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DOUGLAS SLAYBAUGH

From New Womanhood to Companionate Marriage in the Progressive Era: The Case of Frances Cochran MacDaniels

When Frances Cochran was growing up in Cincinnati in the first decade of the twentieth century, she mocked her girlfriends' interest in boys and scoffed when they suggested the possibility of her falling in love.[1] At Oberlin College, which she entered in 1908, Frances enjoyed the friendship of a wide circle of classmates, both men and women, but, unlike many of them, she did not form any particular romantic attachments. Graduating, she left without a fiancé but with reinforcement for a set of beliefs that perhaps discouraged thoughts of marriage: (1) the importance of being true to one's deepest needs as a person, (2) equal rights for women, and (3) the need to be useful to society.[2]

Douglas Slaybaugh is Professor of History and American Studies at Saint Michael's College, Colchester, Vermont. He is the author of *William I. Myers and the Modernization of American Agriculture* (Ames, Iowa, 1996). Prof. Slaybaugh is currently writing a dual biography of Frances Cochran MacDanials and her husband, Laurence Howland MacDaniels.

1. Frances (FCM) to Laurence Howland MacDaniels (LHM), 1-31-14, 4-29-14, and 7-24-14, Correspondence Received by LHM, Series 2, Box 3, Papers of LHM and FCM (30/276), Oberlin College Archives (unless otherwise noted, all citations in this article refer to the Correspondence received by LHM, Series 2, Box 3, MacDaniels Papers; unless otherwise noted, all manuscript citations refer to the MacDaniels Papers); "Record of Family Traits (Cochran Family Eugenics Study)," 11-6-14, Series 1, Box 1.

2. FCM to Mr. Depuis, 7-25-77, Series 5, Box 5; FCM to LHM, 10-14-13; for Oberlin's emphasis on social mission, see John Barnard, *From Evangelicalism to Progressivism at Oberlin College, 1866–1917* (Columbus, Ohio, 1969), 109–27.

Oberlin's impact on her was multiplied by her family's long connection with the college. Her great-grandfather, Charles Grandison Finney, the leading preacher of the Second Great Awakening, had been a dominant leader of the college following its founding in 1833. Frances's grandmother, Helen Finney Cochran, had been one of the early female graduates. Her father, William Cochran, and many other relatives were also alumni of the college; her mother, Rosa Dale Allen Cochran, had been a student there.[3] Upon her graduation in 1912, Frances seemed primed by both family background and education to go out into the world as an independent woman to do good. She rejected at least two marriage proposals and, instead, embarked on a career as a social worker.[4] Frances seemed well on her way to becoming a single career woman.

Yet a year and a half after graduation, after an essentially epistolary courtship, she became engaged to a college classmate, Laurence "Mac" MacDaniels. Frances subsequently gave up working for six months to stay home with her parents, revel in thoughts of marriage, and practice such domestic skills as cooking, sewing, and cleaning.[5]

Although she returned temporarily to social work while Mac finished a doctoral program in botany at Cornell, Frances effectively abandoned her career in favor of marriage and family. Her story is an instructive one, and it is worth exploring it to help us understand the complexities involved as women began to shake off the limitations imposed by Victorian society and embrace the possibilities of modern life.[6]

The Progressive Era was a time of avid public discussion of the "new woman." Hearing the term, most people probably imagined a creature with more liveliness and a more youthful style than the traditional woman. She was more athletic, enjoying bicycling, tennis,

3. "Record of Family Traits."

