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Meeting Unmet Needs: The Evolution of Housing and Aid in New London 1910-1950

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Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to the History Department for providing me with the opportunity to engage in researching and writing this senior thesis. Thank you to my thesis advisor Professor Desloge for his support in research and writing over the past year. Without his recommendations and expertise, this project would not have been possible. I would also like to thank Professor Garofalo for being a reader and leading the honors thesis writing seminar in the fall. I learned so much about the process of writing through his feedback and guidance. Also, thank you to Professor Stock for being a reader and providing me with helpful insight and support! I am so appreciative of my time with the Connecticut College history department and the courses and research opportunities that have provided me with new perspectives and skills in historical analysis.

I would also like to thank the Holleran Center for Public Policy and Community Action for facilitating important community engagement experiences. I am so grateful for all I have learned in our courses and the opportunities they have given me to work with organizations like the New London Homeless Hospitality Center and the Southeastern Connecticut Community Land Trust. My time with PICA has been one of the most valuable experiences of my time at Conn.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support. Especially my parents, thank you for all you do.

Introduction

On July 30, 1929, the New London Shiloh Baptist Church hosted the ninth annual convention of the Nutmeg State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs. The attendees represented a class-diverse group committed to their local aid organizations. The Shiloh Baptist Church offered a location for the meeting as an alternative to offices at the Arthur Building or someone's home. The Church had a tradition of women's organizing and had been at the center of New London's aid politics for over 10 years.

The small aid organizations from across Connecticut had adapted to a changing landscape of aid politics over the previous fifteen years. Aid organizations that had emerged as local mutual aid groups during World War I, networked throughout the 1920s to build coalitions and expand their ability to politically organize. By 1929 they faced another shift as credentialed professionals gained entry to aid politics through the growth of social sciences. These professionalized institutions created behavioral explanations for poverty that ultimately co-opted the community-based organizations. Sadie Dillion Harrison, President of New London's United Negro Welfare Council, addressed the community-based groups amidst this changing landscape. In her speech, titled by newspapers as "Negro Achieving Success Through Adversity," she demonstrates a conservatism different from her previous work reflecting the organization's efforts to adapt to the philosophy of professionalized aid.

Racial Oppression among the colored people can be overcome by selfishness, that is selfishness in what the Negro owes the world, rather than what the world owes him... The Indian has failed to progress because of the hatred in his heart and because of the opportunities that the government has given him to be idle. The

American Negro is achieving success through oppression and adversity, while still holding to the faith of humanity.¹

Harrison celebrated the organizers' success while adjusting to the increasing pressure to abandon the mutual aid framework and embrace behavioral explanations for poverty. This quote demonstrates how the aid politics of New London had come to embrace a poverty knowledge that understood marginalization as something individuals could overcome through assimilation. Harrison argued the marginalization of indigenous people is a result of their failure to assimilate. In 1917 a group of Black working-class women created the War Canteen to mitigate "racial oppression" by providing for the needs of Black servicemen neglected by their employers. Twelve years later, politicized replacement organizations sought to mitigate oppression through the encouragement of self-reliance.

Between 1910 and 1950, the industrialization of both World Wars and increased migrations to the city reshaped New London. As New London adjusted to these changes, so did their provisioning of aid. This thesis seeks to answer the question: how did New London's aid organizations change over time? Professionalization of aid resulted in a study of poverty by credentialed academics and social scientists that dominated and ultimately subsumed aid politics. Professionals prevented community-based organizations from meeting immediate needs through mutual aid because the professionalized study of poverty established the idea that specific behaviors led to poverty and poor housing conditions.

The changes to aid organizations took shape in three distinct parts. First, local mutual aid run by working-class Black women focused on provisioning aid for immediate needs. Second, politicized aid organizations run by a class-diverse Black community focused on advocacy.

¹ "Negroes Achieving Success Through Adversity," *Hartford Courant*, July 31, 1929, Newspapers.com. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/369138439/?terms=Sadie%20Harrison&match=1>

Finally, professionalized academic aid focused on studying needs. New London was home to a network of aid groups that emerged to support a growing population of Black migrants during World War I. Elizabeth Jeter Greene, a working-class Black migrant from Arlington, established the War Canteen in 1917. The organization focused on supporting the basic needs of local populations. In the 1920s, the group reorganized into the United Negro Welfare Council (UNWC) to build a network of partnerships to advocate against segregation and for increased socio-economic mobility. Between 1930 and 1950, credentialed professionals from organizations like the Urban League and Connecticut College co-opted local aid organizations and concluded behavioral explanations for poor housing conditions.

Why New London?

