

JANE ADDAMS

b. September 6, 1860

d. May 21, 1935

ACTIVIST

“Social advance depends as much upon the process through which it is secured as upon the result itself.”

In 1931 she became the first woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1889 Jane Addams cofounded Hull House, a social settlement on Chicago's Near West Side. Social settlements were established to attract educated, middle- and upper-class people to poor urban areas. Addams also cofounded the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), a nonpartisan nonprofit organization created in 1920 to defend and preserve individual rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

After graduating from college, Addams studied medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. She eventually turned her attention to women's issues. She and several other women founded Hull House as an educational hub for neighborhood residents, most of whom were recent immigrants. Addams lived and worked at Hull House until her death.

Throughout her life, Addams was dedicated to improving the lives of those on the fringes of society, becoming one of the most important social reformers during the Progressive Era in America. She became a leading advocate for women's rights, immigrants' rights, better housing, fair labor practices, improvements in public welfare and stricter child labor laws. She and other Hull House residents helped pass legislation and influenced critical social policies in many of these areas. Addams also worked for the Chicago Board of Health and served as the first vice president of the Playground Association of America. She advocated for black rights, becoming a charter member of the NAACP.

In 1894 Addams became the first woman appointed as sanitary inspector of Chicago's 19th Ward and was instrumental in reducing disease and death in the city. She was also a charter member of the American Sociological Society and lectured widely about women's rights.

In 1931 Addams became the first woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. On December 10, 2007, Illinois celebrated the first Jane Addams Day. A Jane Addams Memorial Park was also established near the Navy Pier in Chicago. She was inducted into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in 2008.

Her close companion was Mary Rozet Smith.



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