4. FCM to LHM, 7-24-12, Series 2, Box 2.

5. Ellen Woodbury MacDaniels (EWM) to LHM, 1-9-14 and reverse, 1-11-14.

6. For discussions of women seeking greater freedom during the Progressive Era, see Lois W. Banner, *Women in Modern America: A Brief History* (San Diego, 1984, 2d. ed.), 1–137; Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20th Century: The Festival of Life* (San Diego, 1987), 4–41; Rosalind Rosenberg, *Divided Lives: American Women in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1992), 3–73; and Peter G. Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Gender Identities in Modern America* (Baltimore, 1998, 3d. ed.), 3–120.

and golf. She dressed more freely, abandoning corsets and confining dresses for looser-fitting shirtwaists and skirts. She did not fear exposure to the sun and helped redefine the meaning of a tan from a sign of lower class status to a sign of health.[7] The magazine illustrations of Charles Dana Gibson were key in fixing these images in the popular mind. His "Gibson girl" pictures of energetic young women became the rage around 1900.[8]

As Peter Filene argues, however, there was another type of new woman. Where the Gibson girl, for all her free-spirited appearance, still aspired to the traditional goals of marriage and family, a more radical new woman who rejected those goals began emerging in the early years of the twentieth century. This new woman was college-educated, career-minded, and willing to forego matrimony for the sake of financial and emotional independence.[9]

That Frances was a new woman by Gibson's definition there can be little doubt. Tall and athletic, she could almost have stepped out of one of the artist's magazine illustrations.[10] Frances adored tennis and was a class women's champion at Oberlin. On one occasion, she earned a rebuke from the Dean of Women for playing a match so late she missed dinner. Frances's reputation for athleticism was such that one of her male friends told her, "Oberlin missed a fine foot ball [sic] player when the Lord made Frances Cochran a girl rather than a boy." This comment would have angered some women, but she reported it with pride to her mother.[11]

If Frances could seem like a Gibson girl, she also fits Filene's more substantial definition of the new woman in her somewhat rebellious reactions to traditional restraints on her gender. She criticized college rules, for instance, complaining when the Dean of

7. Banner, 21–28.

8. Filene, 3rd ed., 21–22.

9. Peter G. Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Sex Roles in Modern America* (Baltimore, 1986, 2d. ed.), 30; Filene, 3d. ed., 19–41; Lynn D. Gordon, "The Gibson Girl Goes to College: Popular Culture and Women's Higher Education in the Progressive Era, 1890–1920," *American Quarterly*, 39, (Summer, 1987), 211–30.

10. The large number of photographs of FCM from her collegiate and early post-collegiate years attests to her Gibson girl appearance. "Oberlin Album," FCM, 1909–1914, Series 8, Box 6.

11. FCM to [mother, Rosa Dale Allen Cochran (RDAC)?], n.d. [January or February, 1911?], Cochran Papers, (30/8), Subgroup 2, Series 2, Subseries 4, Box 1, Oberlin College Archives.

Women refused to sanction a trip to Cleveland to visit her brother because she did not have a chaperone. On a later occasion, Frances simply violated this rule and left campus unaccompanied.[12] Regarding marriage, as noted above, she stood out among her closest friends as the one in the group most suspicious of the desirability of that state. Frances also openly disagreed with the conservative opinions of her lawyer father, William Cochran. The two had some animated exchanges on the desirability of women voting, prohibition, and the value of trying to uplift the poor. On one occasion when Frances brought some orphans home to dinner, her father remarked sarcastically that his daughter was turning the place into "a Hull House."[13] Although her father's attitude frustrated Frances, she remained determined to stand up to the man she found "so particular about conventionalities."[14]

If her father became an intellectual antagonist, Frances's mother, Rosa Dale Allen Cochran, was something of an accomplice. For the most part, Rosa does not seem to have disagreed overtly with her daughter's advanced views, and may in fact have taken some pleasure in living vicariously through Frances as the latter finished college and pursued a career. Rosa, like most women of her generation, had subordinated her talents (in her case for music) to raising a family and running a household.[15]

Yet more than some mild college rebellion and intellectual disagreements with her father, the best evidence of Frances's "new womanhood" was her decision, upon graduating from Oberlin, to devote herself to social work. As she wrote Mac at the time, this endeavor would be "not as a hobby or avocation[,] but as a profession."[16] In taking this step, she had the example of her older sister, Mary, to guide her. Mary had graduated from Oberlin in 1903, trained as a librarian, and eventually lived on her own in Columbus

