



“The Paupers’ Removal”: The Politics of Clarina Howard Nichols

Clarina Howard Nichols . . . was among the few female activists who not only contemplated women’s role in politics in the 1850s but also devised a rationale to justify her entrance into this male sphere.

By MARILYN S. BLACKWELL

In the mid-nineteenth century, most middle-class white women in America hardly contemplated entering the field of politics. If they held strong opinions about political issues, they were expected to use their influence to shape the votes of husbands, fathers, or sons. In fact, if they considered involvement in politics at all, they quickly concluded that it was not only outside their appropriate sphere of action, but clearly distasteful as well. Politics required an appearance before public audiences, a profession of partisan loyalties, and the possibility of mingling with men at party caucuses, behavior that was inconsistent with nineteenth-century standards of womanly demeanor. Bostonian Mary Livermore, who would become a famous lecturer after the Civil War and campaign for woman suffrage in Vermont, admitted that in the 1850s, “I would have deemed it something terrible, horrible for a woman to come out before the public and talk.”¹ In her diary of 1862, Sarah Morgan of Louisiana wrote extensively about politics but proclaimed, “I abhor politics, and women who meddle with them, above all.”²

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*Clarina Howard Nichols
(mid-1850s). Courtesy of Grace
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Clarina Howard Nichols (1810–1885), a journalist and reformer living in Brattleboro, Vermont, was among the few female activists who not only contemplated women’s role in politics in the 1850s but also devised a rationale to justify her entrance into this male sphere. She developed her political skills between 1847 and 1853 as she wrote editorials for the *Windham County Democrat* and participated in a series of woman’s rights conventions in the Northeast. Before her involvement she considered politics “degrading” and admitted that “the propriety of woman voting had been . . . a stumbling block; the idea was repelling.”³ This article re-prints one of her columns, outlining how she reconciled politics with her image of womanhood. It also reveals how her conception of women’s role in the polity, coupled with her concerns about injustice to the poor, led to a broader claim for human rights. In “The Paupers’ Removal,” which appeared in the *Democrat* on March 2, 1853, Nichols proposed a state welfare system more than a century before its enactment. The following introduction provides the historical background for the document, and the conclusion explores the basis of her political theory and her benevolence.

INTRODUCTION

In the early nineteenth century many middle-class women in the Northeast became involved in civic life through participation in voluntary benevolent associations, stemming at first from their religious affil-

iations. By the 1830s and 1840s, a few women had expanded their activities by supporting reform efforts; they advocated temperance and moral reform, opposed Indian removal, and became active in antislavery societies.⁴ Women's involvement in political parties was generally limited to appearances in rallies and parades as standard bearers and symbols of party virtue. A few writers, like Anne Royall of Washington, D.C. and Anna Ella Carroll of Maryland, sometimes labeled "woman politicians," entered the combative field of partisan journalism, unconnected with a community of reformers.⁵ Clarina Nichols developed a following as a partisan journalist and also identified closely with the reform movements, particularly temperance and woman's rights.

Known by her readers as the "lady Editress" of Brattleboro and praised as both "sensible and sarcastic," Nichols gained access to political debate through her role as a journalist.⁶ Raised with considerable wealth in an ambitious Baptist family in West Townshend, Clarina had received relatively little formal education before she entered a disastrous marriage, which ended in poverty, separation, and divorce. With three children to feed, she returned home, hoping to make a living through her writing. In 1843 she became both editorial assistant and wife to George W. Nichols, publisher and editor of the *Windham County Democrat* since 1836.⁷ Writing under her "husband's hat" for the Democratic Party, Nichols campaigned for candidates and participated in partisan debate over the tariff, the national bank, and the Mexican War. Lacing her political commentaries with moral overtones, she expanded readership by employing a polite, genteel style and reprinting sentimental stories, temperance allegories, and homespun advice about family life.⁸ On the question of slavery, the Nicholises equivocated at first. Avidly opposed to slavery but tied to the Democratic Party, they eventually broke with the party establishment and joined the free-soil movement, a coalition of former Liberty, Democratic, and Whig men. The shift freed Clarina to inject her moral concerns over the mistreatment of slaves into partisan debate.⁹

By the early 1850s, Nichols was writing under her own name and had become a champion of reform; she advocated temperance, free soil, and especially married women's property rights. Based on her own experience, Nichols recognized the difficulties married women faced when husbands failed to provide support. She argued that mothers, deprived of control over their property and earnings within marriage, needed access to the means to support their children. Partly in response to her columns, Vermont legislators passed a modest reform bill in 1847, which protected wives' inherited property from their husbands' debts and allowed women to make wills.¹⁰ Identifying with other female reformers,

Nichols began attending national woman's rights conventions held in the Northeast, at which they identified issues and developed strategies to improve the status of women. Nichols gave a major address at the second convention in Worcester, Massachusetts, in October 1851, which catapulted her into national recognition.¹¹

In her columns for the *Democrat*, Nichols combined her interest in women's issues with a wider reform agenda, including improvements in the poor relief system. During a trip to Pennsylvania in June 1852 to attend another woman's rights convention, she visited the Delaware County Poor House and reported about the efficiency and kindness with which the female administrator supervised ninety inmates. Concluding that "woman's humane influence" made women far more suited to care for the "afflicted and the suffering" than men, she advocated not only that women needed opportunities for useful work outside the home but also that their participation would benefit society.¹²

To wield political influence in print was one form of doing politics, but Nichols sought more direct participation in the political process. In a departure from her accustomed exercise with her pen—and from women's traditional sphere of influence—in October 1852 she gave a public address to the Vermont Legislature in support of a petition seeking women's right to vote in school meetings.¹³ Emboldened by the success of her speech, despite the failure of the petition, Nichols became even more enamored of politics and the potential for women's political action. In the next few months she campaigned diligently both in print and on the lecture circuit in support of a referendum on Vermont's adoption of the Maine Law, which would criminalize the sale and possession of alcohol in the state. Explaining to Susan B. Anthony that all the other editors in the county had "taken to the fence," she insisted that it was "time that women who are the greatest sufferers should be heard to speak of their own sex."¹⁴ Less than a month after passage of this new liquor law, a buoyant Nichols penned an editorial announcing her theory of women's politics and advocating improvements in poor relief.

