

The Benjamin Rose Institute

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The Benjamin Rose Institute was created as a non-profit organization in 1908 following the death of its benefactor, Benjamin Rose, a wealthy Cleveland businessman. Two unique stipulations distinguished the board and defined the mission of the organization. Rose named 15 prominent Cleveland women to the board and accorded them complete administrative authority over the corporation's financial assets. Given the mandate "to provide relief and assistance to the elderly," their vision of philanthropic service included personal involvement coupled with concern for the individual and an operating style characterized by innovation, flexibility and cooperation. These characteristics are evident in the definition, development and management of the Benjamin Rose Hospital, a rehabilitation hospital for chronically ill elderly which operated between 1953 and 1968. The "lady bountiful" stereotype attributed to elite female board members has obscured their role in envisioning philanthropic service as a means to achieve lasting change. In this instance, financial commitment and the dynamic leadership of trustees fostered new alliances among health care workers and challenged prevailing beliefs about the nature of aging and the aging process.