

HEALTH CARE INSTITUTIONS AND GENDER THREE CASE STUDIES

The Rainbow Circle of King's Daughters: A Little Band of Fair Philosophers and Practical Philanthropists on Behalf of Cleveland's Children

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On Thanksgiving Day in 1887 a group of nine young Cleveland society women met and formed a "Rainbow Circle" of King's Daughters and sought a practical way to help poor children in Cleveland. The "King's Daughters" was a national, nonsectarian, worldwide sisterhood of service formed in 1886 in Oswego, New York, whose goal was to develop spiritual life and stimulate Christian activity for young women. The Rainbow Circle's goal was to provide a place where sick children of the poor could convalesce from such prevalent nineteenth century diseases as rickets, polio, diphtheria, and scarlet fever. They raised sufficient funds through fashionable charity balls to open Rainbow Cottage in the Glenville area, in 1891. In the same year the Rainbow Circle was expanded to include other young society women. Later, in 1896, Rainbow Cottage was incorporated with some of the original founders becoming trustees.

The Rainbow Circle, and later Board of Trustees, would raise funds for Rainbow Cottage through charity balls and donations from families and friends. In the late 1890s, at the suggestion of Samuel Mather, they began a bed subscription campaign to fund the ongoing operations of Rainbow Cottage. The success of their work on behalf of sick children led to major philanthropic donations by John D. Rockefeller, the Harkness Family, and the Bingham-Bolton-Blossom families. Rainbow Cottage, renamed Rainbow Hospital for Crippled and Convalescent Children, affiliated with University Hospitals in 1926 and merged with Babies and Children's Hospital in 1974 to form one of the nation's "best children's hospitals." The members of the Rainbow Circle of King's Daughters who founded Rainbow Hospital [Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital] maintained life long interest in their organization and fostered continued service and philanthropy among their own children and descendants on behalf of the children of Cleveland.