THE PAUPERS' REMOVAL

Windham County Democrat, MARCH 2, 1853

"It isn't a *woman's* vocation to write politics; her sphere is at home," says one and another, and we always say *amen*. 'Astonished' are you, gentle reader! And did you think that Mrs. Nichols "meddles with politics" because she finds their details congenial with her tastes, or for any reason but that politics *meddle* with the happiness of home and its most sacred relations, with *woman* and all that is dearest to the affections and hopes of a true woman! If you dreamed

that politics have any hold upon our sympathies not strictly belonging to their power over the *homes* of the land for weal or woe—any claim upon our time and efforts not identified with our own home interests, you have done us grievous wrong, dear reader, and we pray you just listen to a brief chapter of state policy which was forced upon our notice, a few days since, and say if women, as the “guardian angels” of the “*sanctity* of home” and the “inviolableness of the home relations,” have not a call to *write* politics, to *talk* politics!

We were waiting, a few days since, at a railroad station in a town some miles north of our home, when the “Overseer of the Poor” arrived, bringing a family consisting of a father, mother and five children. The family had applied to the town for aid, and the town had ordered their removal to another town some sixty or seventy miles distant, as being the legal residence of the father, and, according to the laws of the State, bound to furnish the support. The circumstance of their removal was nothing new or startling; but its very commonness moved our wonder that “men noted for wisdom and virtue” and abundantly familiar with the inhumanities and property waste of such a system, had, year after year, sat in our legislative halls and moved no resolution or order of inquiry after a better way than the present, of removing the sick and infirm and helpless poor from town to town for support. . . . The mother was born and, we were told, had always lived in the town from which they were being sent. She had married a worthless, drinking man, whose capacity for consumption, added to five little hungry mouths, exceeded her ability to provide for, and so she had been obliged to call on the town to assist her in her “*home duties*.” . . . We couldn’t help thinking how, if the authorities who make laws, had secured to her her own earnings, the drunken husband would have been kept sober enough of his time to earn his own rum and food; and she have been saved the necessity of asking, and the town of assisting her in the discharge of the duties of her “*peculiar sphere*.”

But we do not purpose to dwell upon this single and by no means extreme case. We have seen the aged couple, members of a Christian church, warned out of a town where four years residence had won them the esteem of the good; and not because they had applied for aid were they thus rudely warned to return to the town in which they had previously resided, but because it had become morally certain that, “if they didn’t die before” it happened, they *would be unable to support themselves*, and, if not warned out, would gain a residence and become a tax on the town in which they then were. We have seen removals of the sick and helpless from among friends, to the care of strangers, at an expense which would have gone far to make them comfortable where they were, and at the risk of life too. We have seen, year after year, that more money is expended in lawsuits, contesting, or pressing the obligations of particular towns to support paupers, than would suffice to keep said paupers in comfort. And we have wondered at the *impolicy* which continues so heathenish a system—a system which any one of our “wise men” or good would be willing and anxious to have allotted [sic] provisions. There is but a single class in community particularly benefitted by this system, and that

comprises the lawyers, who—Heaven save them—are doomed, poor fellows, to fatten on the leanness and misery of one half of all their clients; and in pauper cases, *all* the subjects of lawsuits.

And now, reader—*voting, lawmaking* reader—in virtue of the fact that a large proportion of the paupers are women and children, those “deities” and “cherubs” which make home the “delightful retreat to which men retire from a troublesome world for rest and soothing”—we ask you to think of our proposition, that instead of *Town* paupers, we have only *State* paupers. . . . An arrangement by which towns should draw monies from the State treasury for the support of the poor, the expense being provided for by a State tax, would dispense with all this removing of paupers, and also with the expensive litigation between towns—of which we have examples yearly in our county courts—as to their legal residence.

Another thing, freemen. As the annual March meeting is close at hand, we put in our annual petition that the poor shall not be *set up at auction!* but have comforts provided for them, as if we, who have every comfort ourselves, were expecting to occupy their berths by-and-by.

WOMEN IN POLITICS

Throughout her political career, Clarina Howard Nichols sought to uphold her image as a genteel lady, a “true woman” of the nineteenth century, responsible for creating the domestic environment that lawmakers revered. Opening her column with a display of her commitment to the “*sanctity* of home” and woman’s true vocation, she disarmed potential critics, those accustomed to challenging outspoken women. Joseph Barrett of Middlebury, a leading Vermont Whig, had resisted Nichols’s attempt to address the legislature by suggesting she would “make herself ridiculous” and heartily disapproving of her “scramble for the breeches!”¹⁵ To maintain her femininity and simultaneously influence public policy, Nichols linked the “happiness of home” with politics, hoping to show how lawmakers influenced the everyday lives of Vermont women and why they had a right to be heard in political debate.

By exploiting the tenets of the “cult of domesticity”—the ideology dictating a woman’s role in the home—Nichols gained moral authority as a political commentator. In her opening paragraph, she prepared her “gentle” readers to listen to the opinions of a woman of great delicacy and sympathy, who would normally refrain from discussing political issues if it were not for their intrusion into her “home interests.” She hoped not only to convince male readers that she was maintaining gender boundaries but also to educate women, the “guardian angels” of the home, about their connection to politics.

These references to women’s responsibility for domestic happiness reflected the dominant middle-class culture of the mid-nineteenth century,

not the labor many women were performing on farms, in workshops, and in factories. As the development of a commercial and industrial economy separated men's work from the home, a compensating ideal arose for women as mothers and domestic managers. The ideal wife devoted her time to creating a sanctuary of virtue, piety, and affection at home and to educating her children as citizens in the new republic. Nichols's reference to the home as a place of "sacred relations" expressed a conception of marriage and family life elevating the importance of wives and mothers and equating women with home and virtue. Women's isolation from the corruption of business and politics supposedly assured both their superior morality and their social usefulness as moral arbiters of the nation. Despite her distance from the centers of urban life where this ideal emerged, Nichols had lived in New York City and become exposed to this concept of womanhood through her wide reading in evangelical and women's literature. Moreover, by the 1850s, the "canon of domesticity," in a somewhat modified form incorporating the value of women's household work, had thoroughly penetrated the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont.¹⁶ By establishing her feminine credentials, Nichols claimed her position as a woman of integrity and her social leadership as a member of the rising middle class.