12. FCM to RDAC, 10-3-09, Cochran Papers.

13. FCM to LHM, 9-30-13, 2-21-14, 4-20-14, 9-30-14; Hull House remark in FCM to LHM, 3-22-14.

14. FCM to LHM, 1-31-14.

15. "Record of Family Traits." It is interesting that as a child, Frances had disliked hearing her mother sing. See FCM to LHM, 3-10-14. Linda W. Rosenzweig, *The Anchor of My Life: Middle Class American Mothers and Daughters, 1880–1920* (New York, 1993), 70, 91.

16. FCM to LHM, 7-24-12, Series 2, Box 2.

and Cleveland where she pursued her chosen career.[17] Library work was a leading choice among career-minded women of the early twentieth century. Teaching and nursing were other popular options.[18]

It was social work, however, that enjoyed a unique respect. This was due largely to the example and writings of Jane Addams, already a legend for her work with the poor at her Hull House settlement in Chicago. Hull House was a magnet for bright, energetic young women fresh from college or graduate school and afire with the ideal of helping the less fortunate. Many of these women, as with Addams herself, and, not incidentally, sister Mary, forsook marriage for lifelong commitments to public service.[19] In her famous 1892 essay, "The Subjective Necessity of Social Settlements," Jane Addams provided a classic justification for this choice. She wrote that educated young women needed an outlet for their idealism and settlement house work, and, by implication, social work generally, provided such an outlet.[20] More than that, to generalize Judith Ann Trolander's argument, social work offered young idealists "a substitute for traditional family life" in close, even loving relationships within a larger community of altruists. An additional attraction, at a time when most women could not yet vote, was that social work was one of the few ways they could have a meaningful voice in shaping public policy.[21]

Frances, in the months following her college graduation, had given every indication she planned a life of professional social service. How then can we explain her seeming to forsake independence and career for marriage and domesticity? There are a

17. "Record of Family Traits;" FCM to Dupuis, 10-3-77. Another sister, Helen, taught physical education at Oberlin.

18. Barbara Sicherman, "College and Careers: Historical Perspectives on the Lives and Work Patterns of Women College Graduates," John Mack Faragher and Florence Howe, ed., *Women and Higher Education in American History: Essays from the Mount Holyoke Sesquicentennial Symposia* (New York, 1988), 153–57; Rosenberg, 27–28.

19. Allen Davis, *American Heroine: The Life and Legend of Jane Addams* (New York, 1973), 63–66; Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Hull House in the 1890s: A Community of Women Reformers," *Signs*, 10 (Summer, 1985), 658–77.

20. Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House* (New York, 1960), 90–100.

21. Judith Ann Trolander, *Professionalism and Social Change: From the Settlement House Movement to Neighborhood Centers, 1886 to the Present* (New York, 1987), 12–13.

number of reasons. In exploring them, we can examine the limits of Frances's commitment to independence while also deepening our understanding of the stresses of living as a new woman during the Progressive Era.

One reason Frances embraced domesticity was that she found it hard to live on her own. In her first job, after a brief stint working at a summer camp, she ran a social center for young people in Dayton that challenged her to create wholesome activities with proper chaperoning. Frances liked the job well enough, even if she found her employers' failure to provide promised helpers frustrating. The main problem with Dayton turned out to be her homesickness. She returned to her parents' home in Cincinnati as often as she could get away.[22] In early 1913, the great Dayton flood wrecked the social center and gave Frances an excuse to live with her parents in Cincinnati.[23] A temporary move home could have represented economic necessity, but Frances's move lasted three years until her marriage. This was hardly the behavior of an independent woman.

