



Celebrating International Women’s History Month with Our Founder, Jane Addams

March 8 was first celebrated as International Women’s Day in Europe in 1911. In many European nations, as well as in the United States, women’s rights was a political hot topic. [Woman suffrage — winning the vote](#) — was a priority of many women’s organizations. Jane Addams was at the forefront of this movement to involve women in the major issues of the day, demonstrating that they had power and influence well beyond the traditional areas of home and hearth.

An Illinois native and the 8th of nine children in a privileged household (her father was a friend of Abraham Lincoln), Addams co-founded Hull House in 1889 with her friend Ellen Gates Starr. It was one of the first settlement houses in the United States, serving recent immigrants, children, and families by helping them adjust to life in America and learn skills that would enable them to function well in society. She outlined their mission as follows: “...to provide a center for a higher civic and social life; to institute and maintain educational and philanthropic enterprises and to investigate and improve the conditions in the industrial districts of Chicago.”

Over the years, the organization grew to include more than ten buildings, extending its services to include child care, educational courses, an arts program, a public kitchen and many other social programs.

For these efforts and much more, Addams is regarded as the founder of the social work profession. She established the Juvenile Protective Association in 1901 with the object of providing “the first probation officers for the first Juvenile Court in the United States until this became a government function. From 1907 until the 1940s, JPA engaged in many studies examining such subjects as racism, child labor and exploitation, drug abuse and prostitution in Chicago and their effects on child development.” JPA is proud to carry on her work with children and families in need.

Aside from her commitment to the welfare of those in need, Addams was also a prominent peace activist, becoming chair of the Women’s Peace Party at the outbreak of World War I. She served as president of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom from 1919 to 1929. For her efforts, she shared the 1931 Nobel Peace Prize with Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University and presidential advisor. She was also one of the founders of the ACLU.

Jane Addams died on May 21, 1935, aged 74, but her work and inspiration have lived on, not only at JPA but in social service organizations all over the U.S. and the world. We at JPA are proud to carry on her commitment to children and families in need and are equally proud to celebrate her during Women’s History Month.

(Text Sources: [Biography.com](#), [Thoughtco.com](#), [Wikipedia](#))