Nichols was not alone in her effort to justify her involvement in politics through moral overtones. Since the 1830s female abolitionists had regularly defended their political activities by describing slave mistreatment and their duty as Christians and as true women to defend the downtrodden. Their presence on the lecture podium often stirred controversy from ministers and male journalists who challenged their political opinions by questioning their femininity and their right to speak to mixed audiences. By the 1850s, when abolition had become decidedly more political, causing divisions among northern Democrats and Whigs, a few of these women were seen campaigning for antislavery candidates whom they claimed would purify politics.¹⁷ Reverend Antoinette Brown found politics distasteful, but she resolved to become a "practical politician" by "talking politics . . . both in private and in public." In 1852 she rationalized her promotion of abolitionist Gerrit Smith for Congress in Madison County, New York, by noting that Smith would bring "justice, equity, and righteousness into politics." A year later, Brown found herself excluded from the lecture podium at the World Temperance Convention in New York City because of her sex. Undaunted, she continued to promote the necessity of women's efforts at "purification of the body politic."¹⁸

As they became involved in partisan debate, women used their reputation for piety and disinterestedness to counter the claim that their

partisanship was corrupting. “*Principle* should be the ground of action,” Nichols insisted, “*expediency* should be rebuked and we expect it will be so in the rout of whiggery.”¹⁹ Jane Grey Swisshelm, editor of the *Pittsburgh Saturday Visiter* and a supporter of the Free Soil Party, justified her partisan work as a religious calling. “We learned our politics at our mother’s knee,” she remarked, “with the 23rd Psalm and Shorter Catechism.” A staunch Presbyterian, Swisshelm simply noted that the Covenanter Church called “all members to ‘meddle’ in politics.”²⁰ Like Nichols, Swisshelm had earned a reputation as an accomplished female journalist who maintained her femininity by taking the moral high ground even as she engaged in partisan political debate.

WOMEN AND BENEVOLENCE

By addressing the needs of the poor, a problem clearly within woman’s sphere, Nichols also reconciled women’s roles with their participation in public policy. Charged with upholding the conscience of the nation, women like Nichols were welcomed in benevolent work because of their supposedly innate humane sentiments. Through their charity organizations, urban middle-class women provided asylums, education, and work for orphans and poor women, but they rarely became involved in public policy. Operating outside formal politics and disavowing partisan connections, they used their class position and family networks to lobby and petition for funds for charitable purposes.²¹ Women in rural Vermont were less well organized than their urban counterparts, but they also gained a reputation for benevolence through their religious and charitable societies. Brattleboro’s Female Friendly Society, organized in 1816, was “marked not only by piety but by a dignity, nobility and courtliness of manner that could not be forgotten,” according to one local historian.²² In conjunction with their missionary work, these elite women supported the local ministry and helped deserving neighbors with food and clothing, which allowed poor families to avoid the stigma of receiving public poor relief. While displaying their social position, benevolent women showed sympathy for their sex, helping to bridge class differences.

When she criticized the overseer of the poor and lawmakers whom she believed had created an unjust system, Nichols crossed an invisible dichotomy in nineteenth-century welfare between this private, largely female-operated system and the public one. Women rarely became involved in public poor relief, a system town fathers operated to serve “paupers,” those without family or considered permanently disabled. Vermont towns, which held responsibility for poor relief, relied upon either the selectboard or an overseer of the poor to provide aid or work

for qualifying residents while limiting taxpayer expense. In the 1830s and 1840s, as the poor population grew, many Vermont towns began operating poor farms in an effort to create a more efficient system while relying upon the work ethic, but responsibility for the poor remained at the local level. Vermont legislators also began recognizing the need to improve conditions in prisons and to house specific poor populations, such as the mentally disabled, in new institutions supposedly designed to provide more humane treatment.²³

A similar impulse drove a broader reform movement to address the condition of the poor and to uncover the causes of increasing levels of poverty prevalent in urban areas in the Northeast. Since the 1820s reformers imbued with a sense of religious duty had sought solutions to the problem of rising unemployment, crime, and public relief. Commercial and industrial development had concentrated workers and immigrants in cities without the social services necessary to support them during economic slowdowns. Most reformers concluded that the poor should be removed from debilitating conditions and rehabilitated through exposure to religion and the work ethic; they advocated the construction of asylums or work houses and discouraged the use of direct relief, which supposedly fostered dependence. In states with large urban populations, such as New York, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, county and state governments assumed limited responsibility for the development of asylums and for regulating transients and specific poor populations. Meanwhile the system of local and church-based relief persisted to serve settled paupers with little public support. The operation of asylums, work houses, and larger prisons prompted efforts to separate and educate children, to rehabilitate criminals, and to improve the treatment of the disabled.²⁴

Reformer Dorothea Dix of Massachusetts was one of the few women involved in this movement to reform public welfare, which catapulted questions about care of the needy into legislative halls. Dix gained national recognition in the mid-1840s for her critiques of the condition of poorhouses, jails, and asylums for the insane. While she sent memorials to legislators encouraging them to design humane institutions, she also retained her respectability as a woman through her benevolent work. In a similar vein, Nichols alerted her readers to the “injustice and inhumanity” of both the penal and pauper systems after she read a New York report in 1852 about the poor treatment of criminals.²⁵ Unlike Dix, however, Nichols also championed property and civil rights for women, which threatened to undermine her virtuous image. Dix avoided the kind of criticism heaped upon other female reformers because she not only practiced a form of genteel politics, but also abhorred

partisanship, disdained abolition, and disavowed woman's rights. Nonetheless, by the early 1850s, Dix was deeply involved in politics as she boldly lobbied Congress for public funds to support care of the mentally disabled.²⁶

Nichols's reform impulse stemmed as much from her personal experience and family background as from her identification with other female reformers. Raised as an evangelical Baptist, Nichols was thoroughly familiar with Christian teachings about neighborly assistance and the poor relief system as well. She believed that Christians were obligated by God "to have fed the poor and ministered to the needy."²⁷ Her prominent father, Chapin Howard, had modeled Christian charity as deacon of the Baptist church and selectman in Townshend, where he often supervised poor relief. Nichols remembered seeing "town dignitaries" discussing application of the poor laws and observing her father's frustrations with the law as she sat in a "quiet corner, an indignant and silent listener to revelations from the quivering lips of the poor."²⁸ For those lacking family support, the town could provide shelter, food, medicine, and especially work for needy residents if ablebodied. In practice, this often meant that officials "hired out" or auctioned the cost of support to the lowest bidder, who would provide poor men and women with board in return for work. Orphans or children lacking parental support were usually indentured to local families, girls until eighteen and boys until twenty-one.²⁹ In 1794 the town of Townshend had followed this practice when voters "set up Deborah Howe to be bid off . . . to the person that will support her for the lowest sum."³⁰ Young Clarina observed her "father's moistened eye and heard his regretful replies to the oft-recurring tales of sorrow" while he lamented that the law and town finances limited his ability to provide direct assistance.³¹ Having gained a sense of *noblesse oblige* and seen the agony of poor relief administration from her father, Nichols was in a position to express both her empathy for the poor and her desire to reform the system to her readers.

