Arenas of negotiation: defining women's roles in labor periodicals

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Arenas of Negotiation: Defining Women's Roles in Labor Periodicals

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Arenas of Negotiation:
Defining Women's Roles in Labor Periodicals

by
Allyson B. Kambach

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Master of Arts

in
History

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August 24, 1996
Date

Thesis Advisor

Co-Advisor

Chairperson of Department
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Abstract:

This study asks how and why two labor periodicals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries -- the Knights of Labor's *Journal of United Labor* and the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers' *Amalgamated Journal* -- addressed female readers. It is argued that these publications provided arenas in which the unions could negotiate tension-causing issues for women. Such issues were defined by the union's individual policies and philosophy. For example, the Knights' journal negotiated the tension between the union's official advocacy of sexual equality and their seemingly contradictory dedication to female domesticity. The periodical also tried to resolve the conflict between the Order's official espousal of female equality and the acceptance of that policy by male Knights. In comparison, the *Amalgamated Journal* addressed the gender conflict between male and female roles as well as the class tension which existed between Amalgamated wives' middle class aspirations and their working class reality. Essentially, both unions used their publications to put forth their positions on two issues -- the proper female role in society and in the labor movement -- and in so doing, they reveal the relationship that existed between labor and women.
Introduction:

The labor movement has historically had an ambivalent attitude toward women, both as workers and as union members. For example, although women were entering the work force in increasing numbers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, their representation in unions did not reflect such growth. In 1866, the National Labor Union became the first large-scale labor union to permit female members; however, in the five decades which followed this achievement, the number of women organized barely grew. By 1910, the first year for which there is an accurate accounting of female union membership, there were over 8 million women employed in the United States -- but, of that number, only 76,748 were organized, representing less than 1% of female workers. In comparison, 9.4% of male wage earners were organized.\(^1\) Such statistics have led historians to question labor’s commitment to organizing women and to ask what makes female wage earners different from their male counterparts that they did not organize as successfully. Essentially, understanding women’s relationship with labor has become the study of how women were kept out of unions and how their gender specific interests were ignored.\(^2\) Yet, by focusing on how labor excluded women the strategies these organizations followed to include female interests are obscured. Perhaps in addition to asking how and why women were kept out of unions, we need to ask how and why they were addressed by them.

Organization alone cannot define women’s relationship with labor unions. Rather than confining ourselves to questions such as how many women were members of unions and why labor failed to organize them, we can expand our attention and begin to ask how unions perceived women, their roles in society and in the labor movement. Statistics indeed suggest that there were very few female union members, but women came in contact with labor unions not only through


\(^2\) See for example, Alice Kessler-Harris, “Where Are the Organized Women Workers?” *Feminist Studies* 3 (Fall 1985): 92-110.
actual membership but through their husbands, fathers, and brothers as well. For example, when a
man brought home a copy of his union's journal, his wife or daughter might also have read some
of the articles, becoming educated in the organization's labor philosophy, critique of
industrialism, and goals for the working class. Perhaps, recognizing that labor periodicals were
already introducing women to the labor movement, a few unions formalized this contact by
providing material specifically addressed to female readers. Two such unions were the Knights of
Labor and their Journal of United Labor and the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin
Workers (AA) and their Amalgamated Journal. The primary purpose of a union's journal was, of
course, to inform its members of strikes, boycotts, happenings in various lodges, and to educate
them in the organization's labor philosophy. However, in the case of the two journals mentioned
above, a secondary purpose was added -- to educate women, prescribing for them a union
sanctified role in the labor movement and in society. Both the Knights of Labor and the
Amalgamated Association had specific goals for the material they published for female readers,
and, as a result, these periodicals provide a window through which we can better understand these
unions’ relationships with women.3

Labor journals were often the arenas in which a union could address and negotiate
tension-causing issues for its membership. Debates concerning the eight hour day or the efficacy

3Some recent historians who have used labor journals to study labor unions and their
relationship with women include the following: Susan Levine, Labor's True Woman: Carpet
Weavers, Industrialization, and Labor Reform in the Gilded Age (Philadelphia: Temple
University Press, 1984), Levine “Labor’s True Woman: Domesticity and Equal Rights in the
“From ‘Sealskin and Shoddy’ to ‘The Pig Headed Girl:’ Patriarchal Fables for Workers,” in ‘To
Toil the Livelong Day:’ America’s Women at Work, 1780-1980, Eds. Carol Groneman and Mary
Union Maids: The Woman Question in the Journals of the AFL and IWW, 1905-20,” Feminist
Analysis of the American Labor Press for Their Attitudes Toward Women, 1877-1920,” Ph. D.
of strikes, for example, were featured not only to inform readers of the different views, but, more importantly, to educate them in the correct position they should take on a particular issue -- the union’s position. Essentially, a labor organization negotiated tension by prescribing attitudes or behavior through the medium of the labor press. There were, however, issues discussed in these journals that appeared to be peripheral, related to, but without immediately apparent connections to the labor movement and the working class cause. A union’s perception of women and female roles represents one such issue that seemed outside of labor’s primary concerns, but which was nevertheless important enough to deserve negotiation in union journals. Perhaps, the labor movement was not quite as ambivalent toward women as membership statistics have suggested. This study, therefore, examines the female-oriented literature in the journals of the Knights of Labor and the AA, focusing upon the issues each of these organizations negotiated for their female readers in order to better define the relationship which existed between labor and women.

The actual tensions the two periodicals addressed and resolved with their material for female readers reflected the unique policies and philosophies of their respective organizations. The Journal of United Labor, for example, negotiated the tension between the Order’s “ideology of sexual equality” and their seemingly contradictory dedication to female domesticity. At the same time, the Knights’ journal also tried to resolve the conflict between the union’s official advocacy of sexual equality and the male membership’s acceptance of such a policy. In comparison, the Amalgamated Journal addressed the gender conflict between masculinity and femininity, male roles versus female roles, as well as the class tension which existed between Amalgamated wives’ middle class aspirations and their working class reality. The union’s desire to maintain traditional gender definitions and the relatively high incomes of their members gave

4 The term, “ideology of equality” is used by Susan Levine to describe the Knights’ broad definition of the working class in her study Labor’s True Woman.
rise to these particular tensions. Both the Knights of Labor and the AA provided their official union stance on each of these issues in their weekly periodicals, resolving the different conflicts by prescribing the correct behavior or attitude their female readers should observe.

Yet, although the tensions addressed in both periodicals were context or union specific, some generalizations concerning the issues these unions attempted to negotiate can be made. Essentially, both unions used their publications to put forth their positions on two issues — the proper female role in society and in the labor movement. The growth of industrialism had sparked not only economic change, but social transformation as well, necessitating a redefinition of women's role in society. The context for this redefinition for both the Knights and the Amalgamated Association was their labor journals. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed the expansion of female wage work as evidenced by Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Women's Share of Labor Force (%)</th>
<th>Working Women in Female Pop. (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Mechanization de-skilled many occupations, making them less labor intensive and more open to female workers. As increasing numbers of women left the home to enter the work force, both men and women worried that female wage work would upset traditional gender roles and unsex women. But perhaps more importantly, many men feared that lower paid female labor would
jeopardize their jobs. Both the *Journal of United Labor* and the *Amalgamated Journal* addressed the female role in society, negotiating the gender tension which accompanied industrialism by promoting their own understandings of how women should work, behave, and appear.

The second trait these two periodicals shared was their preoccupation with trying to define what role women should play in the labor movement. As vehicles for their respective unions, the *Journal of United Labor* and the *Amalgamated Journal* tried to encourage female readers to support union activities by informing them how they as women could further labor’s cause. Such roles could be formal or informal depending on the individual union’s perception of women. The Knights, for example, invited women to become members of the Order while the AA asked female readers to encourage their husbands, fathers and brothers to be active union members. Both unions wanted to involve women in the working class cause; however, they insisted that the boundaries of female participation be clearly delineated. These unions defined women’s roles in the labor movement for the same reason that they addressed the female role in society -- to ensure that traditional gender expectations were not completely disrupted.

It is essential to note that although the Knights of Labor and the Amalgamated Association shared an interest in addressing female readers, the two unions were quite dissimilar. For example, the Noble Order of the Knights of Labor was a labor organization composed of different craft unions while the AA was a single trade union affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (AFL). This distinction resulted in vastly different memberships in terms of both size and composition. At its height in 1886, the Knights of Labor had approximately 700,000 members, including unskilled wage laborers and women. In comparison, the AA reached its peak with only 24,000 members in 1891 and permitted only skilled workers to join, thereby excluding the few unskilled women in the iron, steel, and tin industries from membership. Furthermore, the Knights gained national prominence during the 1880s, beginning its decline
when the AA was at its greatest strength in 1890. But perhaps the most significant difference between these two organizations, at least in terms of this study, was their contradictory perceptions of women and the female role in both in society and the labor movement. Whereas the Knights of Labor and their official commitment to an ideology of equality established women as men’s equals, the Amalgamated Association saw women and their roles as fundamentally distinct from those of men and defined by domesticity rather than equality. A comparison of these two unions and their journals’ material for women might at first seem irrelevant, as they were very dissimilar organizations with contradictory attitudes. However, their common interest in addressing women suggests that they shared the belief that female interests were interwoven, and perhaps interdependent, with the interests of labor.

This study examines the journals of the Knights of Labor and the AA for the periods during which the unions seemed most interested in publishing material for women. The Journal of United Labor, for example, will be studied from 1881 to 1890. It was in 1881 that the journal first began carrying articles for women which, not surprisingly, was the same year that the Knights opened their membership to females. Although material which addressed women continued to appear well after 1890, female readers received noticeably less attention after that year, suggesting that addressing women’s interests was no longer the Knights’ priority. The Amalgamated Journal will be studied from 1899, the first year of its publication, to 1906. In September 1906, the journal’s women’s page was preempted for over a year by advertising, and when it reappeared in 1907 its format had been changed. Articles addressing women appeared less frequently and the short stories that had formerly been female-oriented took on a more masculine tone. It would seem that not unlike the Knights, the AA also became less interested in female readers over time. Nevertheless, when these journals did address women, they revealed how their respective unions
perceived the female gender and their roles and thus recorded for the historian the relationship between labor and women.

In order to understand what these union journals reveal about women and organized labor it will first be necessary to consider how both the Journal of United Labor and the Amalgamated Journal addressed women in their pages. The format of the female-oriented articles, their authorship, subject matter, audience, and tone will therefore be addressed in the following section. This discussion will suggest how each union's labor philosophy and perception of women was reflected in their periodicals while at the same time introducing the two journals and their material for female readers. Each union will then be discussed individually -- first the Knights of Labor followed by the Amalgamated Association -- to consider why these organizations chose to provide material specifically for female readers in their publications. It will be argued that both unions used their journals as the context for negotiating gender issues and as a medium for prescribing the proper female role in society and in the labor movement.
Chapter 1: How Labor Journals Addressed Their Female Readers

When the wife or daughter of an Amalgamated man opened the family copy of the weekly *Amalgamated Journal* she would probably turn immediately to pages 6 and 7. It was there that she could always find the “In Women’s Realm” column with its helpful household hints, recipes, and fashion advice, lessons on how to look or act, as well as a few short stories full of proper young women who always married the hero in the end. If the editors needed additional space for official business, a few articles on the aims of the AA or the state of various local unions might also be found on the women’s pages; however, overall, pages 6 and 7 were dedicated to the female reader. The women’s pages of the *Amalgamated Journal* allowed the union to address a female readership within clearly defined boundaries. In comparison, the experience of a Lady Knight reading her copy of the *Journal of United Labor* was quite different. Short stories as well as articles on working conditions endured by female wage earners and discussing the union’s policy of equal pay for equal work appeared throughout the journal, inviting the Lady Knight to read the entire publication. This format encouraged women reading the Knights’ journal to familiarize themselves with issues that pertained to the entire working class rather than confining them to gender specific concerns on a women’s page.

These physical differences in the formats of the *Journal of United Labor* and the *Amalgamated Journal* reflect much deeper differences in how their respective organizations perceived women’s roles. The Knights of Labor, for example, recognized that in order to effectively fight the enemies of labor -- capitalist monopolies -- all members of the working class

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5 The women’s advice column which appeared in the *Amalgamated Journal* changed its title twice over the period being studied. I have chosen to refer to it throughout the text as the “In Women’s Realm” column to avoid confusion; however, from 1899 to 1907 the feature was also called the “Housekeeper’s Column” and “Of Interest to Women.”

6 It should be noted that in 1888, the *Journal of United Labor* began carrying a short lived “woman’s page” that contained articles on notable women. The incorporation of this feature, however, did not preclude articles on women’s issues from appearing on other pages of the journal.
had to be united, including female wage laborers and housewives. Dedicated to an ideology of
equality the Knights accepted into their ranks all members of the “producing classes” -- a group
they defined broadly, irrespective of skill, sex, race, or wage earning status. The *Journal of
United Labor* reflected this philosophy. As an editorial stated, the journal was devoted “to matters
of interest in the family circle” which would make it “a welcome visitor at the fireside as well as
in the workshop.”\(^7\) In essence, by encouraging all members of a Knight’s family to read the
publication -- from cover to cover and not just relevant sections -- the journal educated a greater
portion of the working class for their crusade against capitalist monopolies.

In comparison to the inclusive character of the *Journal of United Labor*, the format of the
*Amalgamated Journal* was exclusive, reflecting the membership and ideals of the union it
represented. Rather than espousing an ideology of equality, the AA saw fundamental distinctions
between skilled and unskilled workers, male and female workers, female wage workers and
housewives, and between males and females. Almost by definition the AA did not have any
female members as it was a union of skilled iron, steel, and tin workers -- industries with very few
female workers who were virtually all unskilled. In addition, as the AA was an organization of
skilled workers who received higher wages than less skilled laborers, Amalgamated men were
better able to aspire to and attain a family arrangement in which they, as men, would be the sole
breadwinners for their families. Their wives, therefore, could remain in the domestic sphere as
breadgivers.\(^8\) This ideal affected how the union perceived women and their relationship to the
union. The expected female role was that of housewife, related to but separate from the male role
as provider. Reflecting this social arrangement, the women’s pages appeared within the labor
periodical, yet were differentiated from the male-oriented, labor material.

\(^7\) *Journal of United Labor* (hereafter *JUL*) 9 July 1887.

\(^8\) The concept of separate gendered spheres was first discussed by Barbara Welter, “The
Essentially, the format of the *Journal of United Labor* inspired working class unity whereas the format of the *Amalgamated Journal* encouraged the separation of the sexes. When the *Journal of United Labor* spread articles of concern to women throughout the publication, this arrangement was a physical representation of how the Knights perceived women’s role -- inseparable from the whole. Similarly, when the *Amalgamated Journal* confined its female readership to the women’s pages, the format actually mirrored the accepted social arrangement of Amalgamated families -- a women’s domestic sphere, separated from a man’s wage-earning sphere. Yet, format is only one element in explaining how labor journals addressed their female readership. Lady Knights and Amalgamated wives did not just notice how the female oriented features were arranged in the journal, they also read them. Thus, a discussion of the authorship, subject matter, audience and tone of the labor journals’ material for women will also reveal much about the two unions and their perspectives on women’s roles. But more importantly, it will suggest how the unions conveyed these ideas to their female readers.

Both the *Journal of United Labor* and the *Amalgamated Journal* were headed by male editorial staffs who had the challenge of providing material for both male and female audiences. They not only had to inform their memberships of union news and educate them in labor philosophy, but they also had to interest and entertain a group of non-union members -- the wives and families of their subscribers. To meet this challenge the journals attempted different strategies. Letters addressed to the “Lady Editress of the *Journal of United Labor*” suggest, for example, that the Knights employed at least some women to ensure that female interests were represented in their union’s publication.9 No such evidence of a female staff can be found in the *Amalgamated Journal*; however, in the first issues of the publication, the editors solicited contributions from the wives of their members, encouraging them to send in their “tried and true

9 See for example, *JUL*., 8 October 1887.
recipes” as well as “hints on the care of flowers, making of fancy work and general household information.” This explains who wrote the articles on household hints that appeared in the journal, but not who wrote the prescriptive articles which weekly described the looks and behavior of the ideal woman. These articles, advising women on appearance and comportment were most often quoted verbatim from middle class journals such as the Ladies Home Journal and Woman’s Home Companion or contained references to such periodicals. Thus, without a female staff to advise them, the male editors of the Amalgamated Journal looked to their female readers and ladies’ journals for material. However, just because women could suggest articles for both the Journal of United Labor and the Amalgamated Journal did not mean that they controlled what material was actually published for female readers. Editorial control ultimately rested in the hands of male members, and so it can be argued that the material for women found in these periodicals, regardless of its authorship, reflected a male perception of what women wanted and needed to read.

Despite the contributions women sent to the Amalgamated Journal, when a housewife opened the periodical to the women’s pages, she never found a byline attributing advice or information to a specific woman. The recipes, cleaning tips, and articles on how to save through household economy always appeared anonymously, unlike articles on labor issues which listed the male authors. In contrast, female contributors to the Journal of United Labor often signed their names to their letters and articles, proclaiming to their fellow Knights their identity, their gender, and their equal role in the union. These women wrote on a variety of subjects and were not limited to female issues. For example, women discussed suffrage, temperance, wage equality, and working conditions, but they also considered foreign immigration, health insurance, and the

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viability of cooperatives. Thus, female contributors to the *Journal of United Labor* demonstrated through example that women should be educated in a variety of topics important to the working class, and that when they articulated their opinions on such subjects their voices would be recognized by the Knights of Labor.