New London demonstrates the ways in which the events of American history are not isolated to large cities like New York and Chicago but rather intersect and shape the entire country, even small cities like New London. New London has been affected by the rise and fall of the institution of slavery, immigration booms, wartime industrialization, the Great Migration, the Red Summer of 1919, and the urban renewal programs that decimated New London neighborhoods throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

The decades between 1910 and 1950 marked a time of rapid change in New London. The city grew from a population of 17,000 people in 1910 to 30,456 in 1940.² New economic opportunity attracted rural transplants, immigrants who had moved to New London from the cities they first arrived in, and Southern migrants. Many new residents worked in labor-intensive industries. The manuscript census entries often enter a man's occupation as simply "laborer" and

² US Decennial Census, New London County by Race 1900, Social Explorer, accessed February 8, 2022. <https://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/Census1900/R13041655>; US Decennial Census, New London County 1940, Social Explorer, accessed February 8, 2022. <https://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/C1940CompDS/R13042147>

leave where specifically they were working unidentified.³ Companies like Pratt and Whitney, Royal Typewriter, and Hartford Machine Screw employed more high-paying laboring positions. Positions at the Naval Base and Coast Guard functioned as major employers while maintaining segregation among workers.⁴ In addition to laboring jobs, an increased population meant more jobs in other industries including the service industry, retail, domestic positions, offices, schools, and transportation.

The military played an essential role in defining New London in the first half of the twentieth century. It served as a major employer, as well as a segregating force. The War Canteen developed in response to the lack of resources given to Black servicemen. The group provided quality food, lodging, clothes, laundry services, and access to recreation.⁵ Furthermore, military status served as a point of contention in race relations. Similar to other military cities, anti-black violence occurred during the Summer of 1919 was a result of white anxiety fueled violence that targeted Black men in uniform.⁶ After serving in the military, employers continued to deny Black men the freedoms of employment, safety, and conditions equal to their white counterparts.

The establishment of Connecticut College in 1911 shaped New London as a laboratory for the development of poverty knowledge as faculty and students engaged in the politics of defining poverty through social sciences. The role of the college in New London allows for the understanding of how formal institutions acting in aid politics shaped perceptions of poverty.

³ US Manuscript Census, New London Enumeration districts 258 and 262 (1910), Ancestry.com, accessed July 17, 2021.
<https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6061/images/4295765-00112?ssrc=&backlabel=Return&pId=6786247>

⁴ Jan Voogd, *Race Riots, and Resistance: The Red Summer of 1919* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008), 95-97; Stacey Close, "Black Southern Migration and the Transformation of Connecticut, 1917-1941," in *African American Connecticut Explored*, ed. by Elizabeth Normen (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2013), 245.

⁵ Mary Beth Baker, "New London Landmarks Memo," New London Landmarks Inc., November 18, 2019; Linwood Bland Jr., *A View from the Sixties: the Black Experience in Southeastern Connecticut* (New London: New London County Historical Society, 2001) 29.

⁶ Voogd, *Race Riots and Resistance: The Red Summer of 1919*, 95-97.

Connecticut College brought the ideas of the Chicago School of Sociology and faculty from outside the Northeast into New London aid politics.

An Early History of New London

We must note those engaging in aid politics contested the legacy of a history tied to racial exploitation. New London's location as a major port city in the eighteenth century laid the foundation for it to later become profitable in industries including whaling, shipping, boat manufacturing, and as a city that profits from the location of the Naval base and Coast Guard Academy. New London became a major port city because of its connection to the slave trade. Between 1749 and 1774, New London County had one of the largest slave populations in New England. The city of New London had nearly double the number of slaves of the largest slaveholding county of Massachusetts, which is significant given that Massachusetts was the state with the largest slave population in all of New England. In 1774 the city of New London had a population of 2,036 enslaved Africans, not including those in transit. This number of enslaved people accounted for one-third of the entire Black population of Connecticut at the time.⁷

In 1717, New London held a town meeting in which property-owning white men voted in support of an ordinance that would prevent free Black people from being allowed to live or own property in the colony. A municipal law prohibited any free Black person or “Mulatto” from residing or owning businesses or property without explicit permission from a local official of New London. The provisions were retroactive, meaning if any free Black person had managed to buy land or own a business, their ownership was void, and they would be subject to persecution.

⁷ Katherine J. Harris, “Part I Freedom and Slavery,” *African American Connecticut Explored*, ed. by Elizabeth Normen (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press 2013), 7.