Nichols's complaint "that the poor shall not be *set up at auction!*" reflected sentiments about the inhumanity of this practice at a time when bidding out the poor was still legal but less common. It is unlikely that town officials in Brattleboro actually "auctioned" the poor in the 1850s as Nichols implies, and it is unclear whether she submitted annual petitions to protest the practice. During the first three decades of the century, Brattleboro's overseer of the poor had regularly negotiated annual contracts for boarding the poor with town residents for as low as ten and as high as thirty-four dollars, plus medicine and clothing. Common among wealthier towns, this practice supplanted public auctioning

at town meeting. After the town purchased a poor farm in 1837, where poor residents were housed—supposedly more efficiently—even these contracts were rare.³² In 1850 the Brattleboro farm housed twenty-four “paupers,” eleven men, eight women, and five children. In addition, the overseer occasionally supplied fuel, rent, medicine, or supplies to poor residents as needed.³³ Despite these changes in the system, Nichols regularly used the image of auctioning the poor as a rhetorical device in her speeches and writings to remind her northern readers about the practice at a time when they were particularly attuned to the inhumanity of slave auctions—especially after passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850. In this way, she exploited the sentiments of her middle-class readers, whose sympathy for victims of injustice had been heightened by abolitionist rhetoric.³⁴

Nichols identified with these poor, helpless people because of her own experience of poverty, which sparked her interest in the way the poor relief system affected women and children. When her first husband failed to support her, Nichols had tried to earn money to feed her children and maintain her middle-class status by teaching, writing, sewing hats, and even housing boarders. She learned that it was not only difficult for women to earn enough but also that her husband had the right to spend both her inheritance and her wages for his own use.³⁵ Recognizing wives’ economic dependence within marriage and that poverty affected women differently from men, she examined the poor laws with an eye for gender differences to alert voters and lawmakers to hidden inequalities in the law.

Little had changed in the structure of Vermont’s poor relief system since 1817, when lawmakers clarified the eligibility rules regarding public welfare. Settlement law, which defined residents’ rights to community support, provided towns with the means to disqualify and remove dependents seeking aid to their former place of settlement. As most towns sought to relieve taxpayers of the expense of supporting the poor, selectmen routinely warned newcomers out of town to preempt the possibility of providing them with relief and sought to recover their expenses from towns where paupers retained a settlement. Justices of the peace were empowered to remove anyone without a settlement to their former residence if they sought aid. The law of 1817 instituted new penalties for improper removals, which helped limit the practice, but it also instituted new, long-term residency requirements—either five years (with \$60 or more of assets) or seven years of living independently in a town. The change extended the time when newcomers remained unsettled, and towns continued to remove as many poor people as possible or instigated legal proceedings to recover poor expenses

from other towns.³⁶ To remove an “aged couple, members of a Christian church” or “the sick and helpless from among friends, to the care of strangers,” Nichols complained, was to defy the obligations of Christian charity and to disregard the traditional practice of neighborly assistance. Appealing to taxpayers’ desire for efficiency, she noted that the expenses of removal largely enriched the legal profession and could easily cover the cost of care. Nichols was particularly biased against lawyers, not only because her abusive first husband became a lawyer and used the law to control her property, but also because she had learned about the fees lawyers extracted from married women seeking a divorce or custody of their children.³⁷

Of greater concern to Nichols, however, was the way settlement laws treated married women. Under the rules of coverture, which suspended a woman’s legal existence during marriage, a man was responsible for his family’s support. When he failed to provide, wives and children could become the responsibility of the town where he maintained a settlement.³⁸ In “The Paupers’ Removal,” Nichols revealed the problem by recounting one of her typical railroad stories, through which she often apprised her readers about victims of injustice. In this case, she recounted the sad tale of a poor woman and her children, tied by marriage and settlement, according to Nichols, to “a worthless, drinking man, whose capacity for consumption, added to five little hungry mouths, exceeded her ability to provide.” Using the power of settlement law, which stipulated that a married woman “shall always have the settlement of her husband” (unless he lacked a settlement in the state), the overseer was planning to ship the family by rail to the delinquent father’s former residence.³⁹ He had no settlement in the town where the family lived, rendering the mother without a settlement as well, even though she had been born in the town and presumably retained local relatives and friends. Blaming this situation on alcoholism, an argument gleaned from her temperance work, Nichols pressed her point further by explaining that this wage-earning mother could have kept her family out of poverty and saved taxpayer expense, if she had retained control over her own earnings. In this way, Nichols challenged the principle of family unity, which drove poor relief policy, and traditional notions of family support as well. Noting that this mother, not the father, was trying to support her children, she insisted that married women should be treated as individuals under the law.⁴⁰ Not only did Nichols alert voters to the inhumanity of a system that could remove a native-born woman from her home, but she also showed the evils of intemperance and suggested a practical solution.