The extent to which female voices were heard in the *Journal of United Labor* is exemplified by Mrs. Leonora M. Barry, a prominent woman in the Knights' organization and a frequent contributor to their publication. Barry was a widow who went to work in a hosiery factory to support her three children. She joined the Knights of Labor in 1884 and just two years later she was voted master workman for her local and became the representative for her district at the Knights' yearly General Assembly. She was quickly appointed the General Investigator for the Women’s Committee and “was sent into the world to teach, instruct, and educate my sister working-women and the public generally as to their needs and necessities.” To keep members informed of her crusade, Mrs. Barry wrote a series of letters and articles from 1887 until 1890 for the journal which recorded her lectures, organizing efforts, and her general observations of what working women in America faced. That Barry’s reports were a regular feature in the *Journal of United Labor* demonstrates how important a role women’s voices played in the Knights of Labor.

In one of her first published letters Mrs. Barry stated, “I shall, from time to time, give instances, which I know to be true, to the readers of the JOURNAL; and if I find no other measure

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will reach their callused hearts, I will publish the names of all parties whom I find treating humanity in such an inhuman manner.\footnote{JUL, 16 April 1887: 2355.} Barry’s letters and articles were filled with sympathy-inspiring examples of women facing harsh industrial conditions, admonishing her fellow Knights to stop these injustices. A letter which appeared on May 26, 1888 typifies Barry’s style. She began by telling the story of a Pennsylvania girl who had recently lost her job because she was late to work, “being obliged to walk three-quarters of a mile and was the sole support of an aged grandmother whose comfort she must prepare each morning ere going to her work.” Barry then entreated,

\begin{quote}
Brother workingmen of Pennsylvania, you are to blame for existing conditions of this kind, and ever will be; and women who have no power to regulate the laws by which they are governed and of which they are often the victims, must ever suffer until you, by the intelligent use of your ballot, insist on the enforcement of the laws of your State . . . \footnote{"Long Hours for Women and Children of Pennsylvania," JUL, 5 May 1888: 2634.} 
\end{quote}

By inspiring compassion in her readers and then encouraging them to take action to help the Order’s sister laborers, Barry played upon her readers’ emotions and their sense of justice.

Letters to the journal written by Lady Knights in response to the work of Mrs. Barry suggest that she was indeed successful in invoking a response in female readers. One woman wrote, “Having just read your letter to ‘working-women,’ . . . with great interest, I am so impelled to write to you that I turn aside from other work planned for the day.”\footnote{JUL, 10 May 1888: 2591.} Through her contributions to the \textit{Journal of United Labor}, Barry educated and informed, but more importantly she became an inspiration to women and a friend. Barry’s work for both the journal and the union was so respected that when she remarried in 1890 and retired from her position as General Investigator, both female and male Knights mourned her departure. The journal ran the following article about her wedding.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[14] JUL, 16 April 1887: 2355.
\item[16] JUL, 10 May 1888: 2591.
\end{footnotes}
On Thursday, April 17, Sister L. M. Barry, whose name has long been a household word among Knights of Labor, was married. Among Knights of Labor everywhere there will be but one wish for a happy future for the newly-wedded couple. Yet even though it scarcely seems generous to say it, there will be regrets mingled with the good wishes; regrets that the Sister Barry, whose eloquent words have so often thrilled and inspired them, is leaving the field in which she did such great devoted work for humanity.

Thus, the Journal of United Labor gave Mrs. Barry and many other Lady Knights a voice to express their opinions, and in so doing gave them an arena in which they could gain respect and confidence as workers and as women. In comparison, Amalgamated women found no such forum in the Amalgamated Journal. The contributions they made to the union and to its publication were anonymous, winning them none of the recognition or opportunity for self-awareness open to Lady Knights.

The topics of the female-oriented articles found in the Journal of United Labor and the Amalgamated Journal stood in sharp contrast. As the previous discussion has suggested, contributions by Lady Knights covered a wide variety of topics while Amalgamated women confined their opinions to domestic subject matter. The Knights' journal encouraged its female readers to learn about labor organization and working class issues while the AA's journal provided recipes and cleaning tips. The titles of articles appearing in the Journal of United Labor and the Amalgamated Journal further demonstrate this dichotomy. For example, “Female Suffrage in Kansas,” “KL and Women’s Rights,” “Unfair Wages of Women,” and “Woman’s Heroism” are representative of the features that appeared in the Knights’ periodical. In comparison, the AA provided articles such as “Advice to Home-Keepers,” “The Stylish Girl,” “The Home

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17“Sister L. M. Barry Married,” JUL 24 April 1890: 1.
Dressmaker,” and “The Art of Being Agreeable.”19 The articles in the Journal of United Labor suggested that females had interests in society, outside of the home, while the Amalgamated Journal depicted the home as a woman’s only interest. The different subject matter presented by the journals again reflects the different perceptions of women’s roles held by the two unions -- the Knights saw women as equal members of the working class and, therefore, encouraged their education in various labor topics, whereas the AA wanted women separated from the industrial world and so only provided them with material pertaining to the domestic sphere.

This dichotomy, however, breaks down to some extent when we consider the subjects and themes of the female oriented short stories carried by the two labor journals. Although the Journal of United Labor and the Amalgamated Journal ran articles with vastly different subjects, their short stories are surprisingly similar. Both journals published humorous vignettes about women finding men to marry despite mishaps and misunderstandings, as, for example, “The Lady and the Burglar” which appeared in the Amalgamated Journal in 1903. Althea, a young woman asleep in her aunt’s home, was startled awake one night by the sound of a burglar breaking in through the downstairs window. Although not a heroine and “as likely to shrink and tremble” as any girl, Althea nevertheless drew a small pistol from underneath her pillow and descended the stairs to meet the threat. As the burglar entered the dining room, he and Althea came face to face and it was then that she realized that the intruder was her old suitor, Robin Vayne! His mother had once owned Althea’s aunt’s house, and unaware that his family no longer resided there Robin snuck in for a surprise visit. Devastated that she might have shot the young man, Althea’s love for Robin was rekindled. They resolved an old quarrel and Althea finally agreed to marry her old suitor, the burglar.20


Compare this *Amalgamated Journal* story to “An Unexpected Marriage,” which appeared in the *Journal of United Labor* in 1887. One December evening, Harry Cutter’s younger sister Winnie came to him to ask his permission to marry the man she loved. Walter Addams was only a clerk, but Harry knew that he was worthy of his sister and so agreed to the marriage. Winnie was happy for herself yet wanted to know that her brother, who had taken care of her since their parents had died, would be all right without her. She asked Harry if he had ever been in love and in reply he told her about Lucy Stone, a girl that he had once loved but had lost to a quarrel. Suddenly, Winnie asked her brother a favor -- could her fiancee’s aunt come to stay with them. Harry agreed and was stunned the next day when he discovered that Walter’s aunt was Lucy Stone, his lost love. The two reconciled and a double wedding ceremony was performed that same night.\(^{21}\)

Both stories featured long ago quarrels, misunderstandings, and happy coincidences and both end with marriage -- a symbol that the couples lived happily ever after. The two labor journals often excerpted stories like these directly from contemporary “story papers” such as *Chimney Corner*, *The Fireside Companion* and the *Family Story Paper*. These publications contained nothing but stock characters and time-worn plots whose sole purpose was to fascinate their urban readership with stories of heroism and romance.\(^{22}\) This reliance on the popular press for their short stories might explain why both the Knights of Labor and the Amalgamated Association, despite their different perceptions of women, often carried the same type of stories.

Yet, although the *Journal of United Labor* featured tales from the story papers, it also featured short stories which addressed labor issues and taught union policy. “Strike At Elkstone Quarries,” for example personified the Knights of Labor’s no strike policy by emphasizing the

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\(^{22}\) For a discussion of the relationship between nineteenth century story papers and the labor press, see Wier, 152-5.
hardship experienced by the workers and, in particular, how the strike affected their wives and children. Two friends in "The Model Millionaire" argue over the wages a painter's model should receive and in so doing explained the Knights of Labor's dedication to winning for laborers the value of their work. A character in the story argues that if the painter received a large commission, he should pass the benefit along to the man that helped him produce the profit. "Every Man His Own Landlord," introduced readers to John and his new wife who are discussing the merits of a co-operative building company that John was considering joining. The story of the newlyweds' decision making process personalized the union's lesson in cooperation and made it more entertaining. However, in addition to lessons in union and labor ideals, didactic parables often left their readers with morals that they could apply to their own lives. For example, the story of "Arthur" told of a working class man who used his wages each week to buy liquor, robbing his wife and children of the much needed paycheck. Thus, unlike the Amalgamated Association, the Knights of Labor used the medium of short stories to both entertain and educate.

The material the journals chose to publish also reveals who they defined as their audience. Working women, for example, were the primary focus for the female-oriented articles found in the Journal of United Labor. Having brought women workers into their union who, not unlike many male members, probably had little experience with organized labor, the Knights of Labor used their journal to educate them in the union's philosophy and aims. In particular, the Knights wanted their female members to understand how the organization would address their gender-specific concerns. For example, an 1887 article "Knights of Labor and Women's Rights" explained that the organization's motto, "'Fair play for women every time!'" applied to women's activities.

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23 "Strike At Elkstone Quarries," appeared in three successive editions of the JUL: January 24, 31 and February 7, 1889.
position in both industry and the union. The author discussed the Knights' dedication to securing equal pay for equal work and to encouraging women to play active roles in the organization. Ultimately, when the Knights of Labor addressed female wage workers they were demonstrating how integral women's issues were to the union's policies as a whole. Women's suffrage, rather than being discussed as solely a women's problem, became the interest of the entire labor movement in the pages of the *Journal of United Labor*. Authors argued that enfranchising working women would increase the number of working class voters, and as a result would help enact industrial reform legislation. Thus, by familiarizing wage earning females with the union's aims and philosophy, the Knights not only educated them, but helped them recognize their role in the organization.

Although it might be assumed that the *Journal of United Labor* focused solely on wage-earning women, housewives concerned with working class issues were also addressed. The Knights of Labor believed that regardless of whether or not a woman worked outside of the home she was still a laborer and a member of the working class who should be educated in the philosophy of the labor movement. The journal therefore carried articles which equated housework with wage work such as one entitled "The Drudgery of Life" which depicted the common lament of working people: "Oh, it is such drudgery," said a housekeeper the other day. 'It is the same old thing over and over from morning till night, from day to day, week to week, until months roll into years, and no hope of an end to it until the grave yawns." The housewife's complaint was followed by that of the carpenter and then by other workers who shared her despair. The article concluded with the lesson, "All is drudgery that we must do." Having been encouraged to see themselves as equal members of the working class, housewives were taught to

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apply labor philosophy to their housework. Cooperative housekeeping, in particular, was advocated by the journal not only because it would reduce the waste of resources, but, more importantly, because it would save time that women could then devote to educating themselves.30

In comparison, the female-oriented material provided by the Amalgamated Journal focused almost exclusively on housewives and their domestic concerns. One of the main features of the journal’s women’s pages was the “In Women’s Realm” column which weekly addressed women and their household tasks, advising them on how to clean, cook, decorate, and shop better and more efficiently. This household advice stressed the multitude of tasks a housekeeper must perform daily as well as the importance of each of those tasks to a woman’s family. For example, “Problems for the Housewife” delineated the five tasks that any conscientious woman must see to: food preparation, cleanliness and sanitation, directing servants, making the surroundings physically comfortable, and finally, the intellectual life of the home. The author concluded that, “Surely the housewife has important issues enough in her hands without seeking a field for others.”31 By stressing the complexity and importance of a woman’s domestic work, the Amalgamated Journal’s women’s page actually discouraged female wage work. The advice for housekeepers demonstrated that it would be virtually impossible for a working woman to maintain the same high standards in her home that a full-time housewife could and did. Thus, although the journal seemed to be only addressing housewives, it also addressed female wage workers or women considering an outside occupation by implied message -- women should not seek employment because their domestic work was too time-consuming and essential to maintaining healthy and happy families.

The subject matter published for female readers by the Knights of Labor and the Amalgamated Association often determined the tone in which features were presented. Articles

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30See for example, JUL 2 April 1887: 2340.
found in the *Amalgamated Journal*, for example, were largely prescriptive, presenting women with both physical and social ideals and then showing them how to live up to them. Take, for example, this advice that appeared in an article entitled “Girls Should Remember.” “... [O]ne of the most beautiful things on earth is a pure, modest, true young girl -- one who is her father’s pride, her mother’s comfort, her brother’s inspiration, and her sister’s ideal -- which girl we should all try to be.”

Just the titles of articles in the periodical -- “The Neatly Dressed Woman,” “The Cheerful Woman,” “The Capable Woman,” and “The Ideal Mother” -- suggest the variety of ideals an Amalgamated woman was asked to epitomize. To help their readers become the perfect woman described in its pages, the *Amalgamated Journal* provided lessons and advice such as the following recommendations excerpted from “The Art of Being Agreeable.”

No charming woman ever spoke with a harsh voice or with uncultivated phrases. The art of being agreeable which is so delightfully comprehended and exhibited by some men and women in society, and which might be acquired by others, involves unselfishness among other things. One must be mindful of others if they would be agreeable. . . . The Agreeable person never probes a wound, never overpowers one with kindness, never ignores one who has any claims at all upon her consideration (be it that of guest or servant), keeps cool under trying circumstances and is enthusiastic over enthusiasm justifying events.

The *Amalgamated Journal* thus played the role of expert advisor and counselor for its female readers, telling them how they should cook, clean, look, and behave.

The *Journal of United Labor* also tried to act as an advisor for its female readers; however, in this role its tone was instructive, not prescriptive. This distinction between education and prescription may not be immediately clear, but, it is nevertheless essential. While the *Amalgamated Journal* sought to define and therefore confine its female readers to a domestic sphere by presenting feminine ideals, the *Journal of United Labor* tried to lessen women’s

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isolation and broaden their expectations through instruction. When the Knight's journal discussed noteworthy working women, for example, it illustrated to female readers the breadth of opportunities open to women and challenged them to follow the examples presented. The tone of these articles was encouraging and positive as in the case of the following item from a feature entitled, "What Women Are Doing."

Mrs. Elizabeth I. Nicholson is the editor and proprietor of the New Orleans Picayune. Her husband dies bequeathing her the paper burdened with a debt of $80,000. By excellent management she paid off the debt of the paper -- a splendid tribute to a woman's administration.35

Articles, such as this, demonstrated the competence of women and encouraged female readers to strive for personal development -- development that was only limited by a woman's willingness to try and not by a pre-defined ideal. Thus, the Journal of United Labor also sought to teach its female readers; however, its tone suggests that those lessons were meant to empower rather than confine.

The preceding discussion of format, authorship, subject matter, audience and tone demonstrates the variety of strategies used by the Journal of United Labor and the Amalgamated Journal to address their female readers. It also suggests that how a union periodical chose to speak to its female readers reflected the union's view of women and their relationship to organized labor. The Knights' journal revealed its union's dedication to gender equality while the AA's desire to confine women to the domestic sphere was mirrored in its publication. Upon first examination, then, the two unions, the material they published for female readers and their perceptions of women seem almost dichotomous. Yet, such a conclusion must be qualified as these have been only general observations of the major themes of each journal's material for female readers. The Journal of United Labor in particular belies such clear cut findings. The Knights indeed tried to educate and encourage women in their publication; however, articles

which idealized domesticity could also be found. Thus, when we go beyond the general message of this journal we find that the Order's ideology of equality did not go unqualified. In the next chapter, the Knights of Labor and their reasons for addressing female readers will be discussed. Perhaps, by examining the interplay between the major thrust of their journal and its sometimes contradictory undercurrents, a better understanding of this union and its relationship with women can be forged.
Chapter 2: The Journal of United Labor

There's A Woman In It

"They talk about a woman’s sphere
As though it had a limit;
There’s not a place in earth or heaven,
There’s not a task to mankind given,
There’s not a blessing or a woe
There’s not a whispered yes or no,
There’s not a life, a death or birth,
That has a feather’s weight of worth,
Without a woman in it." 36

The reason why the Journal of United Labor specifically addressed female readers might at first seem almost obvious -- women, as the title of the above poem suggests, were "in it." Women were members of the Knights of Labor and were addressed in their periodical because they and their interests were a part of the organization. By 1886, when the union's membership was at its height, there were approximately 50,000 female members, constituting between 8 and 9 percent of the Knights' membership. There were a total of 121 all-female locals in 1886, encouraging the General Assembly to organize a committee to investigate women's unique industrial concerns. 37 The Knights of Labor appealed to the entire working class -- regardless of color, religion, skill level, sex or wage earning status -- and tried to unite this diverse group under the banner of organized labor. Thus, factory girls, domestic servants, and housewives should all have been able to read the Knights' journal, finding something that spoke to them.

