

A Tribute to Michael J. McTighe's *A Measure of Success* Looking Forward from *A Measure of Success*: Protestants, Entrepreneurs, and Patriots at the Cleveland Centennial

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I want to acknowledge my professional debts to Mike McTighe. First, this book, *A Measure of Success*, his *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History* entries, and his many other publications, taught me, and other historians, almost everything we know about organized religion in Cleveland. Second, McTighe introduced me to some important people, institutions, and ideas: most important maybe, Rebecca Rouse, the chief mover and doer behind antebellum Protestant benevolent efforts, founder of the city's first important poor relief society and of the Protestant Orphan Asylum, now Beech Brook. From McTighe I learned my first lesson in the absolutely pivotal role of women in church-related benevolence, a lesson which left an indelible mark on everything I have written since. Including this short paper.

The greatest success of *A Measure of Success* is its probing yet sympathetic portrait of Cleveland's Protestant elite. McTighe faults these men for accommodating their religious principles to the needs of nascent capitalism - "annointing the commercial economy"; for distancing themselves from the workingclass; for being apathetic or ambivalent on the great moral issue of slavery. Yet McTighe describes them as genuinely committed to building a Christian community and painfully aware of conflicts between God and Mammon.

A Measure of Success is primarily interested in assessing the power of these energetic and determined players in Cleveland's schools and benevolent institutions, as well as its economy, politics, and community rituals. This well-placed and well-heeled group "played a decisive role in creating and maintaining the values, attitudes and institutions that pervaded the city's public life."¹ Although powerful, they were not omnipotent, and by 1860, McTighe concludes, Cleveland's Protestant elite constituted "a substantial but eroding presence," their power diminished by the growing heterogeneity of the city's population and the economic imperatives of flourishing commerce and industry.²

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, I want to continue to flatter *A Measure of Success* by asking McTighe's question - what happened to this Protestant presence? - and by using one of his strategies for assessing power - an analysis of the Protestant presence in a significant community ritual, the Cleveland Centennial of 1896. I have not compiled the careful tables which link men and women to Protestant churches, to property, and to political power, which undergird McTighe's argument. Instead, I have relied almost exclusively on the *Official Report of the Cleveland Centennial*, a highly selective, very dubious source. However, I also learned from McTighe not to take anything academic too seriously. So here goes.

By 1890 industry had replaced commerce as Cleveland's economic cornerstone. The city's population of 261,353 was six times that of 1850; only about 16 percent were native-born of native parents.³ In 1850, Clevelanders attended 43 places of worship; in 1895, 275.⁴

In 1890 Cleveland got two splendid votes of confidence from its citizens: the Arcade, symbol of local prosperity and progress; and the Garfield Memorial, Cleveland's link to the martyred president and national significance. Three years later, as the city experienced its worst depression ever, two other significant buildings opened: Gray's Armory and Central Armory. These fortress-like structures housed public meetings but also strike-breaking national guard and private troops, a response to recent incidents of violent labor unrest.

In this context of mingled self-congratulation and anxiety, the planning for the centennial celebration began. That celebration revealed that the religious convictions of the well-heeled, well-placed Protestant men, who planned and ran the centennial, had been supplanted by patriotism