The problem of poor women, children, and the settlement law con-

founded lawmakers and occasionally led town fathers to manipulate the system to their own advantage. In addition to the status of married women, the law of 1817 stipulated that legitimate children gained the settlement of their parents, i.e. the father. If a couple lacked a legal settlement, the town was not obligated to support their children, even if they were born in the town. Illegitimate children, by contrast, held the settlement of the mother. Instituted to resolve conflicts between towns over support for poor women and children, these rules helped regulate poor families in an era of rapid mobility and mounting concern about transients. Cases of separation, remarriage, and out-of-state residents, however, produced unusual circumstances and opportunities for town officials to interpret the law to their own advantage.⁴¹

Nichols had learned about these problems from observing her father's administration. In 1821 the Howards had received a visit from "a fat, dust-begrimed, sun-burned woman" with an infant in tow, who claimed that Chapin "would take care of me and my baby." A New York resident, she had married the child's father, a mentally disabled Vermont man, at the urging of local authorities, who subsequently removed her to his former residence. Officials in Townshend transported her back to her husband, but as Nichols later explained, this was a fateful mistake; seven years later the couple was returned with four more children.⁴² In the interests of family unity and reduction in poor expense, officials often ignored the hardships and restrictions the policy imposed on poor women and the mentally disabled. Pregnant women without husbands presented officials with the specter of a double burden, and could prompt efforts at removal or a hasty wedding. In one case, officials in Moretown found a husband in Middlesex for a poor, old, disabled woman, hoping to relieve Moretown taxpayers of the burden of her support; the supreme court eventually annulled the marriage.⁴³

While exposing the problems of the poor relief system, Nichols outlined her theory of social provision. She believed that the majority of the poor were laborers who resorted to seeking relief because of "misfortune, casualties, bereavements, or the infirmities of age." She insisted that the state owed support to these "producers of wealth" because taxes on their labor and commerce had contributed to the public treasury, to "our institutions of government, of education, of religion," and to the "fortunes of the wealthy and influential." Far from radical, Nichols's analysis of political economy stemmed from her exposure to antebellum reform literature and to the rhetoric of the Democratic Party, which championed the working population over aristocratic monopolists, bankers, and lawyers. At the same time, her plea for change was grounded in Christian benevolence and sympathy for those in need.

She criticized policymakers, who would starve the “honest and industrious” but unfortunate pauper by providing only “*revolting and scanty provisions*” as a means to limit relief. “Instead of acting upon estimates of *how little* will keep soul and body together,” she insisted, “it should be the privilege, as it is the *duty* of our freemen to provide . . . [s]uitable employment for the hands that can labor, and abundant occupation and food for the mind, as well as wholesome food and a comfortable home for the body.” Largely ignoring the problem of dependence and erosion of individual responsibility that lawmakers and even many other reformers feared, Nichols sought the comforts of a middle-class existence for the poor. The law should mirror “popular sentiment,” she averred, which is “ever truth-ward, justice-ward.”⁴⁴ Once again, Nichols appealed to her readers’ feelings over their reason, partaking in the culture of sympathy and sentimentality prevalent in antebellum New England.⁴⁵

Nichols’s sensitivity to the way the law treated women led her to develop a progressive notion of social provision. She noted that “a large proportion of the paupers are women and children,” not idle laborers, and characterized them as “those ‘deities’ and ‘cherubs’ which make home the ‘delightful retreat to which men retire from a troublesome world for rest and soothing.’” Hoping this concept of home life would resonate with lawmakers, she reminded them that just as they protected their own wives and children, so too they should support poor women and children. Her recommendation that “*State* paupers” replace “*Town* paupers” was based on her complaint that the town-based system created undue hardships for poor people, especially women and children. Economically and legally dependent upon their husbands for support, wives were rarely responsible for their own poverty, she insisted, but victims of an unjust system. If they gained access to their own property and earnings as well as state support when in need, women would be free of dependence on husbands who failed to provide. Moreover, her proposal would improve the efficiency of the welfare system by eliminating conflict among towns and wasteful legal expense.

Nichols’s desire to centralize poor relief appeared at a time when there was considerable frustration among reformers and lawmakers with recent efforts at reshaping public welfare. In Vermont, officials in larger towns that had established poor farms struggled to reduce costs and to manage these institutions while facing an influx of transients and heightened expenses during economic downturns.⁴⁶ In more populated states, worker mobility and foreign immigration had thoroughly undermined the concept of local poor relief, overwhelmed the capacity of towns to provide aid, and largely resulted in institutional care in workhouses.

Sending a poor woman and her children to a poor farm or work house was not the kind of direct state relief Nichols envisioned. Reformers deplored the conditions, harsh regulations, and corruption at local and county asylums while the problem of determining settlement and lawsuits among towns to avoid relief payments persisted.⁴⁷ Some states had instituted a form of state aid to ease the local burden of poor immigrants but not state residents. In New York, a state board regulated ships' captains who imported workers and redistributed funds raised from a head tax, but the state fund proved inadequate to satisfy local needs. In both Massachusetts and Rhode Island, a colonial tradition of limited support for transients and immigrants eroded in the first half of the nineteenth century. Lawmakers in Massachusetts redefined eligibility and decreased payment rates, and in Rhode Island they eliminated state aid and instituted regulation of importers and punitive measures to bolster the local system, including fines for illegal transport into the state. Local overseers were empowered to indenture anyone who "lived idly," and after 1851, to confiscate the wages of anyone who "wasted their earnings" and to redistribute them to their families.⁴⁸ In an era when local solutions prevailed, state aid was diminishing and inadequate, and experiments in centralized institutional care had failed to improve the system, Nichols's proposal to shift responsibility from towns to the state and to institute a state tax appeared out-of-step with public welfare reform.⁴⁹

To some extent, Nichols's solution to the problems poor women faced was inconsistent with the predominant ideology of the antebellum woman's rights movement as well. Many of her American colleagues, who typically highlighted women's natural rights to citizenship as individuals, focused on expanding women's civic and economic opportunity. While Nichols also promoted women's right to vote and to work, she believed they derived both their rights and their purer moral sentiments from their God-given reproductive function. Women's work of raising children, Nichols affirmed, was as important as men's work to amass property.⁵⁰ Her analysis stemmed from her Christian beliefs and the concept of Republican motherhood, a form of citizenship American theorists had developed for the new nation. Based on gender differences grounded in women's roles within the family, the concept elevated the importance of mothers by obligating them to raise and educate citizens in the new republic. Nichols extended the theory by insisting that mothers needed access to the economic and educational opportunities necessary to fulfill these obligations.⁵¹ Jeanne Deroin, a contemporary of Nichols, feminist Socialist, and leader in the French woman's rights movement, employed a similar rationale; she argued for civil

rights based on women's role as the mothers of humanity. Both activists found the basis of women's citizenship in their reproductive obligations to the state; it was not because they were equal, but because they were different from men and had been deprived of the means to raise and train children that women needed access to economic and political opportunities. Deroin believed the state must support all mothers so they could be free of economic dependency on men. Despite their parallel claims, Deroin derived her critique from workers' radical challenge to capitalist economy, whereas Nichols sought to adjust capitalism to the needs of women.⁵²