Disregarding late nineteenth century gender stereotypes in lieu of class solidarity must have been an enormous task for the Knights of Labor. Lady Knights had to break free from confining definitions of female roles, and their male counterparts had to reconcile themselves to the change. The Knights' ideology of equality was the complete antithesis of the prevalent

36 "There's A Woman In It," JUL 12 March 1887: 2313.
Victorian ideal of women. At least in terms of official policy, the Knights encouraged women to take active, aggressive roles in the union and in the work force while Victorian society taught them to be submissive, docile, and to remain in the private/domestic sphere. But, how successful were the Knights at overcoming gender stereotypes in actuality? An examination of the Knights of Labor and the history of their relationship with women will explain the Knights' ideology of gender equality and might also lead to other possible interpretations of why the Journal of United Labor took a particular interest in addressing female readers. Perhaps the fact that women were "in it" is not a sufficient explanation.

The Knights of Labor and Women

Pledged are we, our lives, our honor,
To lift up the cause of the right,
To be ever bold and manly,
To be valiant in the fight.
Down with treason's fiery banner!
Haul it to the depths of hell!
But two flags shall e'er wave o'er us—
'Stars and Stripes,' and 'K. of L.'

In 1869, nine Philadelphia garment cutters whose union had recently been disbanded founded the Noble Order of the Knights of Labor. Having experienced the calamity of

blacklisting firsthand, these original Knights vowed to keep their new organization a secret so that its members would be free from employer attacks. The Order, therefore, remained hidden until 1882 when it finally went public. The original Knights of Labor was more like a fraternal organization than a labor union, the small group of craftsmen uniting more often in secret rituals than in organized worker protest.\textsuperscript{41} Nevertheless, it was during this secret period of the Order's history that the Knights developed much of their reform ideology. Convinced that capitalist monopolies, not democracy, was in control during the Gilded Age, the Knights developed an alternative vision of American society based not upon class division but rather upon the ideals of producerism and cooperation. They argued that the producers of wealth, the common workers, should reap the benefits of their labor and not capitalists. Furthermore, Knights believed that production should be organized cooperatively so that mutualism rather than competition governed economic behavior.

The Knights of Labor's membership grew slowly during the first decade of their existence -- the total reaching only around 9,000 members in 1879. However, by 1886, just six years later the union had reached its all-time height of approximately 700,000 members. The reason for this meteoric rise in the Knights' membership was the end of the Order's self-imposed secrecy and the union's decision to admit non-skilled workers. The reform spirit that the Knights had developed during their early days as a predominately fraternal order allowed them to broaden the traditional restrictions on trade union membership to encompass all producers. Without boundaries to working class unity, the Knights hoped to be better able to combat the capitalist interests that

\textsuperscript{41} Weir argues that the early years of the Knights of Labor can best be understood if the organization is seen as a fraternal order much like other late nineteenth century voluntary associations. He pays particular attention to the Knights' secret rituals and reform ideology. Weir, 1-34.
exploited labor. Ultimately, this ideology of equality was what led the Knights of Labor to their particular view of women and the female role in society and labor organization.

Women were not originally permitted to join the Knights of Labor for two reasons. First, most members and especially Uriah H. Stevens, the union's first Master Workman, worried that females would be unable to maintain the Order's necessary secrecy due to their gender. But, perhaps more importantly, it was generally believed that women's rightful place was in the home and that matters of politics, economics, and class were solely in the province of men.\(^{42}\) Thus even though the Knights of Labor would later espouse gender equality, they originally had very traditional ideas about women's roles, idealizing female domesticity and encouraging gender distinctions. Nevertheless, by 1878 female work force participation could no longer be ignored despite the prevailing sexism, and so the Knights of Labor began discussing the role of women workers during their General Assembly convention that year. Debates were predominantly couched in terms of the adverse effect that lower paid, unskilled female labor had on the wages of male workers and not, it should be emphasized, on the inherent injustice of women's inequality. The Knights recognized that women received a lower salary than men due to their gender and that this inequality made women more desirable to employers. By organizing women and other low-skilled workers who might threaten the pay scale by accepting lower wages, the Knights hoped to better the condition of the entire working class. Thus, the Knights of Labor and their original aim for organizing women had less to do with accepting gender equality than it did with combating a growing threat to men's livelihoods. It is also important to note that although the Order moved toward a more liberal understanding of women's position in the labor force, this shift was not accompanied by a denunciation of domesticity as the proper female realm.

\(^{42}\) For a discussion of the Knights' original objections to female members see Foner, Women and the American Labor Movement, 185. Levine discusses the Knights' dedication to the female domestic ideal in Labor's True Woman, 132-41.
The first women were admitted to the ranks of the Knights of Labor in 1881 after three years of intense debates among the union's leaders and members. Once welcomed, women had the choice of forming all-female assemblies, or if there were not enough women in a certain area to justify a separate local, they were invited to join all-male locals. At first, female participation in the union was extremely small — in 1881 only one all-female assembly was organized. However, by 1886 there were approximately 50,000 female members, constituting between 8 and 9 percent of the total and 121 women’s locals had been organized. The women who became Lady Knights worked at a wide variety of occupations, as illustrated by an 1886 breakdown of the all-female assemblies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shoeworkers</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mill operatives</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housekeepers</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailoresses</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundresses</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knitters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collar and shirt ironers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress and cloak makers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatters</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weavers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper-box makers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookbinders</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpetmakers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarmakers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feather curlers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold cutters</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead pencil workers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber workers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local of Bohemian women in Chicago</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black women’s locals whose jobs included housekeepers, farmers, chambermaids, and laundresses</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lady Knights were predominantly white, wage earning women from the working class; however, there were black women, non wage earning housekeepers and middle class women among the female members as well.44

In 1878, the Knights of Labor added the slogan “equal pay for equal work” to their platform, which, although adopted primarily to eliminate sources of cheap labor competition, did

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43 This 1886 breakdown of women’s locals according to members’ occupations lists only 105 all female assemblies whereas there were 121 at that time. Only those shown here were listed with occupations in the “Report of the General Instructor and Director of Women’s Work,” Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Knights of Labor, 1889, pp. 4-5. Foner, Women and the American Labor Movement, 188.

44 Foner, 188.
much to attract females when membership was opened to them. Women were also attracted to the Knights of Labor by the Order’s devotion to justice, moral ideals, and their espousal of sexual equality. An 1883 letter written to the *Journal of United Labor* by Lydia Drake, a recent initiate to the Order and future union lecturer, illustrates what one woman found in the Knights.

> It is scarce six months since I became a member of the Noble Order of the Knights of Labor. But even in that short space I have learned to love and honor it for the instructions it is ever ready to impart; the anxious care it sustains in behalf of justice and individual rights; the desire it expresses not only in words but in deeds to advance the cause of moral and intellectual culture . . . and the determined efforts it has already made to elevate the standard of labor, distribute more equally the profits thereof, and unite the interests of humanity in one common brotherhood.  

The Order’s labor philosophy and defense of working class interests seem almost secondary to this Lady Knight who praised the organization’s dedication to moral and intellectual culture ahead of its labor advances. Drake went on to praise the Knights, asking “Who cannot see the working of Omnipotent love and justice in this great army of reform, where woman must become the peer of man and sit beside him in the council chambers?” She saw the gender equality of the Knights as what made theirs a “glorious cause, a noble work.” Women thus joined the Knights not only for what the union could do for them as laborers, but also for its strong association with morality and dedication to promoting social justice and sexual equality.

As leaders, investigators, and educators women played a variety of important roles in the Knights of Labor. When a Committee on Women’s Work was formed in 1886 to specifically addresses the concerns of wage earning women, Lady Knights such as Leonora M. Barry, Mary Hanafin, Mary O’Reilly, and Nellie Hardison led the effort. Women were able to achieve leadership positions in their locals and district assemblies and were elected to be representatives to the Knights’ General Assembly. Mrs. Elizabeth Rodgers, for example, was a housewife who was elected master workman of a women’s assembly in 1881 and later in 1886 became the master

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workman of the Chicago District No. 24, a position in which she led over fifty thousand men and women. Rodgers was also a judge of the Order’s District Court where she made rulings on union affairs. Lady Knights also lectured on a variety of labor topics, touring the country to educate their fellow workers. Yet, despite this evidence of women’s active participation in the Knights of Labor, the number of female leaders was not representative of the percentage of women in the union. For example, in 1886, out of 660 representatives to the General Assembly a mere 16 were women, representing only 2 percent of the convention at a time when nearly 10 percent of the Knights’ membership was female. Furthermore, the tasks of these female leaders were predominantly confined to addressing and organizing women. Larger labor questions which affected the entire union rested almost solely in the hands of male leaders.

In 1891 Maggie Weir, the master workman of a women’s assembly in Baltimore withdrew her women from the Knights of Labor, stating that they “derived no benefit from belonging to the order.” No benefit? The above discussion has suggested that Lady Knights had their interests as workers addressed by a national organization, were able to attain leadership positions, and achieved at least some level of sexual equality as members of the union. Yet this incident suggests that underneath the Order’s idealized espousals there was conflict over women’s roles in the union and the organization’s attention to their interests. The members of the Knights

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47 Weir, 31.
48 Of course it must be noted that during the late 1880s there was a sharp decline in the membership of the Knights of Labor, suggesting that both male and female Knights were becoming dissatisfied with the organization. Perhaps the lack of benefit experienced by Maggie Weir and her female followers was more a union wide issue than a specifically female issue. It is ironic that just as women were gaining prominence in the union, it fell into rapid decline. For discussions of the unions deterioration and its effect on female members see Paul Buhle, “The Knights of Labor in Rhode Island,” Radical History Review 17 (Spring 1978): 58 and Ware, 66-7, 371-6.
of Labor essentially faced two fundamental dilemmas due to their unique perception of women and the female role in labor organization. First, a tension existed between the Knights’ rhetoric of female equality and their dedication to the ideal of female domesticity. Lady Knights were encouraged to be active and equal participants in the union, but female domesticity rather than equality was the Knights’ ideal conception of womanhood. Another tension existed between the union’s official espousal of sexual equality and the general acceptance and practice of that policy by male members. The Knights might have publicly advocated equal pay for equal work, but their rhetoric was not always translated into reality. Thus, the Knights of Labor were not entirely successful in exorcising Victorian femininity from their ideology of equality and that shortcoming caused the union to have contradictory positions on women and their roles. These tensions were apparent in the pages of the Journal of United Labor and, within this context they were negotiated.
Negotiating Conflicting Female Roles: Equality v. Domesticity

A Little Wife of the K. Of L.

The dear little wife at home, John,
With ever so much to do,
Stitches to set and babies to pet,
And so many thoughts of you.
The Beautiful household fairy,
Filling your heart with light,
Whatever you meet to-day John,
Go cheerily home to-night.

You know she will come to meet you,
A smile on her sunny face,
And your wee little girl, as pure as a pearl,
Will be there in her childish grace.
And the boy, his father's pride, John,
With the eyes so brave and bright,
From the strife and the din to the peace John
Go cheerily home to-night.

For though you are worn and weary,
You needn't be cross or curt;
There are words like darts to gentle hearts,
There are looks that wound and hurt.
With the key in the latch at home, John,
Drop the troubles out of sight,
To the dear little wife who is waiting,
Come cheerily home to-night.

What thought the tempter try you,
Thought the shafts of adverse fate
May bustle near and the sky be drear,
Amid the laggard fortune wait;
You are passing rich already,
Let the haunting fears take flight,
With the faith that wins success, John,
Go cheerily home tonight.49

As the Knights of Labor were champions of female wage workers and proponents of sexual equality, the woman in the above poem is the antithesis of what we might have expected the Order to idealize. She is a "beautiful household fairy" who does her domestic chores, cares for her children and whose fragile feelings must be protected. She waits at the door each night for her husband to return home from work, and when they move inside and close the door to her domestic sphere they shut out all thoughts of the industrial realm and its problems. The entire world of the Little Wife of a Knight of Labor is her husband and her family -- she is happily isolated, blissfully unaware. How can we reconcile this image of femininity with what we know about the Order's labor philosophy and contention that all members of the working class are equal regardless of sex?

This poem suggests that just because the Knights proposed an ideology of equality and defended female wage workers did not mean that they dismissed female domesticity as an ideal.

The Knights of Labor argued that it was the fault of the capitalist system that women had to work in the first place, and that once the working class was able to reform that system women would be able to return to their proper sphere -- the home. Recognizing that female wage work was necessary in the present economic system, but not wanting their low paid work to undermine the wage scale, the Knights organized women. As a united front, men and women could fight the capitalist system and reform it so that women would never have to leave their homes for the mill.\textsuperscript{50} Ironically, the inclusion of female members in the Order was ultimately a defense of female domesticity rather than a dedication to sexual equality -- women were allowed equality as a step toward re-establishing their proper place in the home. The Knights of Labor, therefore, held two contradictory ideals for their female members -- equality, the means, and domesticity, the end of the union’s activism.

The question then arises -- did the Knights promote domesticity or sexual equality when addressing female readers in the \textit{Journal of United Labor}? There were reasons for and against both possibilities. If the publication only discussed women’s domestic concerns they would promote the Order’s feminine ideal, but at the same time it would further reinforce women’s identification with a sphere that was isolated from the labor movement. Yet, if the journal concentrated on women’s public roles the Knights would encourage women to join the working class cause but they might irreparably disrupt the traditional gender roles that they were fighting to protect. The solution to this dilemma, evident in the pages of the Order’s journal, was to temper the discussion of each of the ideals with qualities of the other, and thus the Knights could ensure that neither ideal was taken to an extreme. When the \textit{Journal of United Labor} made references to women’s domestic roles, the purpose was to promote female activism, and when women’s public roles were discussed, it was to temper this sphere with traditional values. Each approach was

\textsuperscript{50} For discussions of the Knights of Labor and their dedication to female domesticity as an ideal see the following: Grob, 54-5 and Levine, \textit{Labor’s True Woman}, 132-53.
addressed to one of the journal’s two types of female readers -- domestic women, for example, were encouraged to take public roles while wage earning women were instructed to temper their public roles with traditional female qualities. In this way the inconsistencies of the Knights of Labor’s feminine ideals were reconciled within the Order’s journal.

The labor philosophy of the Knights implied that for their organization to successfully battle industrial corruption, the working class needed to face their foe as a united front -- skilled and unskilled, black and white, male and female. The domestic isolation of the wives and daughters of their male members posed a strategic problem -- their interests and energies were confined to the private sphere by their gender. The union needed to help these women expand the scope of their concern and identify their welfare with the labor movement. Articles in the Journal of United Labor, therefore, proposed to expand their female sphere. When addressing housewives the Knights of Labor used domestic language because it was the language of their realm and because it made the Order’s labor philosophy more accessible to female readers. References to women’s domestic sphere allowed the union to speak to women with themes and images that were familiar to them in order to teach them about realms that would have been largely foreign -- the labor movement and the industrial world. A housewife whose only connection with the industrial sphere was through her husband was given a more personal understanding of what the working class was fighting against in the Knights' journal. Take for example, an article entitled “For Home and Humanity.”

Mothers of America, as you clasp your lambs to your bosoms and kiss away their infant tears, do you know but they, too, may be forced into the ranks of this great army of tramping destitutes? . . . Mothers and wives of America, a great duty rests upon you. Your influence is needed. Victory largely depends upon your action. . . . Organize at once.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{51} Merlinda Siskins, “For Home and Humanity,” \textit{JUL}, 10 April 1890: 1.
This article plays upon a female reader’s traditional role as a mother to introduce her to the realities of the industrial world, and to implore her to join the labor movement to reform that realm for her children.

Throughout the Journal of United Labor there were references to women’s household roles and responsibilities; however, rather than reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes, these examples of domestic language actually served to introduce female readers to the aims and philosophy of the labor movement. Susan Levine has tried to untangle this paradox in Labor’s True Woman by examining the domestic rhetoric of the Order’s publications. She argues that the Knights’ purpose for evoking images of the traditional female sphere with the “language of domesticity” was not to reinforce women’s confinement in that separate sphere, but rather to define the union’s aims for the labor movement. Workers’ traditional rights, dignities, and comforts were rhetorically represented in journal articles by the home and the housewife. Thus, references to protecting domesticity and the family were actually references to the values that the Knights of Labor were trying to protect from the corruption of the industrial world. Levine’s argument suggests that in order to understand why the Knights used domestic language in their journal we must look beyond the references of traditional gender stereotypes and recognize what they symbolized to female readers.

Evidence from the Journal of United Labor demonstrates that the Order did indeed use references to women’s domestic roles to critique the industrial sphere, much as Levine has argued. Articles reveal that the home, the housewife, and domestic values were discussed in terms of the traditional working class values they represented, and not as a means to reinforce women’s confinement in the domestic sphere. Take, for example, “The Housekeeper’s Song” which compares the household chores a woman performs to the industrial work of her husband.

52 Levine, Labor’s True Woman, 132-5.
On the surface, this poem seems to idealize female domesticity by suggesting that the husband would be lost without his wife's housework. However, there is also a reference to the traditional belief that work should be performed for love and not money, which assigns greater meaning to the allusion to female domesticity. The author implies that capitalism taints work by assigning a monetary value to it and suggests that women’s household chores are the ideal because they are un-paid labor and therefore free from industrial corruption. Essentially, women’s sphere represented a way of life that the Knights of Labor wished to preserve. The poem evoked images of domesticity and the home not to define the female realm by them, but rather because they represented the antitheses of industry and competitive capitalism.

