robert W. Kelso, *The History of Public Poor Relief in Massachusetts, 1620-1920* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1922); Marcus W. Jernegan, *Laboring and Dependent Classes in Colonial America, 1607-1783* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1931); Blanche D. Coll, *Perspectives in Public Welfare* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969); Robert H. Bremner, *From the Depths* (New York: New York University Press, 1956).

3. Robert H. Binstock, "The Aged as Scapegoat," *Gerontologist* 23 (April, 1983), pp. 136-43.

4. These estimates are based on evidence from New Rochelle, New York for 1698; see Fischer *op. cit.*, p. 272.

5. Peter Laslett, "Societal Development and Aging," in Robert H. Binstock and Ethel Shanas, eds., *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1976), p. 99.

6. Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

8. One estimate is that a fifth of Whites were laborers without significant property holdings. The same source estimates that in the late 18th century this "permanent proletariat" may have been as high as 30 percent of the population if Blacks are also considered; see Jackson T. Main, *The Social Structure of Revolutionary America* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 271-72.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-11.

10. Michael Zimmerman, "Old Age Poverty in Pre-Industrial New York City," in Beth B. Hess, ed., *Growing Old* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1976), p. 83.

11. William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1962).

12. Fischer, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-10.

13. Walter I. Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State* (New York: Free Press, 1974), p. 17.

14. See David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum* (Boston: Little Brown, 1971), p. 5; Trattner, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-26; Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 61. In 1720, for example, a law was enacted in New Jersey that instructed justices of the peace to search arriving ships for "old persons" as

well as "maimed, lunatic, or any vagabond and vagrant persons," and to send such persons away so as to reduce pauperism in the colony; see James Leiby, *Charity and Corrections in New Jersey* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1967), p. 7.

15. During King Philip's War (1675-1677) there was an influx of "impoverished refugees" from frontier settlements to towns such as Boston, New York, and Newport. In Newport alone, more than 500 of these refugees arrived in 1675; see Trattner, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.

16. In Plymouth Colony the two major reasons people were refused inhabitation were: (1) incompatibility in religious beliefs and (2) likelihood of early public dependency, a factor that was particularly problematic for the aged; see Robert W. Kelso, *The History of Poor Relief in Massachusetts, 1620-1920* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1922), pp. 35-36.

17. Trattner, *op. cit.*, p. 19. Three years later an ordinance was passed which required that a townsman provide security (post bond) for any such persons; see Neil B. Betten, "American Attitudes toward the Poor: A Historical Overview," *Current History* 65 (1973), pp. 2-5.

18. Coll, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

19. In 1642 Plymouth Colony established the first residency requirement for relief eligibility; see Trattner, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

20. Stefan A. Riesenfeld, "The Formative Era of American Assistance Law," *California Law Review* 43 (1955), pp. 175-223.

21. Marcus W. Jernegan, *Laboring and Dependent Classes in Colonial America, 1607-1783* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1931), p. 193; Eleanor Parkhurst, "Poor Relief in a Massachusetts Village in the 18th Century," *Social Service Review* 11 (September, 1937), p. 446.

22. Trattner, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

23. In New York State some 1,800 people were subject to the process of "passing on" in 1822 alone; see Coll, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

24. Raymond A. Mohl, *Poverty in New York, 1783-1825* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p. 7.

25. Rothman, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

26. The workhouse was far more common in 18th century England than in the United States; see *ibid.*, p. 31.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

28. Mohl, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

29. Parkhurst, *op. cit.*, p. 446.

30. Coll, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.

31. Trattner, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

32. Rothman, *op. cit.*, p. 30. In 1696 the town of New York rented a house for sick paupers and in 1736 the town's almshouse was constructed. By 1772 there were some 425 paupers in the facility; see Mohl, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-45.

33. Zimmerman, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

34. Rothman, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

35. Fischer argues that "old age seems actually to have intensified the contempt visiting upon a poor man." He also points out that in some cases poor widows were driven out of the community by neighbors who feared increases in the poor taxes; see *op. cit.*, pp. 60-63.