By the late nineteenth century, many American female reformers had adopted a similar maternalist perspective. The vision of a compassionate state protecting women and children from male abuses drove the leadership of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the largest female voluntary association in America in the 1880s and 1890s. In the Progressive era, female reformers participated in the development of the welfare state by promoting programs and aid for women and children as a means to counter the inequities of industrial capitalism. Leaders in the settlement house movement, Jane Addams, Florence Kelly, Julia Lathrop, and Lillian Wald, helped foster Mother's Aid programs at the state level, spearheaded the U.S. Children's Bureau, and inspired their successors to help formulate Aid to Dependent Children (ADC). This federal program succeeding Mothers's Aid in 1935 provided the kind of support Nichols had envisioned. Flowing from the practice of charity organizations, the program of social protection arose from recognition of women's dependence within marriage and their disadvantages in the wage-labor system.⁵³ Vermont lawmakers instituted minimal state support for widowed mothers in 1917, when they created a state Board of Charities and Probation. Vermont's Mothers' Aid law provided matching state and local funds for worthy widows or deserted mothers with children.⁵⁴ With gradual increases in state and federal aid, poor relief improved but remained the responsibility of local officials until 1967, when the state assumed full administration of public assistance.

For Nichols, this was the ultimate goal of the woman's rights movement—to bring women's perspective and their moral sensibilities to benefit public policy. With access to politics and economic opportunity, she believed women could fulfill their "God-ordained responsibilities." In her view, the movement would eventually "emancipate and elevate the race, by opening to it the mother-fountains of humanity."⁵⁵ When she began to promote suffrage for women, Nichols argued that, "I want to have this power, because, in not having it, I am deprived of

the power of protecting myself and my children, because I do not possess the power which ought to belong to me as a mother.”⁵⁶ With equal civil rights, Nichols believed, women would use their superior morality to protect themselves, to purify politics, and to improve the nation. Ultimately, she looked forward to a government in which women and men enacted “Christ’s teachings of love and duty as practical rules.” Finding hope in the power of individuals and their right to self-government, she referred to “the soul of a Garrison, or the heart of a loving woman” as the fountainhead of moral force to direct public policy.⁵⁷

In 1854, Nichols took her family, her political skills, and her commitment to a better world to Kansas Territory, where she hoped to promote women’s rights and ensure freedom for African Americans as settlers battled over slavery. She left “conservative old Vermont” because, she explained later, “it was a thousand times more difficult to procure the repeal of unjust laws in an old State, than the adoption of just laws in the organization of a new State.”⁵⁸ Putting her Vermont experience to good use, she participated in the Wyandotte Constitutional Convention in 1859. While helping to ensure that married women’s property and custody rights were included in the new constitution, she wrote a provision providing women’s equality in school affairs. As a result, women in Kansas were some of the first to vote in school elections.

Throughout her career as a public woman, Nichols relished involvement in political debate and the development of strategies that would promote her goals. When political controversy and defeat shattered the hopes of many of her colleagues, she remained optimistic about the prospect for and benefits of women’s enfranchisement. In that regard, she remained in the vanguard of political women. In 1886, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joselyn Gage, editors of the *History of Woman Suffrage*, honored Nichols with a bitter commentary: “To Clarina Howard Nichols the women of Kansas are indebted for many civil rights they have as yet been too apathetic to exercise.” Despite Nichols’s efforts to domesticate politics, many women still abhorred “politics, and women who meddle with them.”⁵⁹

NOTES

¹ Wendy Hamand Venet, *A Strong-Minded Woman: The Life of Mary A. Livermore* (Amherst and London: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 61.

² Sarah Morgan Dawson, *A Confederate Girl’s Diary* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 94.

³ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joselyn Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage* (Rochester, N.Y., 1881; 2nd ed., 1887), 1: 355.

⁴ See for example, Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women’s Activism: New York and Boston, 1797–1840* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Lori D. Ginzberg,

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Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 2–79; Nancy A. Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822–1872* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne, eds., *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994); Beth A. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005); Alisse Portnoy, *Their Right to Speak: Women's Activism in the Indian and Slave Debates* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2005), 43–86, 193–202. For women's voluntary societies in Vermont, see Marilyn S. Blackwell, "Surrogate Ministers: Women, Revivalism, and Maternal Associations in Vermont," *Vermont History* 69 (Winter 2001): 67–71.

⁵ Elizabeth R. Vron, *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 71–102; Rebecca Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery: Gender in American Party Politics from the Civil War to the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 13–18; Robert J. Dinkins, *Before Equal Suffrage: Women in Partisan Politics from Colonial Times to 1920* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood, 1995), 30–50; Christopher J. Olsen, "Respecting 'The Wise Allotment of Our Sphere': White Women and Politics in Mississippi, 1840–1860," *Journal of Women's History* 11 (Autumn 1999): 104–125; Melanie S. Gustafson, *Women and the Republican Party, 1854–1924* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 10–13. For partisan journalists, see Janet L. Coryell, "Superseding Gender: The Role of the Woman Politic in Antebellum Partisan Politics," in *Women and the Unstable State in Nineteenth-Century America*, eds. Alison M. Parker and Stephanie Cole (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 84–112; Sylvia D. Hoffert, *Jane Grey Swisshelm: An Unconventional Life, 1815–1884* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 104–111.

⁶ *Windham County Democrat*, 28 September 1853 (hereafter *WCD*).

⁷ For Nichols's biography, see T. D. S. Bassett, "Nichols, Clarina Irene Howard," *Notable American Women, 1607–1950: A Biographical Dictionary*, eds. Edward T. James, Janet Wilson James, and Paul S. Boyer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 2:625–627; Joseph G. Gambone, ed. "The Forgotten Feminist of Kansas: The Papers of Clarina I. H. Nichols, 1854–1885," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 39 (Spring 1973): 12–25 (hereafter *KHQ*); Diane Eickhoff, *Revolutionary Heart: The Life of Clarina Nichols and the Pioneering Crusade for Women's Rights* (Kansas City: Quindaro Press, 2006).