Thus, rather than reinforcing women’s isolation in the home, the domestic language of the Journal of United Labor actually helped the Order appeal to female readers and encourage them to participate in the labor movement. By invoking images of the traditional female sphere to express the union’s goals and ideals, the Knights of Labor politicized women’s realm -- the home. However, domestic language also politicized women and their roles by demonstrating that as caretakers of the home, women should actively participate in the protection of their sphere. For example, an article entitled “Cooperation” implores women to join the cause of labor but does so by appealing to female domestic concerns.

... for you have the same interest in the success of their labor movement that we
[men] have ourselves. You belong to the same class; your destiny and well being
depends upon the same conditions as your own. Remember that your future well-
being, the education of your children, the prospect for increased home comforts
all depend upon what we do for ourselves. 54

The author suggests that it was the female relationship with the domestic sphere, as a wife and
mother, that both qualified and compelled her to take an active role in the labor movement.
Domestic language helped women identify their interests with the working class cause and
encouraged them to broaden the boundaries of their female realm to encompass participation in
the Knights of Labor. Such activism would not represent an abandonment of their traditional
roles, but rather an enlargement of the scope of their concern.

By introducing women to the labor movement, the Knights opened a new arena for
female activity; however, it was not enough to merely introduce them to the union philosophy as
these individuals also needed to learn how to break free from their isolation. Lady Knights were
socialized as Victorian women, meaning that they were expected to be passive, delicate, and
domestic; however, participation in the labor movement demanded that women expand such
restrictions on their behavior to become more assertive. 55 The Journal of United Labor, therefore,
acquainted women with the qualities that would be respected in their new realm. For example, in
an article on how home influences mold the character of young girls, mothers are instructed to
teach their daughters to know "her own capabilities, to know herself and to depend on
herself..." 56 With these characteristics a girl will have the confidence to see beyond the domestic
sphere to the possibilities of labor organization. However, articles not only suggested what

54 "Cooperation," JUL 10 January 1886: 1174.
55 It must, however, be remembered that as working class women, most Lady Knights had
responsibilities as wives, mothers, and wage earners that were physically demanding, requiring
considerable skill and determination. These women were probably not as passive or delicate as
the Victorian ideal of womanhood dictated.
56 "A Word to Mothers: How Home Influences Help to Mold the Character of Girls,"
JUL 10 December 1886: 2220.
qualities a woman needed to possess, but also encouraged women to use them in their public roles by demonstrating that these non-traditional female roles and behaviors were acceptable in the context of labor activism. For example, in a letter to the journal about the effects of convict labor on the working class, a male Knight wrote, “I suggest that [this] question is one upon which [we] ought to hear from sisters as well as brothers, and I hope our sisters will not be silent in the discussion of a question which so deeply concerns them and their children.” The author appealed to women to speak out at meetings of the Order, suggesting that they should overcome the passivity that defined their traditional feminine roles and assert themselves more in discussions that concerned them.

The Knights of Labor believed that domestic women -- the wives and daughters of their members -- were far too removed from the working class cause due to their isolation in the domestic sphere, and so they needed to be introduced to the labor movement and its philosophy if they were to aid the Order. Thus, when the Journal of United Labor addressed these non-wage earning women it instructed them to broaden their interests beyond their households and encouraged them to take active, assertive roles as members of the labor movement. In comparison, however, when the same publication addressed wage earning women, the emphasis was on tempering their public roles with traditional female values and reminders of their domestic responsibilities. The Knights did not want their female members to become so dedicated to their non-domestic roles that they neglected traditional duties and lost their feminine qualities. Moderation in women’s public lives was key and, as a result, articles in the Journal of United Labor reminded women not to stray too far from the center. For example, the short story “Miss Carmen’s Last Charity” tells of the career of a woman who was dedicated to raising money for

57 JUL 25 June 1885: 1015.
worthy causes -- a public role. Miss Carmen was notorious for roping her neighbors into fundraising schemes such as international teas and booths at the town fair and they were all getting tired of her charities. When a new curate, Mr. Howard, came to town and proposed raising money for the Mexican Indians, Miss Carmen began organizing a play that she hoped all of her friends would help produce. They all refused, leaving her desperate to come up with some solution. Wanting to help solve her troubles, Mr. Howard suggested that Miss Carmen play a part, but the role he was suggesting was not in any theatrical; rather, it was to play the role of his wife. Essentially, Miss Carmen lacked moderation when it came to her public roles, but, as the story suggests, marriage and domesticity would help temper that extreme by giving her a husband and a home to care for. 59

Thus, when the Order discussed women in the public, non-domestic sphere they emphasized their continued connection to the traditional, private realm, moderating their public roles with reminders of the private. Take for example, the poem “On Nancy Stitching.”

Never painter's fairest fancy
Can compare with my sweet Nancy,
For she is a perfect picture
Of a perfect womanhood;
Though she is not blessed with riches,
And must earn her bread by stitches,
She is better than her betters,
For her heart is pure and good. 60

The subject of the poem, Nancy, earned a wage for her sewing, but, the author stressed, she retained the qualities of traditional womanhood -- goodness and purity. Wage work and labor activism might have changed the boundaries of women's sphere of activity; however, such public roles were not to disrupt the traditional qualities that defined femininity.

59William Clyde Fitch, “Miss Carmen’s Last Charity,” JUL 31 December 1887: 2549.
Just as the Journal of United Labor tried to politicize the home when encouraging non-wage earning women to take public roles, it also tried to domesticate the industrial sphere by reminding working women to exhibit their feminine characteristics when performing their public roles. Articles suggested that wage work and labor activism would not corrupt women, but instead, women's participation in industry and politics would elevate these realms. For example, in an article discussing working women, an author emphasized that it is the moral character of females that qualified them for employment. "A true woman’s ambition in life is to maintain her character above reproach, and that noble desire preserves her true not only to her domestic allegiance, but to the interest of her employer, should she have one." Notice that the author saw female morality as primarily a domestic characteristic and assumed that most women were non-wage earners. However, he also implied that women who maintained their feminine qualities would enhance whatever realm they dwelled in -- domestic or public. The Knights of Labor also seemed particularly interested in the effect female members would have upon the Order itself, arguing that a feminine presence would improve the organization.

Their presence in our Assemblies would tone up the nature and earnestness of our discussions and infuse new life into the cause. While men are coldly calculating and discussing the pros and cons of a subject, women could decide by their hearts and carry the project into execution before the brothers had their thinking caps on.

61 Ann Schofield has argued that short stories in the labor press did much to feminize union activity, suggesting that articles with feminine subjects had a similar effect. Schofield, “"From ‘Sealskin and Shoddy’ to ‘The Pig-Headed Girl,’” 120.

62 Evidence of this sentiment is particularly apparent in articles discussing women’s right to vote. See for example the following: “Mrs. Emily P. Collins . . .,” JUL 6 August 1887: 2467; “About Women,” JUL 29 October 1887: 2514; George W. Curtis, “I am asked . . .,” JUL 24 December 1887: 2547. However, such arguments were more a reflection of the suffrage debate then of the Knights of Labor’s attempt to domesticate the industrial sphere for its female members.


64 “Lady Knights,” JUL 15 October 1887: 2507.
This article suggests that Lady Knights would infuse the Order with such feminine qualities as passion, practicality, and efficiency which would enhance the labor movement as a whole. The Knights essentially reminded their female members that expanding the boundaries of women’s sphere meant broadening the scope of their moral influence.

Thus the Journal of United Labor implied that a feminine presence would tame the public realm and make it suitable for women’s participation. One article in particular proposed how Lady Knights were to rely on their traditional feminine qualities to effect the necessary reform. Reporting that 128 young women were on strike against the Perkin’s carpet factory in Brooklyn, New York, the author argued that the action was over completely feminine concerns rather than over traditional labor disputes.

They have struck, not for higher wages, but for the protection of their honor against the assaults of the villains in charge of the factory. Their stories of gross immoralities have been put in the shape of affidavits, and have resulted in the arrest of several of the culprits.65

The women on strike were performing non-traditional and assertive public roles -- they were active union members, on strike, demanding justice from the law. Yet, such behavior was qualified by the reason behind such actions -- their employers were violating their traditional, feminine honor. This report suggests that it was acceptable for women to behave aggressively when their femininity was at stake; however, it also reminded female readers that the reason the Order accepted such behavior was because it was fundamentally linked to their traditional gender identity. The Knights of Labor thus domesticated women’s public roles, ensuring that they would not corrupt idealized feminine qualities.

Although the Knights fully supported women expanding the boundaries of their traditional roles and behaviors, there were limits to their liberalism. Articles in the Journal of

United Labor demonstrate the Order’s preoccupation with tempering female assertiveness, a trait the Knights encouraged, yet wanted to check. For example, a letter to the journal demonstrates how one male reacted to women departing too zealously from traditional expectations.

Girls, when you are walking along the street, please do not spit out like a man who is chewing tobacco, for if there is one thing a gentleman dislikes it is to see a female, young or old, doing that . . . for, believe me, he will never have the same regard for you he had before.  

The author, who signed this admonishing letter “A Boy,” was horrified by what he saw as a masculine and completely un-feminine display by women in the public sphere. His remarks suggest that although the Knights of Labor desired to lessen the restraints on female behavior, they did not want to completely abolish gendered conventions. The order’s ideology of equality merely lessened the restrictions on women, but did not make expectations of male versus female behavior equal.

Thus, according to the Knights of Labor, there were two extremes of female roles -- domestic isolation versus public aggressiveness. Neither was particularly desired by the union, as one decreased the number of organizable women and the other disrupted traditional gender roles. Through articles in the Journal of United Labor a center ground was established between the two that allowed the qualities of one extreme to temper the undesirable effects of the other. However, the preceding discussion has assumed that the Knights’ female readers were either domestic or public figures, neglecting to acknowledge that Lady Knights necessarily played both roles. An article on Mrs. Elizabeth Rodgers, who was both a housewife and an active member of the Order, suggests this duality. “The mother of twelve children, she went as a Delegate to the Richmond Convention bearing in her arms a babe two weeks old.” Wage-earning women might have entered the public sphere to work, but at the end of each day they still had children to care for and

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66 JUL 14 May 1887: 2387.
67 “Our Women,” JUL 8 January 1887: 2246.
a home to maintain. Likewise, domestic women had their household chores to perform, and yet as members of the working class the Knights would still have expected them to educate themselves in labor philosophy and take an active part in the labor movement. The tension between women’s public and private roles that female readers faced in the Knights’ journal was therefore not unlike the tension they faced in their everyday lives.

The Journal of United Labor helped women reconcile their conflicting roles by providing two different sets of expectations -- one for their private lives and another for their public roles. A short story which appeared in the Knights’ journal in 1887 demonstrated how a Lady Knight could conform to both ideals. “Born to Command” was the story of Prudence Hascall, a woman whose life was split between her public and private roles -- she was both the wife of the sheriff and a traditional housewife. One day, while her husband Josiah napped, the prisoners in the jail began to riot, hoping to escape. Prudence stood at the top of the stairs with a shotgun in her hand and yelled for them to be quiet. The prisoners rushed her thinking that they could easily best a woman, but when the shot gun went off and three of their number lay dead they gave up their attempt at escape. “When all was over she went to the sitting-room, had a fit of hysterics as a recreation, and in half an hour was around getting the dinner ready.”

When Prudence played a public role, she was brave and aggressive, thinking of the safety of the town and the injustice of allowing prisoners to escape. However, when she played a private role, she was no longer aggressive, but, instead, let her emotions rule her actions. The scope of her interests became narrower -- her concern was no longer for the entire town, but for her husband as she prepared his dinner. Different ideals shaped Prudence’s behavior according to the sphere of her action just as the ideals proscribed to Lady Knights in the Journal of United Labor corresponded to the different

roles they played. The Order's contradictory ideals were therefore reconciled in the *Journal of United Labor*. Then strive for your right, O, sisters dear,
And ever remember in your own sphere
You may aid the cause of all mankind,
And be the true woman that God designed. 69

69 From "Song of the Carpet Weaver," *JUL* 10 January 1885: 882.
Negotiating Men’s Views of Lady Knights: Rhetoric v. Reality

The Factory Girl’s Last Day

’Twas on a winter morning
The weather wet and wild,
Two hours before the dawning
The father roused his child;
Her daily morsel bringing,
The darksome room he paced
And Cried, “The bell is ringing;
My hapless darling, haste!”

She thought how her dear mother
Blessed her with latest breath,
And of her little brother,
Worked down, like her to death;
Then told a tiny neighbor
A penny she would pay
To take her last hour’s labor
While by her frame she lay.

“Dear father, I am sorry;
I scarce can reach the door,
And long the way and dreary,
Oh, carry me once more!”
Her wasted form seems nothing,
The load is on his heart;
He soothes the little sufferer,
Till at the mill they part.

The sun had long descended
Ere she sought that repose.
Her day began and ended
As cruel tyrants chose.
Then home! But oft she tarried;
She fell, and rose not more;
By pitying comrades carried,
She reached her father’s door.

The overlooker met her
As from her frame she crept,
And with his thong he beat her,
And cursed her when she wept.
It seemed as she grew weaker,
The threads they oftener broke;
The rapid wheels ran quicker
And heavier fell the stroke.

The rapid wheels ran quicker
And heavier fell the stroke.

At night, with tortured feeling,
He watched his sleepless child;
Though close beside her kneeling,
She knew him not, nor smiled.
Again the factory’s ringing
Her last perception tried;
Up from her straw bed springing,
“It’s time!” she shrieked, and died.70

This poem about a young girl whose life was defined, and ultimately destroyed by her work was meant to elicit an emotional response from readers of the Journal of United Labor. Readers sympathized with the girl as she was roused from bed to go to work and understood her cries of fatigue. They became angry at the supervisor when he beat her and incensed to learn that her mother and brother were killed by the same exhausting work. And, ultimately, the sadness that was evoked when a reader learned of the factory girl’s death was meant to inspire them to stop such an occurrence from ever happening again. The Knights of Labor often published poems.

like “The Factory Girl’s Last Day” to inspire sympathy for the plight of working women and to encourage members to recognize the union’s need to take up their particular cause. But why would the Knights have found it necessary to carry material specifically published to convince its members of this necessity? The Order’s ideology of equality, as discussed previously, as well as its support of equal pay for equal work suggest that the official policy of the Knights of Labor recognized the specific condition of female wage workers. Yet perhaps the official policy of the organization did not accurately reflect the beliefs of its membership.

Support of female wage workers by the Knights of Labor has often been attributed to the advocacy of Terence V. Powderly, the Order’s Grand Master Workman from 1879 to 1888. A vocal proponent of organizing women as members of the union and a champion of industrial sexual equality, Powderly was individually responsible for dedicating a portion of the Journal of United Labor each week to addressing women and their gender specific concerns. In articles for the journal, Powderly argued his position, trying to convince his fellow members.

If the women are not organized, they will soon be doing the work that strong men are now doing. And strength and brain will not be regarded as factors in the work of the future, for it is within the possibilities of the next few years that women will do all the work through the aid of science and invention. And then when the men are standing around idle they will wish that they had taken heed to the precepts of the Knights of Labor and demanded for women of the land equal pay for equal work.

Powderly tried to open men’s eyes to the fact that increasing numbers of less skilled and lower paid women were joining the work force. He argued that the only way to stem the effect of such an influx was to invite women into the union and demand that wages be equal, regardless of sex. Unfortunately, as the pleading tone of the above passage suggests, Powderly’s ideas were in advance of many of his fellow Knights.

Indeed, not all of the Order’s leaders supported the sexual equality philosophy that was part of the union’s official policy as the misogynistic schemes of John Hayes, the Knights’ Treasurer, demonstrate. In 1888, Hayes began to plot against Mrs. Leonora M. Barry and the Department of Women’s Work, arguing that Barry’s few accomplishments as General Investigator did not justify her travel expenses and the costs of maintaining a committee to specifically address women’s issues. Hayes’s lack of compassion for both Barry and the department she spearheaded was reflected in letters he wrote to Powderly throughout his campaign against her. He recalled a conversation he had had with Barry during which he suffered through her “tale of woe [and watched as] . . . a big tear was dropped on the table . . . because the women’s department was a failure.” In another letter he wrote, “I would suggest if there is an opportunity for the abolishment of her department to do it and let her go into the lecturer’s field. That will only give the Order one more year of her!” Hayes’s schemes were apparently successful as Barry spent 1889 on a long lecture tour after which she retired, ostensibly due to her marriage. Hayes’s desire to rid the Order of Barry, however, was not just a personal vendetta against one woman, but rather it was only one piece of a larger crusade. From 1890 to 1893 he was instrumental in clearing the Knights’ ranks of all female leaders. Although Hayes’s machinations represent an extreme, it does reveal that the official stance of the Knights towards women and sexual equality was perhaps more rhetoric than reality. That the crusade against Barry and other female leaders succeeded suggests that there was not enough popular support for women in the Order to ward off attacks on their leadership roles. Thus, despite the liberal words found in the Order’s official platform and journal, male Knights were still uncertain about and in some cases opposed to a female presence in the union.