36. Trattner, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

37. Fischer, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-66.

38. Alfred J. Kutzik, "American Social Provision for the Aged: An Historical Perspective," in Donald E. Gelfand and Alfred J. Kutzik, eds., *Ethnicity and Aging* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1979), p. 34.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
40. Coll, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
41. Rothman, *op. cit.*, p. 157.
42. Coll, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
43. For a thorough analysis of the Yates report see Schneider, *op. cit.*, Chapters 12 and 13.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 228.
45. This shift turned out to be important because it tended to make the poor more distant from the middle class. Due in part to this shift they were more likely to be viewed as members of a lower class than as neighbors who had fallen on hard times.
46. Schneider, *op. cit.*, pp. 235–46.
47. Rothman, *op. cit.*, pp. 180–205.
48. Rothman, *op. cit.*
49. Mohl, *op. cit.*, pp. 8–9.
50. Rothman, *op. cit.*, pp. 30–31, 184; Coll, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
51. Rothman, *op. cit.*, p. 183.
52. Coll, *op. cit.*, pp. 30–32.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
54. By the end of the Civil War the number of long-term relief recipients in the almshouses was much greater than the number on outdoor relief, but if we take into consideration those persons receiving casual relief on a very short-term basis, then the total number of outdoor relief recipients was greater; see Rothman, *op. cit.*, p. 183.
55. Coll, *op. cit.*, pp. 29–30.
56. Rothman, *op. cit.*, p. 205.
57. Benjamin J. Klebaner, *Public Poor Relief in America, 1790–1860* (New York: Arno Press, 1976), p. 211.
58. Henri Desroche, *The American Shakers from Neo-Christianity to Presocialism* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), p. 190. The Shakers came to live long lives. The average age for the elders increased from 42 to 71 between 1790 and 1889 in one community and increased from 35 to 82 during the same time period in another community; see Edward D. Andrews, *The People Called Shakers* (New York: Dover Publications, 1953), p. 198.
59. Desroche, *ibid.*, p. 193.
60. Elmer Schwieder and Dorothy Schwieder, *A Peculiar People: Iowa's Old Order Amish* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State Univ. Press, 1975), p. 67.
61. Robert V. Hine, *California's Utopian Colonies* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1966), p. 167.
62. In England in 1850 approximately 11 percent of those receiving relief were in institutions; see Michael E. Rose, "The Allowance System Under the New Poor Law," *Economic History Review* 19 (1966), pp. 607–20. But in the United States a majority, (by the end of the Civil War, 80 percent), were in institutions; see Coll, *op. cit.*, p. 29; Rothman, *op. cit.*, p. 183.
63. Andrew T. Scull, *Decarceration* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977), pp. 15–40.
64. Scull argues that in the 19th century the working and lower classes found the care of the aged and incapacitated relatives an intolerable burden, given the problems they were having providing for their own subsistence; see *ibid.*, pp. 128–129.
65. Edgar S. Furniss, *The Position of the Laborer in a System of Nationalism* (New York: Kelly, 1965), p. 107; Scull, *ibid.*, p. 26.
66. By the early 19th century the laissez-faire ideology of classical economics, such as that of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, was reinforcing the earlier Protestant Ethical ideology described

by Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Talcott Parsons, trans., (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958). Poor relief was viewed by those classical economists as a violation of a person's "natural right" to accumulate wealth.

67. Rothman, *op. cit.*, pp. 156–59.

68. This view can also be linked to the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment resulted from the growth of science as reflected in the work of Newton and the thinking of philosophers such as John Locke. Persons in this tradition argued that everyone possesses reason and can use this reason to understand the universe. The perspective also put an emphasis on equality among people and the belief that it was possible to solve social problems such as poverty. But, as Trattner points out, it led many to the conclusion that the poor themselves were responsible for their poverty, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

69. Paul Wallace Gates, *Landlords and Tenants on the Prairie Frontier: Studies in American Land Policy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1969), p. 5.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

71. *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 139–41.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 304. In Iowa townships for example, the 1870 census indicates that of the agricultural population 53 percent owned farms and 47 percent owned no land.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 324. By the end of the 19th century agricultural laborers and tenants outnumbered full owner operated farms in several states and all of the Upper Mississippi Valley.