If working in Dayton had challenged her desire to live on her own, in a new job in Cincinnati she found a very different challenge: the chasm between her ideals of helping the abstract poor and the reality of dealing with hardened individuals whose sordid appearance and behavior often disgusted her and ultimately proved unendurable. In this she reminds us of Linus in the "Peanuts" comic strip when he cries, "I love mankind . . . it's people I can't stand!"[24] The new job, working with teenage girls at Cincinnati's House of Refuge, turned out to be far more difficult than Frances had imagined. The House of Refuge functioned as a type of reform school and orphanage. Working there would awaken in the young college graduate the disturbing reality of "how (as Jacob Riis put it) the other half

22. Upon first coming to Dayton, Frances boarded with "a charming married woman with a cunning little girl" whose husband and father was out of town for the winter. The mother and daughter had to move, however, and Frances found herself sharing the house with some less congenial Mennonite nurses. FCM to LHM, 12-4-12, 1-5-13, 2-12-13, Series 2, Box 2.

23. Ellen MacDaniels Speers to author, October 31, 2000.

24. Robert L. Short, *The Gospel According to Peanuts* (Louisville, Ky., 2000), 123–24. For a similar reaction to British poverty in the early twentieth century, see Philip S. Foner, *The Social Writings of Jack London* (Secaucus, N.J., 1964), 366–91.

lives."[25] Although sincere in her desire to improve the moral character of the girls, increasingly Frances came to worry that every contact with them assaulted her sensibility and character.

She feared that the need to maintain discipline with the girls would turn her into a scold and noted without pleasure the effect the job had on her: "Discipline is the hardest row I have to hoe, but I'm growing stern enough to lock up a girl occasionally now." Although she could sometimes have fun with her charges, their vulgarity and inability to appreciate higher culture alienated her. Describing a trip to what she called a "fool" amusement park with several of the girls, Frances admitted being "so green at such 'fun' that I take it too hard, [and] can't unbend gracefully to the occasion."[26] Revealingly, this remark came from a young woman known among her middle class friends for her high spirits and sense of humor. The lack of culture extended to her coworkers, none of whom, Frances bemoaned, could sing. Music, she believed, was an uplifting way for the inmates to pass time.[27] Worst of all, most of the girls seemed physically dirty to her. Describing a return to the House of Refuge a few weeks after leaving her work there, she wrote,

> After a brief visit with the workers . . ., I went in to [sic] the lion's den and submitted, an unwilling martyr, to twenty affectionate greetings which made me want to rush out and take an antiseptic bath. I was rather startled to notice I suffered a rather severe repugnance at meeting some of the harder girls; I was surprised to find out that I really had not naturally felt the same towards all, and realize now that to treat all alike is an effort and not the simple outcome of a willing heart.[28]

Frances spent only six months at the House of Refuge, leaving in the late fall of 1913. She had the option of returning but never did. It was too unsettling and stressful to descend from her dream of uplifting the less fortunate as a social worker to the reality of

25. FCM to LHM, 7-6-13 and 8-11-13, Series 2, Box 2; FCM to LHM, 10-14-13; *History of the Class of 1912*, v. 2, Oberlin, Ohio, May, 1914, 18, Series 1, Box 1; Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (New York, 1891).

26. FCM to LHM, 8-11-13, Series 2, Box 2.

27. FCM to LHM, 3-22-14.

28. FCM to LHM, 8-11-13. For an example of Frances's physical repugnance toward an orphaned girl she had invited home, see FCM to LHM, 2-12-14.

controlling (and punishing) them as a kind of prison warden.[29] Marriage as an alternative had begun to seem enormously appealing. A few weeks after leaving the House of Refuge, Frances became engaged to Mac.[30]