73 A discussion of Hayes’s plot against Barry and the Women’s Department can be found in Weir, 188-91.

74 Nancy Schrom Dye has argued that during the Louisville Woolen Strike of 1887 male Knights overcame much of their ambivalence towards their fellow female members who distinguished themselves during the hostilities. She contends, “This cooperation between male workers, many of whom were skilled, and female operatives, almost all of whom were unskilled,
Articles in the *Journal of United Labor* suggest that Lady Knights were not unaware of men's ambivalence and occasional hostility toward their membership in the organization. For example, an article entitled “A Sister’s Complaint” alluded to the prejudice women faced in mixed-sex locals. The author wrote, “In many Assemblies women are rejected for the sole reason that they are women. Frequently there are a few men who object to women and even cast black ballots against them. Would it not be well to issue a circular letter informing them that this is unconstitutional?” In addition, many women wrote to the journal complaining of the Order’s lack of enthusiasm for women’s issues. One woman argued:

> If the K. of L. would enforce their demand, “equal pay for equal work,” they would do more to raise wages than they would to prohibit convict, contract and Chinese labor. Working-women greatly outnumber these, yet comparatively nothing is done for them... Will the K. of L. do itself the honor of urging this reform? [emphasis added]

Women had joined the Knights of Labor due to the union’s enlightened stance toward female workers and were understandably frustrated when they realized that the union did not always live up to its ideals. As women became more experienced as union members, they became increasingly aware that articles in the *Journal of United Labor* espousing the Order’s ideology of equality represented promises, but often not practice.

In addition to their experiences as members, Lady Knights must also have been surprised to read articles opposing the Order’s “equal pay for equal rights” policy in the *Journal of United Labor*.

is... at variance with the traditional picture of union men’s indifference or hostility toward working women.” However, it must be noted that this situation was the result of an extreme condition in which women and men were forced to work together in order to succeed. Articles in the *Journal of United Labor* suggest that under normal circumstances male Knights did not entirely accept women members, needing convincing that female membership was necessary to the labor movement and not a threat to traditional gender definitions. “The Louisville Woolen Mills Strike of 1887: A Case Study of Working Women, the Knights of Labor, and Union Organization in the New South,” *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 82 (1984): 136-50.


Labor. Although the publication, on the whole, carried only material in support of the Knights’ ideology of equal rights, there were occasions when opposing viewpoints were featured. An anonymous article in the journal demonstrates one man’s reaction to the union’s equal pay for equal work policy.

Let every Knight of Labor who reads this article imagine himself walking the streets in idleness, while his wife or daughter rides the carriage as head sawyer, or officiates as head roller in the rail-mill, or, what is even worse, wheels brick on the brick-yards, or forks coke ovens. This is no idle picture. Women are performing this very labor to-day, while there are more than a million idle men in America, who are ready and willing to work if they could but get it to do. 77

Either unable or unwilling to see that support of the equal pay for equal work policy would ultimately save men’s jobs by maintaining the wage scale, the male author of this article demonstrates how prevalent the fear was among Knights that they would lose their jobs to lower paid and less skilled female workers. But beyond this explicit message was the implication that women did not belong in certain occupations. The author named jobs where women might be found that were labor intensive, requiring both strength and skill, as if to suggest that they were inherently ill-suited for such work. Thus, despite the national organization’s support of women’s equality, rank-and-file members needed more convincing that this official position would not threaten their jobs or their traditional understandings of femininity.

Articles in the Journal of United Labor, however, were not usually as explicit as the previous example in their objection to the union’s policy on women’s wage work and female membership in the union. More often, such complaints were found within articles which explained to readers why that particular point of view was incorrect. For example, the author of “Women as Competitors” suggested that when the Knights’ policy of equal pay for equal work was first introduced, male members balked, arguing that women were not worth as much as men. But, the author argued, “when the man saw his position as clerk or bookkeeper taken from him

77”Woman’s Work and Wages,” JUL 30 June 1888: 2654.
and given to a woman, who did his work just as well for much less money, he very readily came to the conclusion that 'the woman was as good a man as he was. . . .'

The author began by stating a sexist opinion prevalent among Knights in the past, but then revealed how current that opinion remained by reminding readers why union members should no longer hold such a position. In addition, this article focused on the financial effects that opposition to the equal pay for equal work policy would have on members' lives thereby making the rhetoric more tangible for readers and their support seem more necessary. Thus, this article, which proposed to merely review the history of a union policy, was also an attempt to convince male readers to support the Order's official stance toward working women.

Male Knights seem also to have been uncertain about accepting females as members of the union, an opinion which can be implied from articles in the Journal of United Labor. One of the reasons cited for opposing female membership was that women would be subjected to corrupt influences by mingling with men in union halls. Powderly discussed this issue in the journal and explained why such an argument was nonsense, and yet by addressing it he revealed its prevalence.

Some of our men have felt that the women should not be organized; they are too good to be brought into an Assembly of the Knights of Labor. They should not mingle with the foul smelling, tobacco-chewing, profane men in the Assemblies. If it is right for these women to sit at the same table in the evening with their fathers, brothers, uncles and husbands, is it not right to meet with them in an Assembly where the rights of all may be discussed?

This same issue was discussed in "Women Not Wanted," an article about female school board officials in New York City. Critics, similar to some members of the Knights, were arguing that women should not be allowed to hold such offices because it would bring them into contact with disreputable men. However, the author countered this contention, insisting that if the men on the

school board were so vulgar as to offend women then they should not be officers themselves. Implicit in both Powderly’s address and the article on female school board members was the contention that Lady Knights would raise the moral character of the Order as their mere presence at meetings demanded a greater level of propriety from male members. Such claims were meant to override objections to admitting Lady Knights by suggesting why their membership would be an asset rather than a detriment. Thus, although the Journal of United Labor contained few examples of overt objections to the union’s ideology of equality, equal pay for equal work policy, and women’s membership, references can be found to suggest that such complaints were common enough among male Knights to require rebuttal.

To counteract the reluctance of rank-and-file members to accept females and their interests on equal terms, the Knights’ journal featured articles about working women and why addressing their plight was essential to the labor movement. Thus articles pertaining to women’s issues were meant to educate men -- or were they? Previously it was argued that such material was part of the Knights plan to educate its female members in the policies of the union and convince them of the Order’s dedication to women’s issues. Women were instructed, but it must be remembered that so were men. Because the journal did not isolate articles for women on a women’s page as the Amalgamated Journal did, but instead featured articles about female issues throughout the publication, both women and men read the same material. However, the lessons they took away with them were gender specific and, therefore, different. For example, when a woman read the Journal of United Labor and specifically its female-oriented material she was encouraged to take an active role in the labor movement and was shown how essential that role was to the Knights’ organization. In comparison, when a man read the same articles he was being

convinced that women belonged in the union and that labor’s class interests had to supersede traditional gender divisions for the movement to succeed.

Thus, the material in the Knights’ journal which addressed female issues and concerns must be understood as it was received by both sexes. Take, for example, a story published by the journal about Mrs. Moran, a woman whose desperation led her to attempt suicide.

The story is repeated a thousand times each day of the year. With four children to support, she went out washing each day and worked with her needle dressmaking at night, laboring from 16 to 17 hours daily for a pittance that merely kept the pulse beating. Was it so strange that she at last gave up the hopeless struggle and sought release in death? It is pitiful, it is tragic and yet, I repeat, she is but one of the many...

The article argued that the tragedy of Mrs. Moran was not just the misfortune of one woman, but was actually representative of the plight of many female wage workers. Having incited outrage, the author used this episode as an introduction to a larger argument about the importance of organizing women in the labor movement, suggesting that unions “will lift [women] out of the power of compulsory debasement.” Female readers would have been encouraged by this article as it suggested their interests were being addressed by the union. In comparison, men had their eyes opened to the consequences of not addressing women’s industrial condition and were then told how such injustices could be righted -- unionizing female wage workers. The same article sought to both reassure women of the union’s commitment to their interests and convince men that such a commitment was necessary. By focusing on the mis-treatment that women were forced to endure in the workplace due to their gender, the Journal of United Labor tried to evoke sympathy from readers, both male and female. However, as most women who had joined the Knights of Labor were already convinced that labor should address their concerns, it was men in particular to whom these arguments were addressed.

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The Journal of United Labor tried to overcome male resistance to women’s labor issues through three strategies -- articles appealed to their logic, their emotions, and their manhood. Arguments which relied on logic provided readers with the Knights’ official justifications for their position on female wage workers, and then made such positions more tangible by discussing how that policy would affect the average working man’s life. This strategy appeared predominantly in articles which discussed the Order’s policy of equal pay for equal work.\(^{82}\) One such article concluded, “Let no working man, whatever his occupation, then be stupid and short sighted enough to say that the question of raising the condition of female labor does not concern him.”\(^{83}\) This suggests that articles on female subjects were not always meant to bolster Lady Knights’ commitment to the union as it was men’s support of such issues that was of primary concern to the journal. As was discussed previously, male Knights believed that women’s work was not worth as much as male labor and so the union’s policy of fighting for equal pay regardless of sex seemed incongruous to them. Women did not work as hard as men, so why should they receive the same wage? Articles in the Journal of United Labor combated this opinion by explaining that mechanization and technology had reduced the skill and heavy labor required of many jobs, and so women were now doing the exact same labor as men. Yet, “absurd sex prejudice” and tradition maintained low wages for women even though they worked alongside men. The consequences of this reality, a reality that male Knights had yet to fully recognize, was that employers would rather hire cheaper female laborers than the higher paid male workers. Their jobs threatened by women, men would be forced to accept lower wages rather than face unemployment. Articles in the Journal of United Labor explained this theory repeatedly, trying to convince male readers through


\(^{83}\) “Women Workers,” JUL 19 December 1889: 2.
logical reasoning that the Knights’ equal pay for equal work policy was the best way to address increased female participation in the wage force and to ensure that male wages did not suffer as a consequence.

Whereas logic was perhaps limited in its appeal, journal articles which played upon readers’ emotions were able to win male support through sympathy. As the previously discussed poem “The Factory Girl’s Last Day” and the tragedy of Mrs. Moran suggest, emotional stories were a particularly successful way to both inform readers of the plight of female workers and to convince them that such conditions needed reform. These articles often relied on dramatic examples to make their case. “Dogs and Human Beings,” for instance, compared a factory owner’s five hundred dollar dog which wore a one hundred dollar blanket and a diamond collar to the young girl who spied the dog from the factory window and was fined ten cents out of her small wage for looking. The author called attention to the irony and railed “Damn a man that will work poor girls like slaves and pay them next to nothing, and spend ten thousand dollars to catch a dog thief.”84 This comparison between a dog and a female wage worker played upon a readers’ emotions, outraging them and begging their support for women in the industrial sphere. “Tempted by Poverty” was another instance of the Journal of United Labor appealing to readers’ sympathies. Eva Bottholf was convicted of trying to pawn the overcoat of her employer, tailor Charles Hauer. The mother of three young children who was abandoned by her husband, Mrs. Bottholf stole the coat only after Hauer refused to pay her the full wage that she had earned. The author of this article did not condone the thievery, but instead focused on the cause of the crime and its effect. An employer refused to pay a woman a full wage and as a result, she was tempted into criminality, caught, and imprisoned, leaving her three children orphaned. Emotion inspiring stories, such as

this, demonstrated to male readers the consequences of women not receiving equal pay for equal work and thus solicited their sympathy and support for female laborers.

Yet, such dramatics were not the only way to call attention to the female plight as oftentimes the reality of their condition was just as effective in outraging readers. To this end, the Journal of United Labor featured reports by Nell Nelson, an investigative reporter for the Chicago Times and the New York World. Her descriptions of factory life, full of personal observations and wage statistics, called attention to the deplorable condition of female wage workers not through hyperbole, but through fact. Nelson would take a job in a factory and work alongside common female laborers, gathering information and stories of individual desperation that she would then report to her readers. For one article, Nelson entered a jersey manufacturing company where she observed that although a jersey sold at the company store for 2 dollars, women received only 5 cents for sewing it. The air in the shop was bad and yet the girls had no way to escape it even at the noon break because the elevator often stopped working. Nelson described the young women on their break scampering "like cattle" to the washroom with its one sink just to cool the backs of their necks with water and clean the grime off their hands. For "Fingers Worn to the Bone" Nelson entered the book binding trade, where she observed her sister laborers folding pages for 40 cents per 1,000 sheets. She reported to her readers the story of Amelia, a 25 year old woman who sat next to her, whose health had been destroyed by her trade.

Constant stooping over the table had curved her neck and rounded her shoulders, and the pressure necessary to fold the heavy leaves had literally worn her fingers to the bone. All the lower joints of her right hand were blisters, and the left thumb had the side of the nail and flesh as completely worn away as though it had been whittled or sliced down.

This story is not unlike the melodramatic tales provided by other authors for the Journal of United Labor; however, Nell Nelson's name and reputation for investigative reporting gave such descriptions more weight with readers. Knights who read her observations became witnesses of the tragic plight of female wage workers. But, as Lady Knights were often living these conditions, it was men whose eyes were being opened and whose sympathies were being solicited. Both men and women were the victims of industrialism, but men needed help to recognize that sex did not shield women from the harsh conditions of wage work.

The third strategy used by the Journal of United Labor to win male support of Lady Knights and female issues was to appeal to members' sense of duty. Duty and responsibility were central to the Order's definition of what it meant to be a Knight. Knighthood, members were reminded in the journal, was greater than mere membership in a labor union. Rather, it meant manhood -- not in the sexist sense of the twentieth century, but in terms of character, morality, and altruism. When early Knights were initiated into the Order they took a vow which reflected the organization's dedication to honor and duty. They promised to "defend the life, interest, reputation and family, of all true members of the Order, help and assist all employed, unemployed, unfortunate, or distressed Brothers to procure employment... relieve their distress, and counsel others to aid them." Furthermore, Knights saw themselves as the champions of their communities who would come to the aid of any member of the working class, not just fellow Knights, because it was the right thing to do. Personal accountability and morality were thus the Order's guiding principles. It is not surprising then that the Knights of Labor would extend these principles to help formulate their approach to female wage earners. Dedicated to service and the protection of the weak, Knights were almost honor bound to address the concerns of working women and come to their aid. As an article from the Journal of United Labor argued, one of "the

87 Cited in Weir, 13.
88 For a discussion of "knighthood" as defined by the Knights of Labor see Weir, 12-14.
most knightly planks in the whole ideal” was that which ensured women equal pay for equal work.\textsuperscript{89}

Of course, this again represents the official philosophy of the Order and not necessarily the opinion of the rank-and-file members. Perhaps that explains why the Knights found it necessary to publish articles in their journal reminding male readers that women’s industrial concerns were matters of male responsibility. Articles frequently reminded men that as husbands, brothers, and fathers they had a duty to support the Order’s attempts at improving industrial conditions for female wage workers as someday a woman that they loved might be subjected to such horrors.

You, my brother have a sister whom you dearly cherish and love; you are married to one whom before God you promised to cherish, love and protect . . . [and yet] a dread and fear takes hold of your heart for the future of your darling daughter, should sickness or other calamity befall you before you have had the opportunity to carry out and establish the hopes you had in view.\textsuperscript{90}

Such pleas reminded men of their familial duty; however, articles in the journal also alluded to men’s responsibilities to all women, regardless of relationship. One author, after reflecting upon a report about women’s working conditions made by Mrs. Barry, observed that the thousands of women who presently toiled in the factories would eventually become mothers who would pass on to their children the same regrettable fate.\textsuperscript{91} By alluding to a woman’s reproductive role, the author suggested that eradicating the plight of working women was more than just a reform of the present situation; more importantly, it was essential for the future generation. It was men’s duty to ensure that the cycle of poverty and exploitation was broken during this generation so that the working class as a whole could improve.

\textsuperscript{91} “Mrs. Barry’s Report,” JUL 22 November 1888: 2738.
Ironically, the Order appealed to paternalism and not sexual equality to persuade male Knights to accept female members and their concerns on equal terms in the union. Beneath all of the journal’s references to male duty and responsibility lay the assumption that women were weak and inferior workers who needed men’s protection. One such article argued “When a woman earns a dollar she ought not to be paid eighty cents, and she should not be cheated out of fair wages simply because she is physically weak and cannot strike back.”\(^{92}\) In addition, all of the stories which featured the tragedies of female wage workers, such as the “Factory Girls Last Day,” demonstrated to male readers how ill-suited women were for the industrial sphere. The journal’s preoccupation with the misfortunes of female laborers was more than just a ploy to attract attention to their plight as it also showed men how susceptible women were to exploitation. Through such references, male Knights were to see admittance of female members into the Order not as a threat to their traditional male roles and masculinity, but rather as an extension of those qualities. What defined masculinity and Knighthood was the protection of the weak -- in this case women -- and according to the Journal of United Labor there was no better way to protect women than to organize them and admit them into the union.