74. David Ellis, ed., *The Frontier in American Development: Essays in Honor of Paul Wallace Gates* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1969), pp. xxii–xxiv. In Kentucky, Vermont, and Tennessee from 1797 to 1830 the state legislatures provided reimbursements to evicted settlers for improvements they made on lands which had been previously claimed. In California occupancy laws were established temporarily in 1856. In other states occupancy laws had been in effect as early as 1797 to protect absentee landowners and settlers from false claims.

75. Gates, *op. cit.*, pp. 323–25.

76. Kutzik, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

77. Zimmerman, *op. cit.*, p. 87. For example, in New York City the population grew from 124,000 in 1820 to 313,000 in 1840.

78. Kutzik, *op. cit.*, Settlers on the frontier until about 1840 were primarily from New England and the Middle States with the foreign born comprising only 10 to 15 percent of the population. These were mostly from the British Isles. By 1860 the numbers had changed dramatically.

79. The labor force in agriculture decreased from 74 percent in 1800 to 55 percent in 1850 and to 40 percent in 1900. Between 1850 and 1900 the percent in manufacturing increased from 15 percent to 20 percent and the number in trades from 6 to 14 percent. See Series D 167-181 "Labor Force and Employment, by Industry: 1800 to 1960" in U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), p. 139.

80. Achenbaum, *op. cit.*, pp. 51–54; Joe R. Feagin, *Subordinating the Poor* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), pp. 34–37.

81. Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought 1860–1915* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1944), pp. 18–19. Social Darwinism provided a "scientific" basis for many tenets of laissez-faire ideology including the view that the only remedy for poverty is individual self-help; see Bremner, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

82. David Duncan, *The Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer* (New York: Appleton and Company, 1908), p. 128.

83. Trattner, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

84. While Darwin briefly discusses the application of his ideas to the poor, it was Herbert



Spencer who coined the phrase "survival of the fittest." Social Darwinism combined laissez-faire economics with the doctrine of survival of the fittest; see Charles Darwin, *The Origin of the Species and the Descent of Man* (New York: Modern Library, 1936), p. 501.

85. The COS movement originated in London in 1869; see Coll, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

86. Feagin, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

87. Josephine S. Lowell, *Public Relief and Private Charity* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1884), p. 89.

88. The motto of the COS was "not alms but a friend." The reference here is to the corps of middle class volunteers or "friendly visitors" who provided sympathy, hope, encouragement and supposedly help with such problems as indolence, intemperance, and improvidence; see Trattner, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

89. The COS considered its approach scientific in part because of the thorough investigation of the applicant's financial situation. Relief, if given, was to take into consideration need. Also it was to be more efficient by avoiding fraud and duplication of benefits from different agencies; see *ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

### ***Marine Resource Journal Founded***

CRANE, RUSSAK & Company, Inc., publishers, of 3 East 44th Street, New York, N.Y. 10017, have established a new scholarly quarterly, *Marine Resource Economics: An International Journal*. Jon G. Sutinen of the University of Rhode Island is editor. He credits, in an editorial, Ben Russak, the publisher, for the idea of such a journal, feeling the need for a forum for scholarly research related to the development and management of fisheries. Although the first three issues are concerned with fisheries economics, future issues will be concerned with seafood trade, offshore oil and gas, and marine pollution and other marine environmental issues.

The new journal will publish 400 pages a year. Subscriptions are \$78 a year and should be sent to the above address. Manuscripts should be submitted to the editor-in-chief, Dr. Sutinen, Department of Resource Economics, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI 02881. Crane, Russak now publishes six journals in the ocean sciences.

W.L.

### ***In the Eyes of Princes***

LANDS AND PEOPLES are, in the eyes of princes, nothing but objects of princely ownership; the former form the basis of sovereignty, the latter the appurtenances of landownership. From the people who live in "his" land the prince demands obedience and loyalty; he regards them almost as his property.<sup>1</sup>

LUDWIG VON MISES

1. L. von Mises, *Nation, State, and Society*, Leland B. Yeager, trans. (New York and London: New York Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 32-33.