In addition to the stress of her work, family pressure may have also contributed to Frances's decision to marry. If true, such pressure must have been subtle because she never directly acknowledged it in her candid letters to Mac. Still, family pressure was a common obstacle for young women of the time who tried to pursue a career. Jane Addams, thinking in particular of social workers, called such pressure the "family claim."[31] Families opposed to their unmarried adult daughters living independently could coerce them in a variety of ways to conform to traditional expectations. These ranged from overt demands to move back home, to the mother suddenly "falling ill" and requiring the daughter to return to nurse her and take over domestic duties.[32] In Frances's case, her mother seems to have been more supportive of her daughter's independence than was her father. As noted above, William Cochran rejected gender equality and remained skeptical of the possibility of social reform. Frances sometimes invited girls from the House of Refuge to dinner, hoping that if she could temporarily replace a prison-like environment with that of a middle-class home, she might help redeem them from an antisocial life. Her father thought otherwise and was irritated by visitors he considered little more than intruders, swallowing his disgust with their sometimes uncouth manners only if they happened to be pretty.[33]

If her parents grudgingly accepted social work as an appropriate activity for their daughter, they strongly opposed an idea she broached during the fall of 1913 to train as a nurse.[34] They probably saw nursing as an occupation unworthy of their family's social class.

29. Nelson Metcalf to LHM, 12-2-13 and EWM to LHM, 12-13-13 comment on Frances's tired appearance while she worked at the House of Refuge.

30. LHM to EWM, 1-11-14.

31. Quoted in Rosenberg, 3.

32. For examples of the first kind of pressure (in the 1880s) and the second (in the 1910s), see Douglas Slaybaugh, *William I. Myers and the Modernization of American Agriculture* (Ames, Iowa, 1996), 8–10, 37–38.

33. FCM to LHM, 1-31-14, 2-21-14.

34. FCM to LHM, 12-14-13.

In addition, if the Cochrans really did want to assert a family claim on Frances, they would hardly have wanted her seeking a career that might prove more to her liking than social work thus far had.

Perhaps as important as a "family claim," what we might call a "peer claim" is likely to have influenced Frances to choose marriage. Although her two older sisters had not married, she had several other women even nearer her own age to serve as married role models. There was new sister-in-law Rachel, wife of brother Will, who was already a cherished friend.[35] Other models included Mrs. Dawson, a newlywed next door. At first, Frances referred condescendingly to her neighbor as "the little housewife" and laughed at her pleasure in displaying her wedding presents. The two became friends, however, and Frances enjoyed the chance to provide piano accompaniment when Mr. Dawson sang.[36]

Probably the most influential peer models, however, were close friends from college who were becoming engaged and marrying in the first years after graduation. Frances was part of the so-called "second generation" of college women (1890–1920) that tended to marry at a notably higher rate than had been true of the "first generation" (1860–1890), Jane Addams's cohort.[37] It was thus more common for college-educated women of Frances's acquaintance to marry. At Oberlin, like many other coeducational colleges, there was also a strong tradition of classmates marrying each other.[38] Both male and female peers could have affected Frances's thinking on marriage. Perhaps influencing her most, in August 1913, one of Frances's closest male friends, Donald King, who also happened to be Mac's best friend since childhood, became engaged. King's enthusiastic letters to his friends announcing his engagement surely encouraged Frances to make the same commitment.[39]

35. FCM to LHM, 7-6-13, Series 2, Box 2.

36. FCM to LHM, 4-30-14.

37. Roberta Wein, "Women's Colleges and Domesticity, 1875–1918," *History of Education Quarterly*, XIV (Spring, 1974), 44. I am assuming that the rates she reports for Bryn Mawr and Wellesley women can be extrapolated for women collegians in general. In fact, it would be logical to assume that women at coeducational institutions like Oberlin would have married at a higher rate than those at women's colleges.