Articles in the Journal of United Labor which addressed female issues, therefore, negotiated the tension between the Order’s official stance on women -- defined by the ideology of equality -- and the practical understanding of that policy by male rank-and-file members. Still under the influence of Victorian definitions of masculinity and femininity, male roles and female roles, male Knights needed to be convinced that expanding those traditional definitions was both in their best interests, and not a complete abandonment of gender delineations. By appealing to men’s logic, emotions, and sense of duty the Knights’ journal tried to link female membership and concerns to the success of the labor movement and the honor of individual Knights. Articles

\(^{92}\) *JUL* 25 June 1887: 2433.
demonstrated that women, as equal members of the working class, were threatening neither men's jobs nor their masculinity.
Chapter 3: The Amalgamated Journal

Look Pleasant

That was the sign in large letters that adorned the kitchen wall of a bright little housekeeper. When the nervous worry lest the steak get too brown while she was mashing the potatoes threatened to crease her forehead she looked up at the friendly sign -- and smiled. One can really work from the outside as well as the inside in getting the kinks straightened out of fretted nerves. Smooth the face, and before you know it the worries will follow suit and smooth it out, too.93

What is most astounding about the passage above is not its confidence in the power of a smile to calm female nerves, nor its light depiction of the perils of a woman's household role as such advice and characterizations were common in women's magazines of the early twentieth century. Periodicals such as the Ladies Home Journal and Woman's Home Companion often featured articles with a prescriptive tone, advising their largely middle class, female readership how to lead proper feminine lives with articles focusing on the home and the homemaker.94 What is exceptional about the preceding passage, however, is that it was not found in one of these mainstream female periodicals but, instead, appeared in the Amalgamated Journal, the official journal of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers.

Unlike the Knights’ Journal of United Labor, the Amalgamated Journal’s reason for addressing female readers was not because they were members of the union and not because the Amalgamated Association sought to educate them in labor philosophy. Rather than espousing an ideology of equality, the AA saw fundamental distinctions between skilled and unskilled workers, male and female workers, female wage workers and housewives, and between males and females.

Whereas we found a unique feminine ideal in the Knights of Labor's publication which blended female domestic roles with their public and social responsibilities, the women's pages of the Amalgamated Journal demonstrate the organization's complete devotion to female domesticity and the family wage ideal.

By examining the articles, advice columns, and short stories of the Amalgamated Journal's women's pages, a picture emerges of the ideal woman as espoused by the union's prescriptive literature; however, in order to understand the meanings and ramifications of such a picture it is essential to recognize that the context of the woman's pages was a trade union journal. Among articles on the iron and steel market, lodge reports, and news of union activities and strikes was found the "Women's Realm" which attested to both the female role's importance to the union man and its separation from his industrial sphere. The woman who read the Amalgamated Journal could not have forgotten that what she was reading was her husband or father's trade union journal, as juxtaposed with articles of fashion hints advising her of the change in sleeve styles for the summer season could be found articles on the labor struggle and the importance of unionism.95 To interpret the Amalgamated Journal's women's pages then becomes not only a question of what the ideal woman as perceived by the union was, but, more importantly, why this labor organization espoused such an ideal and for what purpose. An examination of the Amalgamated Association and the history of their relationship with women will perhaps begin to explain why this union took a particular interest in addressing female readers.

95For one example of this odd juxtaposition see "The New Sleeves" as it appears alongside "The Struggle," AJ 9 November 1905: 7.
The Amalgamated Association Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers and Women

And happy and wise is the man to whose thought existeth not a trifle.
And does spread with earnest desire, gladly -- always noble labor's press!
And to whom every true labor paper is a holy sign of sacrifice.
Of martyrdom in the cause of labor and suffering humanity.
O, brothers and sisters! Come onward -- to do steady our duty.
With love and energy strive for union and better life for all.
Always let us give our help and support, spreading truth and light with our noble Amalgamated Journal. 96

The Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers faced difficult challenges at the turn of the century. Unlike other unions within the American Federation of Labor which grew substantially during the same period, the AA's membership declined severely at the end of the nineteenth century due to the particular situation of the iron and steel industries and the union itself. 97 After the disastrous strike at Homestead, Pennsylvania in 1892 when the union was, in the words of one historian, "crushed," membership declined from its height in 1891 of approximately 24,000 members to 10,500 in 1898. 98 Between 1899 and 1906, the membership did begin to rebound slightly, reaching just over 15,000 in 1903 before again declining. Nevertheless, the union never regained its former strength. Indeed, despite the continued existence of the

97 For a discussion of the American Federation of Labor's growth at the turn of the century see Ruth Milkman, "Organizing the Sexual Division of Labor: Historical Perspectives on Women's Work and the American Labor Movement," Socialist Review (1980): 114-6. Her discussion of the AFL is particularly interesting because she discusses how its growth was related to the organization's views toward female wage workers. Essentially, as the AFL grew and overtook the Knights of Labor, its inclusion of women workers became less essential, allowing sexual division and sometimes exclusion to flourish within the organization.
98 Jesse Squibb Robinson argues that the union was "crushed" in his The Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1920): 9.
Amalgamated Association, David Brody has labeled the period between the 1890s and 1929 the "non-union era" in American steel production based upon his findings of labor stability and relatively little union organization. 99 Perhaps one of the greatest reasons the AA was unable to effectively organize the industry during this period was the exclusiveness of its membership. The union's skilled members-only policy excluded a large part of the work force from the organization which could have made the union's bargaining power more effective and also made the union particularly susceptible to managerial assaults on skilled tradesmen's control of the workplace. The union's conception of female roles and ideal femininity, therefore, developed within the context of the decline of the AA's effectiveness as both an organization of skilled men and as a union.

When the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin workers was founded in August 1876, its aim was to better serve the interests of skilled workers in the iron and steel industries by unifying many existing small trade unions into one large organization. 100 Its constitution established skill as its foremost test of eligibility, excluding all men of lesser skill and especially ordinary laborers. 101 Several articles in the Amalgamated Journal attested to the "aristocratic" character of the union and its view of itself relative to unskilled workers. For example, in an article entitled "No 'Blue-Blood' in Working People," the author argued that "The ability of men varies just as they vary in stature, weight or temperament," suggesting that

100 There are relatively few historical studies of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers and those which do exist focus predominantly on its institutional rather than its social history. Among these are Robinson's The Amalgamated Association of Iron Steel and Tin Workers, and a few relevant chapters in Fitch's The Steel Workers, The Pittsburgh Survey, vol. 3, ed. Paul Underwood Kellogg (New York: 1910). Brody's Steelworker in America also discusses the union and more specifically its decline within his larger discussion of the "non union era" of American steel.
101 The Amalgamated Association's Constitution can be found in an appendix to Fitch's The Steel Workers, 258-96. The relevant information concerning eligibility requirements can be found in Article I, p. 259.
Amalgamated men saw the working class as intrinsically divided along lines of skill. As a confederation of skilled workers, the AA was, by conscious decision, neither willing nor able to address the concerns of the industry's workers as a whole.

The exclusiveness of the Amalgamated Association's membership also had implications for the union's view of women. Although the Association never officially banned women from their ranks with constitutional barriers to membership, their insistence upon skill as a prerequisite for joining the association effectively excluded females. There were very few women in the iron, steel, and tin industries to begin with, and those who did work in the factories were unskilled. Thus, in this almost entirely male-oriented work environment women were always outside of the Amalgamated man's purview, excluded from membership by skill and isolated to another realm by sex. The only environment in which the Amalgamated man encountered women was in the domestic sphere which served to reinforce his perception that the only role a woman could play was in the home.

102 No 'Blue Blood' in Working People," AJ 9 July: 3. For further examples of the union's elevated perception of itself as demonstrated in the Amalgamated Journal, see "Trade Unions: How They Have Aided in the Progress of Mankind," AJ 9 October 1902: 8 and "What do Labor Unions Do?" AJ 4 August 1904: 5. The Amalgamated Association's self-perception in some respects also reflected the members' ethnic identification as there was a distinction made between the "English speaking" workman and the non-English speaking "Hunky." For a discussion of this element of the Association's self-perception, see Brody, 118-21. I, however, found no evidence of a union wide sentiment of ethnic superiority in my examination of the Amalgamated Journal.

103 Particular interest has been given to AFL unions and the exclusion of unskilled workers, especially female workers, from membership. See for example, Alice Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982): 151-59 for a summary of formal exclusion of female membership. See Ruth Milkman, 110-19 for a discussion of women's exclusion from AFL craft unions based on skill requirements.

104 Roderick N. Ryon has argued that where the sex segregation of labor was secure, such as was the case in the iron and steel industries, formal exclusion of women from work was not necessary. Nevertheless, unions did recognize female intrusion in the industrial sphere and, therefore, attempted more insidious forms of encouraging women to remain at home. I would argue that the Amalgamated Journal's women's page exemplified this informal strategy. Roderick N. Ryon, "Craftmen's Union Halls, Male Bonding, and Female Industrial Labor: The Case of Baltimore, 1880-1917," Labor History 36 (Spring 1995): 223.
Prior to the turn of the century, Amalgamated men enjoyed a particularly secure position in their industries due to their skills and their employers' reliance on that skill. However, with increased mechanization and an industry-wide drive toward economizing, the secure status of the skilled worker was slowly eroded. With new inventions, semi-skilled and unskilled workers could easily be trained to do the work of a skilled craftsmen and for a much smaller wage. As Brody suggests

Mechanization undermined the base of the union's power. When union men were irreplaceable, strikes were a waiting game. Using improved machinery, however, employers could start up with new men and a nucleus of loyal experienced hands. Although this trend had not completely undermined the skilled workman's status at the turn of the century, its effects were being felt in terms of decreasing wages. Thus, during the period being studied, the Amalgamated man's job security as well as his means to attaining a middle-class standard of living were being threatened. Unfortunately, the AA, due to its declining size and bargaining power, could do little to stop the industrial trends that were endangering its members' traditional way of life.

The belief that unskilled men and especially women were undermining the Amalgamated man's elevated status in the steel and iron industries perhaps also explains the association's views of women. The Amalgamated Journal weekly contained articles on why women should not

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105 See David Montgomery, "Workers' Control of Machine Production in the Nineteenth Century," Labor History 17 (Fall 1976): 485-509 for a discussion of how a craftsman's skill gave him increased control over his early industrial workplace.

106 For a discussion of mechanization and economizing trends in the steel industry at the turn of the century see Brody, 1-26 and 85-6. Michael Santos' "Between Hegemony and Autonomy: The Skilled Iron Workers' Search for Identity, 1900-1930," Labor History 35 (Summer 1994): 399-423 deals with the particular case of skilled puddlers and how they dealt with the insecurity caused by industrialization and the subsequent de-skilling of their trade.

107 Brody, 58.

108 Alice Kessler-Harris makes this connection between technological advances eroding male control of the workplace and the subsequent AFL view of female wage workers. She argues that rather than fighting management's manipulation of technology, workers lashed out at women who, due to the de-skilling of trades, were becoming an economic threat to men. She provides examples from the AFL's American Federationist to suggest the prevalence of this economic
work which focused on the economic consequences such work would have on male wages and job security. For example, an article entitled "Male and Female Labor: Competition of the Sexes in Industrial Occupations" quoted one businessman as saying:

I employ women and girls because they are cheaper than men and boys, and if I could find anything cheaper than women I should engage it, because the intense competition in the business compels me to buy my labor in the lowest market. 109

The article concluded with the suggestion that women replacing men in the industries "is a distinct and regrettable evil and one which should engage the attention of statesmen." Other articles provided Amalgamated men with the rising statistics of women in the workplace, complaints of women "invading" the labor force, and interpretations of women's work as "social destruction."110

It is, therefore, clear that views of women as primarily housewives and belonging in the domestic sphere reflect not only Amalgamated men's limited experience with females outside of the home, but also their firm belief that women should stay in the home to free jobs for men.

The declining effectiveness of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers and the decline of its skilled members' workplace status can be correlated to the views expressed in the Amalgamated Journal toward women. The union's skilled members-only policy made it particularly susceptible to the effects of mechanization and economizing -- two significant assaults on skilled tradesmen's workplace control and wages and the AA's bargaining power. Feeling the effects of a declining status both as a union and as skilled workmen, the AA was faced with the question of how to fight that decline. Perhaps the journal's emphasis on female domestic roles reflects one way in which the union tried to maintain the sexual division of labor to keep

interpretation of the detriment of female wage workers and the organization's belief that women belonged in the home as wives and mothers. Alice Kessler-Harris, "Where Are the Organized Women Workers?" 96-8.

women in the home and men at work. It was at best only a symbolic assault on female labor, as most Amalgamated men had sufficient wages to ensure that their wives and daughters -- the females who read the Amalgamated Journal -- would not have to work outside of the home; however, such a preoccupation with the destructive effects of female labor suggests that union men felt that their ability to provide for their families might be threatened in the future.

Ultimately, the aim of the Amalgamated Journal when it addressed female readers was to further the aims of the Amalgamated Association. Like the skilled workmen it represented, the journal sought to protect men’s jobs and their standard of living from perceived female competition. The AA faced two important dilemmas that they chose to address by appealing to female readers in their union periodical. First was the issue of gender roles. The fear that women would begin taking formerly male jobs was negotiated in the journal by articles which firmly upheld the family wage ideal. Reading these features, the wives and daughters of Amalgamated men were reminded that there could be no question that a woman’s proper realm was the domestic sphere and not the industrial world where she might compete with men for jobs. Unlike the Knights of Labor whose features for women proposed to define a new female role based upon both domestic femininity and industrial independence, the AA resolved the conflict over gender roles by defining the female role in strictly traditional terms.

The second issue negotiated by the Amalgamated Journal was class. Union members, as skilled workmen, were accustomed to relatively high wages, encouraging them and their families to aspire to a middle class lifestyle even though the reality of their lives was still working-class. The union’s periodical fed these aspirations and reinforced the conflict which existed between readers’ desires and their reality while at the same time negotiating that tension. Articles with a middle class tone showed women that there was something better to strive for so that they would encourage their providers to be active participants in an organization that could help them obtain
those goals -- the Amalgamated Association. In an industrial society in which gender roles were undergoing change and the differentiation between classes was increasing, the Amalgamated Journal surreptitiously addressed and negotiated the tensions their female readers faced in the form of amusing short stories and feminine advice.
Negotiating Gender Identities: Femininity and the Family Wage Ideal

The Parable of the Steering Wheel

A young engaged couple, very much in love, was motoring along a country stretch of road one afternoon and although it was his automobile, it was her hand on the steering wheel. There was something right about this arrangement as he was slight and "almost girlish" while she was "erect, alert, confident, blooming with health and vigor." Trying to convince his companion that driving was "man's work," he took the wheel and was soon faced with a difficult predicament -- a horse frightened by the vehicle was blocking the road and they were headed straight for it at a very fast pace. He quickly turned pale, paralyzed by the danger but, she, knowing what to do grabbed the steering wheel out of his hands and drove them over a bridge and away from the rearing horse. Now safe, the man turned to look at his fiancée, who smiled at him, completely unshaken. He then said with resignation, "You are right, I submit. Your hand, not mine, is made for the steering wheel." It was only then that she trembled, turned pale, and became altogether a woman.111

The preceding parable paraphrased from a short story in the Amalgamated Journal demonstrates the union's preoccupation with what it believed were proper female and male roles. The woman's submissive response to the man's admission that she was more suited for steering than he suggests that gender roles were well delineated and that crossing the line with un-feminine behavior meant setting yourself apart from the norm. The man in this relationship was supposed to be the assertive provider and the female was to be the dutiful housewife. However, as the man and woman in the above story demonstrate, there was a growing anxiety over these formerly restrictive roles. In the growing industrial environment of the turn of the century women were entering the work force in increasing numbers. For example, between 1890 and 1930 the number of female wage workers nearly tripled, the percentage of women at work increasing from 18 to 24

per cent. Industrialism, therefore, changed the composition of the labor force and caused a tension between the meanings of masculinity and femininity in this new context.

By establishing the family wage as a goal for their labor activism, the AA, like other labor organizations of the time, negotiated this tension between masculinity and femininity, insisting that maintaining traditional gender roles was in the best interest of its members. Both a goal and an aspiration of labor, the family wage embodied the idea that a man should receive high enough wages to be able to provide for his family. To be able to provide for a family, however, meant that a man's wages ensured that his wife did not have to work outside of the home; thus, it established female domesticity as an ideal. As was suggested previously, the AA had an economic interest in maintaining women's domestic/feminine status. The Amalgamated Journal with its prescriptive literature for women demonstrates how one labor organization used the family wage, an economic ideal for laborers' wages, to promote a social ideal of gender roles to its advantage.

There has been much attention to the family wage and its relationship to women's domestic status in the historiographic literature. Historians seem to agree that the family wage

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112 Evidence which demonstrates the increasing presence of women in the work force can be found in Milkman, 114.

113 Leslie Woodcock Tentler discusses the effect a growing female work force had on women's self-image and social freedom in Wage Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900-1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979). Male responses to an increasing number of women laborers can therefore be attributed to both the growing size of the female work force as well as the instability of gender roles this change caused.

was an ideal which labor unions and middle class reformers employed to make demands of employers; however, they disagree over the fundamental intent of the family wage and how it came to be associated with female domesticity. Two competing interpretations define the debate - the labor market segmentation theory and the Marxist-feminist perspective. Jane Humphries' work epitomizes the labor segmentation theory as she argues in "The Working Class Family, Women's Liberation, and Class Struggle: The Case of Nineteenth-Century British History" that in the beginning the family wage represented a working class aspiration that both men and women supported. In this conception, labor originally demanded the family wage in response to industrialization and the accompanying economic instability as it would ensure that a man's wife and children would be spared the degradation of factory labor. The family wage was, essentially, an attempt to protect the family -- it was meant to ensure that workers would receive a subsistence wage rate to maintain their family's traditional lifestyle in which the man was the breadwinner and his wife the breadgiver. Only coincidentally did it maintain restrictive gender roles and establish the home as the proper female sphere.