⁸ C. I. H. Nichols to Susan B. Anthony, 24 March 1852, Clarina Irene (Howard) Nichols Papers, M133, Women's Studies Manuscript Collections, Series 1, Woman's Suffrage, Part E, Reel E35, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. (hereafter Nichols Papers). For development of Nichols's political journalism, see Marilyn S. Blackwell, "Meddling in Politics: Clarina Howard Nichols and Antebellum Political Culture," *Journal of the Early Republic* 24 (Spring 2004): 27–41.

⁹ See *Vermont Phoenix*, 23 September, 5 October, 5 November 1847; CIHN to Susan B. Anthony, 30 October 1880, printed in Gambone, ed., "Forgotten Feminist," *KHQ* 40:448; George W. Nichols to Charles G. Eastman, 3 July 1848, Eastman Papers, Vermont Historical Society, Barre; Michael D. Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 57–61.

¹⁰ Vermont, *Acts and Resolves Passed By the Legislature of the State of Vermont at their October Session 1847* (Burlington, 1847), 26; *Journal of the Senate of the State of Vermont. October Session, 1847* (Montpelier, 1848), 16, 37, 48, 51, 62, 67; *Journal of the House of the State of Vermont. October Session, 1847* (Montpelier, 1848), 203, 206–207. Clarina I. Howard Nichols, "Reminiscences," in *History of Woman Suffrage*, eds. Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, 172.

¹¹ C. I. H. Nichols, *The Responsibilities of Woman. A Speech by Mrs. C.I.H. Nichols, at the Woman's Rights Convention, Worcester, October 15, 1851* (Rochester, 1854).

¹² *WCD*, 7 July 1852.

¹³ For Nichols's school suffrage campaign, see Marilyn S. Blackwell, "The Politics of Motherhood: Clarina Howard Nichols and School Suffrage," *New England Quarterly* 78 (Dec. 2005): 570–598.

¹⁴ CIHN to Susan B. Anthony, 16 January 1853, Nichols Papers. See also, *WCD*, 26 January 1853; [CIHN], "The Next Step for the Freeman of the County," *WCD*, 23 February 1853.

¹⁵ Nichols, "Reminiscences," 173.

¹⁶ For the ideology of the "true woman" see Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966): 151–175; Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), 63–100. For women and virtue, see Ruth H. Bloch, "The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America," *Signs* 13 (Autumn 1988): 37–58. For the variation of this ideal in Vermont, see Catherine E. Kelly, *In the New England Fashion: Reshaping Women's Lives in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 19–63.



¹⁷ Susan Zaeski, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 42–68, 83–125; Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, 80–95; Alice Taylor, “From Petitions to Partyism: Antislavery and the Domestication of Maine Politics in the 1840s and 1850s,” *New England Quarterly* 77 (March 2004): 70–88.

¹⁸ Antoinette L. Brown, “A Woman Politician,” *The Lily* 4 (December 1852): 100; Elizabeth Cazden, *Antoinette Brown Blackwell: A Biography* (Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1983), 68, 81.

¹⁹ *WCD*, 27 August 1851. For Nichols's use of moral arguments as a Free Soil advocate, see Pier-son, *Free Hearts and Free Homes*, 60–61.

²⁰ “Women in Politics,” *Pittsburgh Saturday Visitor*, 22 October 1853, 53, quoted in Hoffert, *Jane Grey Swisshelm*, 104.

²¹ Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, 36–66; Boylan, *Origins of Women's Activism*, 136–169; Conrad E. Wright, *The Transformation of Charity in Postrevolutionary New England* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 155–157.

²² [Charles Orrin Day], “The Old Church on the Common: An Address Delivered by Rev. C.O. Day on Sunday Evening, Sept. 2,” Miscellaneous clipping, n.d., Vermont Historical Society, Barre. See also Mary R. Cabot, *Annals of Brattleboro, 1681–1895*, vol. 1 (Brattleboro, Vt.: E.L. Hildreth, 1921), 352, 467; Blackwell, “Surrogate Ministers,” 71; Randolph A. Roth, *The Democratic Dilemma: Religion, Reform, and the Social Order in the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont, 1791–1850* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 114. For a list of women's charitable organizations in Vermont, see Wright, *Transformation of Charity*, 266–269.

²³ Lorenzo D'Agostino, *The History of Public Welfare in Vermont* (Winooski Park, Vt.: St. Michael's College Press, 1948), 67–92, 201–207. See also Steven R. Hoffbeck, “‘Remember the Poor’ (*Galatians* 2:10): Poor Farms in Vermont,” *Vermont History* 57 (Fall 1989): 226–228; Mary L. Eysenbach, “Caring for the Poor: Theford and the Baker Family, 1792–1817,” *Vermont History* 72 (Winter/Spring 2004): 55–56.

²⁴ Seth Rockman, *Welfare Reform in the Early Republic: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003), 12–24; David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), 165–189; David M. Schneider, *The History of Public Welfare in New York State, 1609–1866* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), 235–252.

²⁵ *WCD*, 18 February 1852.

²⁶ David L. Lightner, *Asylum, Prison, and Poorhouse: The Writings and Reform Work of Dorothea Dix in Illinois* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 2–11, 67–68; Thomas Brown, *Dorothea Dix: New England Reformer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 101–122, 138–175.

²⁷ *WCD*, 18 February 1852.

²⁸ C. I. H. Nichols, “To the Editor,” *Herald of Freedom*, 17 May 1856, printed in Gambone, ed., “Forgotten Feminist,” *KHQ* 39: 249.

²⁹ D'Agostino, *History of Public Welfare*, 43–44; William Slade, Jr., comp., *The Laws of Vermont, of a Publick and Permanent Nature: Coming Down To, and Including, the Year 1824* (Windsor: Simeon Ide for the State of Vermont, 1825), 370; Hoffbeck, “‘Remember the Poor,’” 227; on children, see Eysenbach, “Caring for the Poor,” 57–61.

³⁰ James H. Phelps, *Collections Relating to the History and Inhabitants of the Town of Townshend, Vermont*, Part II (Brattleboro, Vt., 1877), 107.

³¹ Nichols, “To the Editor,” *Herald of Freedom*, 17 May 1856, printed in Gambone, ed., “Forgotten Feminist,” 249. See also *WCD*, 18 February 1852.