38. Ellen K. Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (New York, 1984), 190–92; Rosenberg, 32–33.

39. Donald King to LHM, 8-30-13, Series 2, Box 2; FCM to LHM, 1-31-14.

Frances and Mac had been acquainted since their freshman year at college. They do not seem to have done anything as a couple, however, until they were seniors. Then Mac accompanied Frances to a lecture where she found his delight in the talk infectious.[40] The only potential obstacle to the development of their relationship was Mac's seeming social inferiority. Where Frances's father was a well-to-do attorney who provided his family with a very comfortable living, Mac's father, Heman Nye MacDaniels, could never quite make enough money to support his wife and five children. Renting or selling old houses he had repaired proved far from lucrative. As a consequence, for many years Mac's mother, Ellen Woodward MacDaniels, felt compelled to run a boarding house to make ends meet.[41] Still, Mac could compensate for any perceived social inferiority with many attractive personal qualities. To use a phrase that would become slang for later generations of college students, he was a "big man on campus." In addition to being tall, fair, and boyishly handsome, he captained and starred as center on the Oberlin football team that tied Ohio State and lost only to Cornell, while winning the championship of Ohio colleges. Mac was also president of the men's senate and sang with the men's glee club. Given Frances's love for music, his fine baritone voice and skill at playing the guitar must have especially attracted her. Another attractive quality was his love of a good wholesome time. He particularly enjoyed camping, ice-skating, and dancing.[42] Mac was also a man with intellectual ambitions as a scientist. He thus contrasted pleasingly with those men Frances derided for their merely utilitarian business interests.[43] More important, Mac was a good and respon-

40. FCM to RDAC, 4-30-11, Correspondence Received by LHM, 1911–1912, Series 2, Box 2.

41. For the comparative social standing of the two families, see EWM to LHM, 1-31-14 and 2-18-14; for Ellen MacDaniels's view of her husband as a poor provider, see EWM to LHM, 4-22-13, 5-21-13, Series 2, Box 2.

42. *The Hi-O-Hi*, (Oberlin College Yearbook), (no place, no pub., 1913), 67; FCM to LHM, 2-15-14.

43. FCM to LHM, 4-3-13, Series 2, Box 2. Frances would not have included her father among those who labored only for money. Despite their many disagreements, William Cochran had the saving grace of devoting his spare time to researching and writing family history, as well as reading, chess, music, and art. See "Record of Family Traits."

sible man, the child his mother could most depend on when she could not count on her feckless husband.[44]

Beyond all such positive qualities, perhaps the irresistible source of Frances's growing attachment to Mac was that he aroused her romantic feelings like no other man she had met.[45] Like many other young middle-class women of this period who aspired to a more independent life, Frances tended to blame herself for what she considered an inability to love, attributing the failure to a personality defect.[46] This was also the psychological price that society charged the career woman. Careers were rarely acceptable for women unless they forsook marriage and family. The logic of this expectation was that the women who chose careers were incapable of achieving the kind of emotional bonds with husbands necessary for happy marriages and were thus better off as single working women. Society benefited from their work and did not suffer if they avoided what were bound to be star-crossed marriages.

Exactly when the stars began to align for Frances and Mac is unclear. The couple corresponded sporadically in the months after graduation. They saw each other at their class's first reunion in June 1913 and had a personal conversation in which Frances "hinted" she had other suitors.[47] In the following months, they exchanged letters more frequently. In early January 1914, Mac visited the Cochrans in Cincinnati. It was on this visit that he popped the question, and Frances accepted.[48]

One of the most striking aspects of the subsequent engagement, which lasted for two and a half years, was the couple's concerted effort to keep it secret from most of their friends and acquaintances.[49] Only gradually did they agree that particular friends should be brought into the inner circle of those who shared the secret.

44. EWM to LHM, 10-17-12, Series 2, Box 2.

45. FCM to LHM, 1-31-14.

46. Frances alluded to such an emotional failure in her letters to Mac of 5-31-14 and 7-18-14; she attributed her emotional distance to unspecified childhood experiences, FCM to LHM, 3-10-14; see also "Record of Family Traits;" Rothman, 200.