The opposite side of the debate taken by Marxist feminist theorists insists that the family wage ideal was an effort to consolidate male supremacy and that patriarchal aims were imbedded in it since its pre-industrial beginnings. Heidi Hartmann argues this position in "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex." She suggests that,

> Job segregation by sex . . . is the primary mechanism in capitalist society that maintains the superiority of men over women, because it enforces lower wages for women in the labor market. Low wages keep women dependent on men because they encourage women to marry. Married women must perform

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domestic chores for their husbands. Men benefit, then, from both higher wages and the domestic division of labor.\textsuperscript{116}

From this perspective, the family wage is a form of social control which allows men to maintain dominance over the industrial workplace by virtually chaining women to the domestic sphere. By extension of this argument, trade unions adopted the family wage ideal to protect male jobs from the influx of female wage earners.

Unfortunately, by separating the intent of the family wage ideal into two distinct aims, these theorists have obscured how both could have been imbedded in workers' espousal of the ideal.\textsuperscript{117} Perhaps, when the Amalgamated man demanded that his employer provide him with a wage sufficient to maintain his family, he was actually drawing upon both he and his wife's class aspirations as well as his patriarchal and economic instinct to keep his wife in the home. Perhaps too, those desires were interrelated in that the patriarchal desire to maintain a female domestic role imbedded in the family wage ideal allowed a couple to acquire one of the symbols of class aspiration -- a wife who did not do wage work. It is, therefore, important to remember that the Amalgamated man would have seen these two sides of the family wage ideal as intrinsically linked to one another and not as two opposing, irreconcilable trends.

Articles in the Amalgamated Journal demonstrate how the family wage ideal was an integral part of the Association's goals. For example, in an October 1905 article entitled "What

\textsuperscript{116}Heidi I. Hartmann, "The Historical Roots of Occupational Segregation: Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex," \textit{Signs} 1 (Spring 1976): 139. See also Hartmann's "The Family as the Locus of Gender, Class and Political Struggle: The Example of Housework," \textit{Signs} 6 (Spring 1981): 366-94.

\textsuperscript{117}In "Bread Before Roses" May attempts to merge the two theories of the family wage by arguing that the labor segmentation conception occurred during the first stages of industrialization while the Marxist-feminist conception was true of the later industrial period, after the turn of the century. Thus, the family wage was originally supported by both males and females as a class aspiration until labor organizations such as the AFL began to use it to divide the work force along gender lines for the benefit of skilled male workers. This interpretation, however, still separates the two theories (although temporally not theoretically) rather than recognizing that perhaps they coexisted in the minds of working men.
Are Living Wages," the union provided its members with a definition of what the pay of "every able-bodied, right minded, sober and industrious working man" should earn him:

1. Enough to keep not only himself but also a family, in a healthy state of mind and body
2. Enough to permit all his children to take advantage of the public school system.
3. Enough to permit him to acquire a home of his own.
4. Enough to enable him to accumulate a bank account sufficient to furnish some security against sickness and old age.118

This definition of a family wage assumed the male role as the provider for his family and identified the home as the symbol of his economic and moral security. Thus, the family wage ideal reinforced gender relationships while aiding the union in establishing the wage that a working man should expect from his employer. Essentially, the family wage structured the economic relationship between employer and employee while at the same time structuring the gender relationship between husband and wife, man and woman.

The Amalgamated Association often couched the union's struggle to gain higher wages in terms of the family wage ideal, essentially using a man's need to provide for his family as a justification for increased pay. For example, in "Unions Help the Home" the author argued that trade unions could help men attain fair wages which in turn would enable them to furnish better homes for their wives. "Better homes make better women. Better women make the whole world better."119 The author related wages to maintaining the home and women's place in the domestic sphere, the assumption being that a man's lower wages would endanger his wife's ability to stay in the home at the cost of society. In another article, "What Do Labor Unions Do," the author argued that by helping working men to gain higher wages, unions helped him to provide the comforts of

life for his family. It is important to note that the Amalgamated man was not asking for fair wages in order to gain a mere subsistence living for his family. Rather, as a skilled worker with already relatively high wages, he was asking for increased wages so as to be able to maintain a comfortable existence for his family and perhaps aspire to an even better lifestyle.

The family wage ideal as it structured the relationships between men and women is less easily apparent in the pages of the *Amalgamated Journal* than the structuring of employer-employee relationships. The preceding discussion could rely on journal articles which overtly mentioned the family wage as an economic focus of the AA because issues pertaining to wages and providing for a family were fundamentally linked to the labor union's activism. However, because the family wage as it structured gender relationships was a more subconscious, subtle implication of the economic ideal, it is necessary to look for evidence of this gender structuring in less explicit material. The short stories of the *Amalgamated Journal*’s women’s page provide a rich source for understanding how the family wage ideal helped negotiate tensions between masculinity and femininity in an increasingly unstable industrial society.

One of the primary themes used in the stories of the *Amalgamated Journal* was that of male as provider. In story after story the man struggled to make his fortune so that he would be worthy of the woman he loved. Like industrial age Romeos and Juliets, the couples were forbidden to marry because her rich father or guardian did not believe that the man she loved could provide for her properly and so they were separated until the aspiring young man could work his way to worthiness. In "My Love of Long Ago" Dick told Maud's uncle, "Maud and I are willing to defer our marriage until I can provide for her the comfortable home to which she was

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accustomed."121 Similarly, in "The Last Spike," Mary's father informed her love Bradford that he had five years to make something of himself. Trying to explain why he sent her fiancé away, the father said to Mary, "Let him show himself worthy of you, and you have my blessing and my fortune."122 These stories took as their starting point the male role as breadwinner and then demonstrated how fundamental that ideal was to the male-female relationship by sending the fictional male characters on long odysseys to attain the family wage -- a sufficient income to support a wife.

At issue in these stories was the man's masculinity -- the inability to provide for a wife and family was equated with being less of a man.123 For example, in "At Last" Lila's husband Thurston came down with a mysterious brain fever which prevented him from working and providing for his family. Lila was forced to work in order to sustain them which greatly bothered her husband. He wailed, "Oh, Lila, Lila, it drives me mad to lie here and see you killing yourself for my sake when I ought to be taking care of you."124 On the other hand, being able to provide for a family through work established a man as more masculine. In "The Last Spike," Bradford traveled out west to work on the railroad and, he hoped, become worthy of his love. He did back breaking labor, fought Indians, and established himself as a master engineer in the Surveying Corps and thus was finally able to present himself as man enough to marry the woman he loved. Work

was, therefore, fundamentally linked to masculinity in the AA's conception of the family wage ideal.

In comparison, femininity was defined not by work but by a woman's relationship to men and her domestic role. In almost every story in the Amalgamated Journal, the female character's behavior was governed by her relationship to a male character and her primary goal, if she was not already married, was to snag a man for marriage. This focus on marriage established domesticity as the only proper sphere for women's activities. For example, in "The Drunkard's Child" Rose spent most of her formative years caring for her inebriated father, Mr. Evans. When taunting neighborhood boys hit Evans on the head with a rock, Rose became undone by the sight, fainted and fell into a brain fever. Her father, who was not in fact severely injured, promised that he would never drink again if God spared his child. Rose recovered and eventually married Edward Glover, a man who had helped her father when she was ill. The vignette ended with Mr. Evans proclaiming that Rose was the guardian angel of their home, deserving of praise because, for the love of her, he had stopped drinking and because as a wife and mother she was the center of their happy family. What is particularly revealing about this story is that Rose as a character never took an active role but, instead, was the idea or symbol that made the men around her take action. She gained respect by being a wife and mother, roles within the domestic sphere, but never ventured outside of her feminine, passive role.

Thus the family wage ideal as it was personified in the short stories of the Amalgamated Journal reinforced the male role as the provider and the female role as the domestic housewife. The wife or daughter of an Amalgamated man would have read these stories and understood the rightness of the gender roles it portrayed. But what of women who did not conform to this
standard of femininity? If the family wage ideal structured proper gender relationships then it must also have established what behaviors were improper, suggesting how the tension caused by the disruption of gender standards could be alleviated.

The story, "The New Slavery" suggested how such tension might have arisen and how it might also have been resolved. Isabel's married life was "a round of domestic duties as housekeeper, nurse and mother" or, in other words, she was the epitome of the feminine breadgiver. 127 Unaccustomed to the solitude of housework she decided that she could no longer bear such a life and that she would return home to her parents where "life had been joyous and gay and she would not be made a drudge and a slave." Shaking off the chains of her domesticity, however, proved to be devastating. By abandoning her home and family, she endangered her child who, without her mother's care, was kidnapped and forced into child labor in a factory. Eventually recovering the child, Isabel returned to her husband and family "humble of course but sweeter than ever before, for the sorrow that had been borne and passed through." Isabel's plight illustrates the perception that the female domestic role was essential -- women were a counter to the corruption of industrialism. The villain of the story was industrialism, personified here as the kidnappers who forced Isabel's daughter into child labor; and the only way to protect the family from his ravages was to have the mother remain in the home with the children so that only the father, as provider, would have to face the factory nemesis.

The preceding story told of a woman who abandoned her household chores to return home to her parents, but what of women who left their domestic sphere for jobs? Articles in the Amalgamated Journal suggest how female wage workers were perceived and how the family wage ideal helped structure that perception. 128 In "Mean Pride of Girls" the author chastised girls who


took work away from people who really needed the money. If a girl had "a home and a father who is happy caring for her" then she should not leave this comfort for work that was merely "an amusement for the time being." ¹²⁹ In "Character Building" the author instructed "Remember that nothing will beautify your after life more powerfully than your loyal devotion and affection to home." Women who wanted careers were generally the ones who made "the most mistakes in life."¹³⁰ These statements reinforced the gender roles of male as provider and women as housewife and suggest that female wage work was perceived as being frivolous and improper.

When addressing women who actually did wage work, the Amalgamated Journal characterized these women as curiosities whose peculiarities deserved amused but not serious attention. For example, in the article, "Bachelor Maids" the author encouraged housewives to invite a working girl over for conversation and a chance to compare their two lifestyles.

If you know a bachelor girl and you are the mistress of a pretty home of your own with someone to stand between you and the worries of the world, sometimes ask the busy bachelor girl to spend a day or the hours she can from work, with you. You will find her an interesting companion. Her world is wider than yours and at moments you will find yourself admiring her. . . . For, of course, when she comes to see you she bravely leaves her troubles behind which is a noble bit of sacrifice on the part of the bachelor girl.¹³¹ Through comparison the woman was to see how fortunate she was when compared to a working girl who had no husband to protect and care for her. The bachelor maid was a curiosity who was set apart from accepted definitions of femininity by her wage work and her lack of a male provider. This preoccupation with showing how working women were different from domestic women appeared in several articles in the "In Women's Realm" column. For example, women with professional careers, such as a female navy admiral, a woman engineer, and three female representatives to the Colorado State Legislature were depicted not as role models but rather as

¹³¹ "Bachelor Maids," AJ 18 October 1900: 7.
The authors characterized these women's roles outside of the home as setting them apart from the proper feminine domestic sphere and perhaps even femininity.

Thus, the Amalgamated Journal depicted how male and female roles and relationships were properly structured and also demonstrated how women who worked outside of the domestic sphere were to be perceived. Essentially they were perceived as "other" because they were outside of the male as breadwinner/female as breadgiver paradigm. By reinforcing this characterization of female wage workers, the Amalgamated Journal ensured that the family wage ideal was seen as the only acceptable structure of gender roles, and thus encouraged the wives and daughters of Amalgamated men to stay at home and leave the jobs for men. The tension caused by industrialism clouding traditional gender stereotypes and tempting women out of their homes and into the work force was, therefore, negotiated by the journal as it depicted women's only proper sphere as the home.

 Negotiating Class Identities: Middle Class Aspirations v. Working Class Reality

The Parable of the White Gown

Anne Prescott was a young woman of expansive tastes and a prohibitive income. A woman alone in New York City, she worked as a stenographer to sustain herself in a boardinghouse which although not the lovely home of her dreams, was at least a symbol of her lofty aspirations. On a walk one day, Anne spied a beautiful white gown in the window of an expensive Fifth Avenue shop. Vowing to have the gown, Anne economizes and saves until finally she is able to purchase it. Unfortunately, despite its exorbitant price, the gown is actually a nightgown which Anne will never be able to wear outside of her room. One night as she is admiring herself and her gown in front of the mirror, a fire breaks out in the boardinghouse and she is forced to run into the street, hoping only to save her beautiful negligee. Once safe, Anne faints and is rescued by a rich gentleman who had been passing by the scene. They eventually marry and Anne's new husband explains that he never would have noticed her if it had not been for her beautiful white gown. 133

This short story, although instructive in depicting the frivolous perception of female wage work, also suggests how pervasive the desire for fine things and a comfortable lifestyle was in the minds of the Amalgamated Journal's readers. Anne Prescott's gown was a symbol of luxury and middle class comfort that as working people, Amalgamated families, like Anne, aspired to. Even though union men had to work long hours at back breaking labor under dangerous conditions, they wanted to be able to come home to all the luxuries their wage could afford. But even more than just material comforts, the Amalgamated man's aspirations had to do with an entire way of life -- a middle class lifestyle. The previously discussed family wage ideal was a significant element of the Amalgamated man's aspirations in that it was a sign to others that a man's income was sufficient to ensure that his wife did not have to work and that she could therefore remain in her domestic sphere to care for the home and children. Both the way of life and the material comforts were symbols of a man's ability to provide for his family.

The question that arises from this discussion of Amalgamated families' middle class aspirations is whether or not they could afford the lifestyle they desired. As skilled workers,

Amalgamated men received relatively higher wages than other workers in the iron and steel industries, but were these wages sufficient? Evidence from 1905 dues records which were scaled according to members' income suggests that Amalgamated men's wages varied from $2.50 a day to over $5.00 a day with more members at the higher rate than the lower.\textsuperscript{134} With such a range of wages, the standard of living for Amalgamated men and their families must also have varied -- some being able to afford a middle class existence while others could only aspire to such a lifestyle. But how did wages actually translate into a standard of living? In 1907, surveyors of skilled steelworkers in the Pittsburgh district found that with a weekly income of twenty dollars -- an income within the range of Amalgamated men's wages -- a workingman's family "could rent or own a six-room house distant from the din and smoke of the mill. There was money enough for a healthy varied diet; for furniture, clothes, and small pleasures; and for insurance and some savings."\textsuperscript{135}

An article in the Amalgamated Journal written by the wife of a skilled workman further suggests how a man's wages were translated into a family's standard of living.\textsuperscript{136} Determined to enumerate how her husband's wages were used throughout a year, Mrs. D. O. J. listed her family's cash outlays for 1904 and in so doing created a picture of an average Amalgamated household. She began by stating that her husband was a "first-class workman" who received $3.50 a day for eight hours of work and that in 1904 he worked a total of 264 days, making $924. She then listed what it cost them to live: the family rented a house, paid for fuel and lighting, provided necessities for eight children such as books, tablets, and small entertainments, purchased clothing, replaced and maintained household appliances and tools, provided for miscellaneous activities...

\textsuperscript{134}Robinson, 59.
\textsuperscript{136}"What it Costs to Live," AJ 6 April 1905: 3.
such as doctors bills, lodge dues, theater tickets, and magazines, and paid the property taxes. These outlays, according to Mrs. D. O. J. left $276.94 for the grocery and butcher bills and a small sum for savings. The wage rate then of the average Amalgamated man was sufficient to provide his family with a comfortable standard of living, and perhaps some of the trappings of middle class life.

But can we assume that the male's wage was the Amalgamated family's only income? In "To Earn Her Daily Bread: Housework and Ante-bellum Working-Class Subsistence," Jeanne Boydston suggests that it is inaccurate to assume that a husband's wage was entirely responsible for providing for a family as women's economizing and informal money making practices were essential. The family wage ideal, Boydston argues, focuses attention on the male provider as the only source of family income and essentially makes women's contributions to the household economy invisible. In actuality, women, through their domestic chores, reduced cash outlays by making products themselves or reusing old materials and made some money by selling their household services. Such practices were common enough among Amalgamated women that they received much attention on the journal's women's page.

For example, articles such as "A Cheap Floor Polish," "Save Scraps of Soap," "Making Old Clothes New," and "Economy in the

137Boydston's arguments address only working class families and the economizing techniques of working class wives trying to help their husbands earn a subsistence. I, however, will suggest that these domestic activities were also used by aspiring women to help them secure increased material comfort and the symbols of a better lifestyle. Jeanne Boydston, "To Earn Her Daily Bread: Housework and Ante-bellum Working-Class Subsistence," Radical History Review 35 (1986): 7-25.