³² Brattleboro Overseer of the Poor, Record Book, 1807–1844, Town Clerk's Office, Brattleboro, Vt. Other than appointment of an overseer and approval of the town budget, between 1844 and 1853, voters took only one vote in 1852 relating to poor relief: to pay the overseer \$50 for a child he “has taken from the town farm” and adopted. See Brattleboro Town Meeting Records, Book 3, 184, Town Clerk's Office, Brattleboro, Vt. Pauper auctions were illegal in Maine after 1847 and in New York after 1848. See Benjamin J. Klebaner, “Pauper Auctions: The ‘New England Method’ of Public Poor Relief,” *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 91 (July 1955): 203–204. For the auction system in Vermont, see Randolph A. Roth, “The Other Masonic Outrage: The Death and Transfiguration of Joseph Burnham,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 14 (Spring 1994): 42–43.

³³ Federal Manuscript Census, 1850, Population, Windham County, Vermont, 272–273. For the practice of outside relief, see *Eleventh Annual Report of the Financial Condition of Brattleboro, February 1, 1867* (Brattleboro: D.B. Stedman, 1867), 5–6.

³⁴ For the culture of sympathy, see Elizabeth B. Clark, “‘The Sacred Rights of the Weak’: Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America,” *Journal of American History* 82 (Sept. 1995): 475–487. For “sentimentalism” in Vermont, see Roth, *Democratic Dilemma*,

284–290. For another example of Nichols’s use of the auction image, see Nichols, *Responsibilities of Woman*, 7.

³⁵ For Nichols’s anonymous account of her own poverty, see Annie, “‘The Union’ and Mrs. Nichols in a New Dress,” *Freedom’s Champion*, 25 February 1860.

³⁶ D’Agostino, *History of Public Welfare*, 70–87.

³⁷ For her comments regarding lawyers, see Nichols, “Reminiscences,” 192–194. She procured a divorce from her first husband in 1843 after having failed the prior year.

³⁸ For poor women and settlement, see Hendrik Hartog, *Man and Wife in America: A History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 128–130; Mary Beth Sievens, *Stray Wives: Marital Conflict in Early National New England* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2005), 92–93; Ruth Wallis Herndon, *Unwelcome Americans: Living on the Margins in Early New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 16–17, 28–47.

³⁹ D’Agostino, *History of Public Welfare*, 77–82; quotation on 77.

⁴⁰ After 1839, a wife whose husband lacked a settlement in the state could retain her settlement before marriage. The Vermont Supreme Court affirmed the principle of family unity in 1843 when it denied the appeal of a town seeking to remove a wife to her former residence, effectively separating her from her husband who lacked a settlement in the state. See D’Agostino, *History of Welfare*, 82–83.

⁴¹ For examples, see Sievens, *Stray Wives*, 79–82, 92–93.

⁴² Clarina I. Howard Nichols, “Editors Journal,” *The Woman’s Journal*, 5 July 1879, printed in Gambone, ed., “Forgotten Feminist,” *KHQ* 40: 435–436.

⁴³ D’Agostino, *History of Public Welfare*, 83. For other examples from Rhode Island, see Herndon, *Unwelcome Americans*, 28–36.

⁴⁴ *WCD*, 18 February 1852.

⁴⁵ See Clark, “‘The Sacred Rights of the Weak,’” 475–487; Roth, *Democratic Dilemma*, 284–290.

⁴⁶ Hoffbeck, “‘Remember the Poor,’” 228–233.

⁴⁷ Schneider, *History of Public Welfare in New York*, 245–252.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 296–312; Louis J. Piccarello, “Social Structure and Public Welfare Policy in Danvers, Massachusetts, 1750–1850,” *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 118 (October 1982): 252–259; Robert W. Kelso, *The History of Public Poor Relief in Massachusetts, 1620–1920* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1922), 59–60, 124, 277; Margaret Creech, *Three Centuries of Poor Law Administration: A Study of Legislation in Rhode Island* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 114–125; quotation on 120.

⁴⁹ Six Vermont representatives did recognize Nichols as a benevolent reformer by voting to appoint her director of the state prison after her appearance in the House of Representatives. See *The Lily* 4 (December 1852): 102.

⁵⁰ See especially, Nichols, *Responsibilities of Woman*; “Speech,” *Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention held at the Broadway Tabernacle in the City of New York, on Tuesday and Wednesday, Sept. 6th and 7th, 1853* (New York, 1853), 57.

⁵¹ Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 283–288; “A Constitutional Right to Be Treated Like American Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship,” in *U.S. History as Women’s History: New Feminist Essays*, eds. Linda K. Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris and Kathryn Kish Sklar (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 20–27. For women’s economic claims, see Reva Siegel, “Home as Work: The First Woman’s Rights Claims Concerning Wives’ Household Labor, 1850–1880,” *Yale Law Journal* 103 (March 1994): 1117–1118. See also, Blackwell, “Meddling in Politics,” 43–45.

⁵² Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 70–74. Nichols would not have supported Deroin’s radical critique of capitalism or of marriage, but she may have been aware of Deroin’s influence from a letter of support circulated at the Worcester Convention of 1851, when Nichols spoke. See Bonnie S. Anderson, *Joyous Greetings: The First International Women’s Movement, 1830–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 160–162.

⁵³ See for example, Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873–1900* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 57–116; Kathryn Kish Sklar, “The Historical Foundations of Women’s Power in the Creation of the American Welfare State, 1830–1930,” in *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, eds. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (New York: Routledge, 1993), 43–93; Barbara J. Nelson, “The Origins of the Two-Channel Welfare State: Workmen’s Compensation and Mothers’ Aid,” in *Women, the State, and Welfare*, ed. Linda Gordon (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 101–113; Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890–1935* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

⁵⁴ D’Agostino, *History of Public Welfare*, 141–145.

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⁵⁵ *Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention Held at Akron, Ohio, May 28 and 29, 1851* (Cincinnati: B. Franklin Book and Job Office, n.d.), 42. See also, Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes*, 92–95.

⁵⁶ Nichols, "Speech," *Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention, New York, 1853*, 57.

⁵⁷ C. I. H. Nichols, "Christian Civil Government," *Woman's Herald of Industry* 1 (September and November 1881), printed in Gambone, ed., "Forgotten Feminist," *KHQ* 40: 519–520.

⁵⁸ Nichols, "Reminiscences," 193.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 171; Dawson, *Confederate Girl's Diary*, 94.