47. FCM to LHM, 10-14-13.

48. LHM to EWM, 1-11-14. See this entire file (9-5-13 to 1-25-14) for the couple's growing intimacy. Mac's feelings must often be extrapolated from what Frances wrote since few of his letters to her for this period have survived.

49. They waited until Mac completed his doctoral program and had a job.

Gaining this knowledge was in return for promising to keep it from others.

Why did Frances and Mac try so hard to hide their engagement? We should note that it was not unusual at the time to do so, with a common reason being to minimize the embarrassment should the planned wedding be called off.[50] Moreover, one of Mac's sisters had been secretly engaged. Mac himself had "an understanding" with another young woman before breaking it off sometime in 1913 as his commitment to Frances deepened. Thus Mac was certainly aware of the value of a secret engagement.[51] Was the couple motivated by reasons other than the natural desire to circumvent possible embarrassment over a broken engagement? That may well have been the extent of Mac's motivation, but what of Frances's? She said that she wanted to save not her own feelings but those of one particular suitor whom she had rejected in the fall of 1913.[52] While probably true, it also seems plausible, though she did not say so, that Frances was reluctant to seem hypocritical to the Cincinnati school friends who knew of her often-proclaimed disdain for marriage.

Besides such sensitivities to what others might think, it is possible that Frances's secrecy about her engagement also reflected a vague uncertainty about what marriage would mean for her earlier desire for more independence. Although she never expressed doubt that marrying Mac was the right thing to do, a certain amount of ambivalence was natural given the either/or bargain that women of the time were expected to make: either marriage *or* career, but not both. Frances's challenge was to figure out whether marriage was compatible with her dreams of independence and greater personal fulfillment.

It is revealing then that within weeks of the engagement, Frances began inquiring about jobs that would combine social service with the practice of domestic skills.[53] One possible opportunity was to direct a Columbus orphanage where she could use her social service

50. Rothman, 271.

51. EWM to LHM, 8-10-07 and 5-21-13.

52. FCM to LHM, 6-29-14, 7-24-14, and 8-8-14.

53. For the growing value placed on learning skilled homemaking at this time, see Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (New York, 1982), 202–23 and Glenna Mathews, *"Just a Housewife": The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (New York, 1987), 145–71.

experience while also practicing for motherhood by overseeing the care of children. Another possibility was to train for a different career. As noted above, despite her family's objections, she sought information from Johns Hopkins University regarding their nursing program.[54] Nurses' training would obviously be valuable for the prospective spouse and mother. The job Frances ultimately took in the summer of 1914, as a caseworker for Cincinnati's Juvenile Protective Association (JPA), allowed what she considered an ideal balance of career with domestic practice. Although the new job did not directly involve the perfection of domestic skills, she could continue living with her parents, with time to practice sewing with her mother and cooking, cleaning, and laundry with Linda, the family's housemaid.[55] At the same time, the job with the JPA eased the guilt she had been feeling ever since taking the sabbatical from her career after long counseling friends to seek just such careers.[56]

Frances found the variety of her new work, which took her from the Cincinnati slums across the Ohio River to the Kentucky hinterlands on investigations and into court to testify in ongoing cases, far more satisfying than she had ever found the big-sister-cum-warden job at the House of Refuge.[57] Nevertheless, even the JPA had drawbacks that undermined Frances's commitment to a career. Her middle class background continued to make it difficult for her to sympathize with her clients and their families. Many of the immigrants in Cincinnati and many of the country people in Kentucky she encountered were for her, at best, quaint and amusing and, at worst, irredeemable and frightening sociopaths.[58] A number of her letters to Mac during this period praised his strength and cleverness and stressed her eagerness for him to protect her.[59]

In reality, Frances wanted two kinds of protection: the protection offered by marriage that would provide an escape from the demands of the work world, but also an opposite protection, this one from the demands of tradition that would force her into the narrow role of