138Margaret F. Byington, a member of the Pittsburgh Survey, found evidence of economizing techniques in the steel mill community of Homestead during her 1907 research. She argues that women in the Pittsburgh area were expected to stay home and "by good housekeeping, make money go a long way, rather than go out to work and earn a little more." Although Homestead's skilled workmen were not members of the AA after the disastrous 1892 strike, I would argue that Byington's evidence suggests a general trend in iron and steel mill towns and is therefore not peculiar to one community. Margaret F. Byington, "The Family in a Typical Mill Town," American Journal of Sociology 14 (March 1909): 650.
Use of Coal" taught women how to increase their family's standard of living by saving money on ordinary items so that that money could be used for other comforts. In "Advice to Home-Keepers" the author relates the story of a young, newlywed woman who was despairing over how to furnish her apartment within the budget her husband has imposed. A neighbor informed her that by shopping for bargains, finding old furniture from neighbors and friends, and with a little hard work, the tiny apartment could be made to look beautiful for under twenty dollars. This story suggests that it was a woman's responsibility to make the wage her husband made sufficient for the family's needs.

In addition, the "In Women's Realm" column taught women how to make some extra money through their domestic activities. For example, "A Variety of Opportunities" suggests

Rug weaving, mushroom raising, home canning, violet raising, dairying, orcharding and many other occupations offer opportunities for women, and for those who have the taste and the ambition are better than factory, schoolroom or office life [emphasis added].

What is interesting about these instructions is that Amalgamated women were being encouraged to see rug weaving and home canning as "opportunities" and not as necessities. It is clear from the tone of the article that women were not being asked to help provide a subsistence for their families from the small incomes that their domestic work might bring in. Rather, these activities were being suggested to augment a husband's income and improve the family's standard of living.


Women's work was therefore an essential element of a family's income which perhaps helped an Amalgamated family aspire to the middle class and buy some of its material symbols.

Despite the preceding discussion on an Amalgamated family's relatively high income, there is evidence to suggest that income alone cannot be translated into a middle class lifestyle. A strike, a downturn in the iron or steel markets, or an accident could rob a man and his family of their way of life and so the income of an Amalgamated family was never completely secure.\textsuperscript{142} It must also be remembered that in order to earn his wages, an Amalgamated man had to work long hours, under extremely hazardous conditions on the average of six days a week.\textsuperscript{143} An interview with a skilled steel worker, Jim Barr, suggests how difficult it is to definitively label the membership of the AA as either working class or middle class. As Barr explained to John Fitch, an interviewer for the Pittsburgh Survey in 1907,

"Tell me, how can a man get any pleasure out of life working that way?" -- Barr asked me this almost with a challenge. We were sitting before the grate in his comfortable and tastefully furnished parlor. There were pictures on the wall, a carpet on the floor, and the piano in the corner spoke of other things than endless drudgery. He seemed to interpret my swift glance about the room, for he went on, "I've got as good a home here as a man could want. It's comfortable and I enjoy my family. But I only have these things to think about. I'm at work most of the day, and I'm so tired at night that I just go to bed as soon as I've eaten supper. I have ideas of what a home ought to be, all right, but the way things are now I just eat and sleep here."\textsuperscript{144}

Barr seems to be explaining that income and a comfortable home were not sufficient to make a man content with his standard of living. He might have had a middle class home and middle class

\textsuperscript{142}Susan J. Kleinberg cites the insecurity of the steel industry to suggest that the even skilled workers should be labeled as "working class." She argues that during periods of industrial chaos and unemployment it did not matter how skilled a man was as he too would feel the effects either in decreased wages or by temporarily losing his job. Susan J. Kleinberg, "Technology and Women's Work: The Lives of Working Class Women in Pittsburgh, 1870-1900," \textit{Labor History} 17 (1976): 58.

\textsuperscript{143}For a discussion of a skilled workman's average workday see Brody, 93-4, Fitch, 166-81, James J. Davis, \textit{The Iron Puddler: My Life in the Rolling Mills and What Came of It} (Indianapolis, 1922): 86-113, and Santos, 400-2.

\textsuperscript{144}Fitch, 14-5.
wages but he was unable to enjoy these comforts because he worked all day long in order to attain them.

Thus if we look only at the work life of an Amalgamated man we might characterize his lifestyle as working class; however, if we look at his home life we might be inclined to label his standard of living as middle class. An Amalgamated man was ostensibly caught between the reality of the mill and the aspirations of the home -- neither working class nor middle class. By extension, it might be assumed that because the Amalgamated man's wife, based upon the family wage ideal, occupied only the domestic and therefore the middle class sphere, she did not have to confront the tensions inherent in her husband's dual existence. However, the women's page of the Amalgamated Journal suggests that she too was caught in between middle class aspirations and working class realities. By examining the prescriptive advice of the journal, we find that an Amalgamated woman's appearance, behavior, and housekeeping were held up to middle class expectations while the realities of her domestic sphere were very much working class.

Perhaps the best evidence to suggest that the journal was attempting to prescribe a middle class lifestyle for Amalgamated wives was the use of middle class ladies magazines as authorities for women's appearance, domestic activities, and roles. Articles appearing in the journal's "In Women's Realm" column were made to sound more factual with the statement "says the Woman's Home Companion" or with the addition of the byline "Harper's Bazaar." Middle class ladies

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journals were seen as expert advisors and councilors and by making reference to them the Amalgamated Journal appropriated middle class authority to advise women on their feminine roles and duties. The housekeepers column used the middle class journals as sources for appearance and behavior ideals. It then provided articles to teach Amalgamated women how to achieve such ideals, lessons middle class women would not need to be taught. Thus, when the housekeeper's column advised Amalgamated women on how to dress stylishly or how to behave on a streetcar, the readers knew that the information they were receiving would help them become more like the middle class to which they aspired.

The information found in the Amalgamated Journal's women's column can be separated into two categories -- ideals of feminine appearance and roles and information concerning current trends in domestic science. Both mixed information from middle class women's journals with the AA's own understanding of femininity and female roles to create a unique prescriptive literature which touted middle class ideals tempered with a recognition of working class reality. For example, when addressing an Amalgamated woman's appearance, the column taught such things as the art of neatness, how to wear a corset, how to dress stylishly, how to look slight, and how to avoid becoming stout -- essentially teaching her how to appear like the women portrayed in middle class women's magazines. However, the Amalgamated Journal also provided information on how to achieve this ideal appearance cheaply, advising women on how to make

147 For discussions of how middle class ladies journals acted as advisors and councilors for their readership see Mott, 358-68 and 536-55 as well as Ehrenreich and English, For Her Own Good.

An article entitled "Bargain Sales" advised women that "There is really no excuse for one's wardrobe assuming a tired worn-out appearance when there are so many ways and means of bringing it up at a small expense." These articles suggest that in order to aspire to the middle class, Amalgamated women needed to use economy to hide the symbols of their working class reality.

"In Women's Realm" also prescribed ideal female behavior which reflected both an Amalgamated woman's aspirations and her reality. Most of the articles of this type lead us to question how pertinent they were to the wife of an iron or steel worker. For example, taking its information from an English nurse, an article on resting advised Amalgamated women that if they had plans for the evening they should "rest up" during the day. The author counseled, "First lie down in the afternoon with only a loose gown on, so that the body can relax properly. Next take a quick warm bath, afterward rubbing the spine with eau de cologne." "There is Skill" suggested that women must learn how to arrange flowers to create a "charming effect" in their homes. Yet another article, taken from Harper's Bazaar, counseled women on the nature of the mistress/maid relationship, advising them on how to organize a pay schedule. The picture these articles create is one of the lady housewife who allowed her maid to do the difficult housework while she focused on household aesthetics, her social life, and her appearance.

152 "There is Skill," AJ 27 April 1905: 7.
On the other hand, the Amalgamated Journal also presented articles such as "Women's Sunday Not a Rest Day," which illustrated the hard work, skill, and never ending quality of women's household chores in order to challenge the perception of women's lives as lazy -- the very image that the article on resting promoted. The article began

Listen! If the head of a house rises at 6 his wife must rise at 5 in order to have his breakfast ready on a clean table in a cleanly swept room. The husband leaves for business, and his wife settles down to the necessarily dull routine of housework.155

The two apparently contradictory prescriptions of female roles presented on the women's page demonstrate the conflicting ideals women faced when they read the Amalgamated Journal. The article "The Greatest Women" suggests how these contradictory ideals were reconciled. As the wife of a man with moderate means, the ideal woman "... does her own cooking, washing and ironing, brings up a large family of girls and boys to be useful members of society and finds time for her own intellectual and moral improvement..."156 The Greatest Woman was essentially a hybrid of the middle class feminine ideal and the working class reality of Amalgamated women's lives. She was strong and capable, committed to her family, and yet found time for herself and her own edification.

The Amalgamated Journal's women's page not only advised women on how they should look and behave; it also proposed, with the help of the latest scientific discoveries, to tell them how to do their household chores. At the turn of the century, the rise of domestic science as an outgrowth of the fields of sanitation, medicine, and nutrition proposed higher standards for women's household chores, placing increased significance on the female domestic sphere and a

Domestic science was essentially a middle class crusade to infuse housework with the industrial world's advances in scientific management and efficiency as well as the medical world's knowledge of health and nutrition. The Amalgamated Journal's women's page embraced these advancements, appropriating the middle class ideal by publishing many articles teaching women to approach their housework as a "system."

There is one word of almost magical influence that needs to be whispered in connection with the theme of housekeeping. It is system! Without it success is doubtful; with it failure cannot ensue. There must be system for all work, system in hours, system in promptness, system for occupation, and system for recreation, system in the rigorous observance of hours of rest and sleep, and system in the hour of rising.

Each activity was to be approached with organization and efficiency because, "Actual pleasure and culture may be found in the humdrum duties of everyday life if they are done in the right spirit with a determination to do everything in the best possible time and way." These statements from the Amalgamated Journal suggest how domestic science glorified women's household chores and further established the home as the proper female sphere.

Unfortunately, whereas domestic science tried to lighten the housewife's burden by applying industrial innovations, it actually increased that burden by elevating housework standards. The women's column addressed this problem, suggesting that "Housework cluttered with the new ideas would kill a woman if it were not for the many new inventions that have

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160 Alice Kessler-Harris discusses the relationship between the growth of domestic science and its impact on maintaining the female domestic sphere. Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, 112-19.
sprung into life to make it easy." But how accessible were these new technologies to women living in mill towns? Susan J. Kleinberg suggests that at the turn of the century municipal services such as sewers and water supply were unequally distributed, servicing the prominent sections of towns long before working class areas. Many Amalgamated wives therefore still had to perform activities, such as hauling water for cleaning, that were unnecessary tasks for middle class women. Another question that arises is whether or not the wages of all Amalgamated men were sufficient to furnish the new technologies to lessen a wife's burden. These included washing machines, toilets, iceboxes, gas and electricity. Perhaps some families could afford these advances; however, the wives of those Amalgamated men who could not afford all of the necessary innovations were caught in the dilemma of wanting to meet middle class standards without the means to do so. Thus, by promoting domestic science and its higher standards for the female domestic sphere, the Amalgamated Journal reinforced the chasm between its readers' middle class aspirations and their working class reality.

What impresses us most as we look at the Amalgamated Journal's household advice, however, is the breadth of activities it assumed were women's responsibilities. For example, the journal advised women on how to cook, preserve, wash dishes, do spring cleaning, sanitize, dust, repair, wash clothing, and iron, to name only a few. Using these references to women's

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162 See Kleinberg, 58-72 and Alice Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, 111-12 on the technological advances in turn of the century homes. Both address the issue of class as it influenced the attainment of these innovations.
163 Amalgamated families probably had a better chance of receiving these services before common laborers as they were less likely to live in working class areas where innovations were installed last. Nevertheless, because the incomes and living conditions of Amalgamated families varied, a portion of the membership would still have had to cope without the new technologies. The advice from the "In Women's Realm" column would have then only applied to some of the female readers while creating unattainable expectations for the others.
164 A few articles from the Amalgamated Journal's women's page which include advice on how to perform household chores include: "Problems for the Housewife," AI 28 November
household chores, a picture of an Amalgamated wife's daily activities can be pieced together which little resembles the lady housewife ideal prescribed in a large majority of the articles in the women's column. The common Amalgamated housewife was not a woman who had the time to rest in the afternoon. A disparity therefore existed between the women reading the Amalgamated Journal and the feminine ideal it prescribed for them.

Yet such a disparity was not meant to accentuate the tension between women's aspirations and their reality as it appears that the "In Women's Realm" weekly column actually helped reconcile the tension it promoted. By playing upon women's hopes with articles on how to shop in London and how to furnish a summer home, the Amalgamated Journal encouraged women to strive for something better. Like their husbands and fathers whose aspirations were addressed in the journal's articles on improved working conditions and increased wages, women were being asked to demand a higher standard of living. By creating and reinforcing a man's aspirations, women could encourage their husbands and fathers to find a means to attain those goals -- the best way, according to the Amalgamated Journal was, of course, active membership in the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers.

Having fed female aspirations on the women's page, the journal tried to subtly channel those desires toward support of the union. The journal, therefore, appealed to women in articles

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166 Throughout my examination of the Amalgamated Journal I found articles which suggested that the union leadership was frustrated with the laxity of its membership. For example, one article stated "the greatest enemy of the labor man is the labor man." I would argue that this frustration led them to appeal to the Amalgamated man's wife to encourage his active membership. "Untitled article," AJ 20 December 1906.
which associated labor activism with improvements in the home. For example, in "Unions Help the Home," the author argued:

Trade unions have done more to improve the home life and social and material well-being of women than any other agency or institution. As the husband or father's day's work is shortened, the wife's labors are correspondingly reduced and brought into a shorter compass.167

This article tried to convince women that support of the union would mean less housework for them, a particularly provocative goal for Amalgamated women. Further demonstrating the union's commitment to improving its members' standard of living, the article "Women and Trades Unionism" suggested that "The trade union is an important factor in building up a higher type of family life."168 In addition, by juxtaposing the "In Women's Realm" column with articles on the power of unionism and the need for more active participation in the organization, the journal reinforced, although not overtly, the idea that the Amalgamated Association was the means to attain the middle class aspirations featured on the women's page. Thus, the Amalgamated Journal was essentially using women by way of their female domestic sphere -- a sphere it relegated women to by promoting the family wage ideal -- to encourage men's union activism. The prescriptive literature of the women's page, therefore, suggested that the tension between middle class aspirations and working class reality, inherent in the lives of Amalgamated men and women, could only be reconciled by supporting the Amalgamated Association.

Conclusion:

The labor periodicals of the Knights of Labor and the Amalgamated Association were arenas in which both unions addressed and reconciled tension causing issues for their female readers. These publications shared the assumption that such tensions could be reconciled if the proper female role in society and in the labor movement was clearly defined. The Journal of United Labor, for example, tried to negotiate the union's official perception of women's roles, defined by their ideology of equality, with the organization's contradictory dedication to female domesticity. The Knights reconciled these dual expectations by prescribing two different sets of expectations for women according to their sphere of activity -- they were encouraged to politicize their traditional household sphere and domesticate their public/union activities. In addition, the Order's journal also negotiated the conflict between the union's official advocacy of sexual equality and male members' acceptance of such a policy. By appealing to their logic, sympathies and sense of duty, the Journal of United Labor helped men recognize the plight of female wage workers and tried to convince them to accept Lady Knights as equal members of the union. The Knights of Labor thus prescribed the female role in both society and the labor movement -- women were an integral part of both realms, however, their activities were to be clearly defined so as not to disrupt traditional gender expectations.

In comparison, the Amalgamated Journal, and more specifically its women's page, negotiated the tensions between masculinity and femininity, aspirations and reality. The journal firmly upheld the family wage ideal so that there could be no question that a woman's proper role in society was defined by her household activities. Articles and short stories idealized female domesticity and discouraged women from entering the industrial world where they might compete with men for jobs, or worse, become de-feminized. In addition, features with a middle class tone fed women's class aspirations while articles on the accomplishments of labor taught them how to
realize those goals. They were to encourage their providers to be active participants in an organization that could help them obtain a middle class lifestyle -- the Amalgamated Association.

The women's page with its short stories and "In Women's Realm" column defined women's roles in both society and the labor movement -- the female role in society was to remain in the home while her role in the labor movement was to ensure that her husband remained active in the union.

Thus, to suggest that organized labor had an ambivalent attitude toward women based solely upon the number of female workers organized is to overlook the complex relationship revealed by labor periodicals. Both the Knights of Labor and the Amalgamated Association addressed female readers in their journals, suggesting that these organizations were interested in women and the roles they played. Yet, it is essential that we do not lose sight of the fundamental reason these organizations provided female oriented literature. Ultimately, both unions addressed women for the benefit of the union itself and its male members. The Knights, for example, forged a relationship with female workers and housewives to control wage competition and create a united working class front against capitalist monopolies. Similarly, the Amalgamated Association addressed members' wives and daughters to protect their jobs and their standard of living from perceived female competition. The relationship between labor and women, as revealed by union periodicals, was therefore one of male self-interest, but certainly not ambivalence.
Bibliography

Primary Sources:


Secondary Sources:


**Vita:**

Allyson Beth Kambach was born on July 28, 1972 in Red Bank, New Jersey. She has lived in Byram, New Jersey with her parents, Bob and Suellen Kambach, her sister Missy, and her cat Ashes for most of her life. In 1994, she graduated from Bucknell University summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History. She then continued her education at Lehigh University where she is currently pursuing a Masters degree, also in history. In 1996 Allyson was awarded the Donald T. Campbell Social Science Research Prize for her paper, "In Women’s Realm: Negotiating Issues of Gender and Class in the Amalgamated Journal."
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