54. FCM to LHM, 12-14-13, 1-11-14, 1-14-14, 1-25-14, 2-5-14, 2-8-14, 2-17-14, 4-5-14, and 4-14-14.
55. FCM to LHM, 1-11-14, 1-14-14, 1-25-14; 4-25-16, Series 2, Box 4.
56. FCM to LHM, 2-17-14, 4-5-14, and 4-29-14.
57. FCM to LHM, 5-31-14 and 6-2-14.
58. FCM to LHM, 6-26-14 and 7-22-14.
59. For example, FCM to LHM, 3-10-14, 5-21-14, 8-8-14; 2-24-16, Series 2, Box 4.

housewifery. It is telling that while the early letters following the engagement show an extreme deference to Mac as the decision-maker, as the courtship lengthened (and Frances returned to a job), she became more assertive. This was particularly true as the couple began to plan their domestic arrangements, including a budget. On the one hand, Frances wrote that she accepted Mac as "the executive" of the household and implied that all her domestic practice was to help insure an efficient execution of his orders. On the other, she challenged some of Mac's ideas for budgeting their money and sewed aprons that would fit both of them for work in the kitchen.[60]

Frances sought to reconcile her seemingly contradictory impulses toward public service, career, marriage, and homemaking by embracing the ideal of "companionate marriage." In contrast to the more patriarchal model of marriage typified by her parent's generation, with the balance of authority held by the husband and life separated rather rigidly into a male public sphere and a female private sphere, the ideal of the companionate marriage was that it would be a true partnership in which both the husband and wife would share their feelings and reciprocally support the other in meeting individual needs.[61] It is true that the companionate ideal was usually honored more in the breach than in reality and wives continued to be largely subordinated to the interests of their husbands.[62] But not in all cases, and Frances seemed genuinely to believe her marriage could be what she wanted it to be.[63] When she told Mac that marriage was "the happiest profession ever invented for woman," she was embracing a supportive, not a submissive, role. As she wrote elsewhere, "I just count myself a thousand times blessed to have you to work out my life with."[64] Frances felt this way because Mac was unique in her experience. Not the rigid man of

60. FCM to LHM, 2-4-14 and 5-21-14.

61. Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York, 1988), 113–15. If Frances's parents' marriage served as a less than ideal model, Mac's parents' marriage would have been even worse: the wife had been forced to become the steady breadwinner with only partial financial and no emotional support from her husband.

62. Gordon, "The Gibson Girl Goes to College," 226; Lynn D. Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven, Conn., 1990), 10.

63. Rothman, 283, makes this point in general for new women drawn to marriage.

64. First quotation: FCM to LHM, [4-23-16]; second quotation: [3-9-16]; both Series 2, Box 4.

proprieties her father was, her fiancé was the only man she had ever known who shared her principles, interests, and antipathies. A man she found both strong and sensitive, she called him the only "real man" she had ever known.[65] Peter Filene says that for the "new woman [to succeed, she] needed a new man."[66] Was Mac such a man? Frances believed that he wanted a more egalitarian marriage, which would not stifle her as most women of her mother's generation had been. In marrying, Frances gave up a specific career (and perhaps called into question just how "new" a new woman she really was), but she believed Mac would support her efforts to work at socially useful projects on an ad hoc basis. She seemed to have an open mind about married women continuing to work. After leaving the JPA full time, she noted approvingly that a married woman (and former social worker) had applied for her old position.[67] While Frances's new married life would not portend "having it all," as we might say today, for her it seemed a way to have enough. At a time when women were still struggling to win the vote and other kinds of gender-based legal and social discrimination abounded, while the social pressure to marry grew stronger, Frances's compromise was one that many other educated young women were making.

65. FCM to LHM, 1-31-14 and 2-18-15.
66. Filene, 3rd ed., 73.
67. FCM to LHM, 1-11-16, Series 2, Box 4.