On one occasion in 1719, Robert Jacklin, a free Black man and longtime resident of New London, was violently threatened by the community and forced to sell his home.⁸

Enforcement of the laws was uneven, only enforced when Black socio-economic mobility threatened white entitlement. In 1784 upon the end of slavery in Connecticut it was debated whether owners should be compensated for the loss property. Furthermore, some argued immediate emancipation would endanger public safety.⁹ This view of Black freedoms as a threat of white security is a theme that persists through New London's history, informing the justification for segregation, racialization of poverty, and events like the May and June anti-black violence of the Red Summer.

Despite the lack of support or compensation for lost property, there was an understanding of existing barriers to socio-economic mobility in the nineteenth century. In the 1840s, abolitionist Savillion Haley purchased houses on Hempstead Street which he sold at market cost to free Black people. In 1920, Sadie Dillion Harrison bought the Haley House at 73 Hempstead Street, and it became known as the Hempstead Cottage.¹⁰ This early history permeates the ways in which race and property was shaped in New London. The intergenerational disenfranchisement and legacy of slavery created the landscape that migrants arrived in the twentieth century.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Tom Schuch, "73 Hempstead Street," Visit New London: New London's Black Heritage Trail, 2021. <https://visitnewlondon.org/black-heritage-trail/73-hempstead-street/>

Historiography: What Do National Patterns Look like in New London?

I have focused on three categories of existing historiographies in order to answer the research question: how did the racialization of poverty and professionalization of organizations change the effectiveness of aid? These three topics include studies of Black life in Southeastern Connecticut Pre-1960; historiography of social welfare, nonprofits, and social policy; and the historiography of the Great Migration. These three topics intersect to depict the history of housing and wealth inequality in cities similar to New London.

Historiography on Black life in Southeastern Connecticut provided context for the ways in which race has shaped the city from the era of slavery through the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, and Urban Renewal projects.¹¹ These sources have served as a basis to understand how the other topics, such as social welfare and the Great Migration, may apply to the city of

¹¹ Books on New London include:

Elizabeth J. Normen, *African American Connecticut Explored* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2013).

A collection of essays on Connecticut's inequalities, Black politics, and Civil Rights movements covering the state's colonization in the mid-17th century to the events of the 1970s.

Frank Andrews Stone, *African American Connecticut* (Storrs: University of Connecticut 2008).

Similar to Normen's collection of essays, Stone provides Connecticut's history of changing racial demographics, evolving race relations, and civil rights.

James M. Rose and Barbara W. Brown, *Tapestry, Living History of the Black Family in Southeastern Connecticut* (New London: New London County Historical Society, 1979).

Rose and Brown provide a historical overview of Black families in Southeastern Connecticut from 1680 to 1865, specifically focusing on Black men's role in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. They also include genealogical sketches of many Black families.

Bland Jr., *A View from the Sixties: the Black Experience in Southeastern Connecticut*.

After serving in both world wars, Bland returned home to New London and began to advocate for fair employment practices by Electric Boat. In his tenyear as the president of the New London chapter NAACP he fought discrimination in employment, and fought to provide replacement housing to people displaced by by Urban Renewal. His memoir provides a historical overview of the achievements of New London Civil Rights efforts through the early to mid-twentieth century.

New London. I have built off of this existing work to draw a connection between specifically the work of Black aid organizations and broader national patterns of Black politics.

Much of the history written about New London focuses on urban renewal. Beginning in the 1950s there was a national trend of urban renewal projects to clear urban areas considered “blighted.” New London became one of the most drastic examples of urban renewal in the Northeast. The destruction of Winthrop Cove between 1962 and 1967 resulted in the demolition of 690 homes, displacing 667 families, disproportionately families of color.¹² The development of housing and aid from 1910 to 1950 explains the racialization of poverty that led to the labeling of working-class neighborhoods as “blighted” and the practice of “slum clearance” as the best way to mitigate poor housing conditions. I hope that this thesis can add to the history of the communities in New London erased by professionalized aid and urban renewal. My analysis of the Hempstead neighborhood demonstrates the existence of mixed-income neighborhoods and the common practice of multi-family housing.

Historiographies on social welfare, nonprofits, and social policy are essential for an understanding of the development of aid politics overtime. Alice O'Connor’s *Poverty Knowledge* claims building an anti-poverty agenda requires change in the way society thinks about “the poverty problem,” challenging the narrative that professionalization of aid organizations and integration of scientific knowledge is the key to solving wealth inequality.¹³ Dean Spade builds upon this argument in *Mutual Aid*, examining the ways in which the function of nonprofit organizations often upholds, sustains, and legitimizes existing gaps in federal or state aid because of a narrative that categorizes people into deserving or not deserving of aid.¹⁴ My work explains

¹² “Discrimination, Urban Renewal, and New London’s Lost Neighborhood,” Connecticut Fair Housing Center, 2018. <https://www.ctfairhousing.org/new-london-urban-renewal-tour/>

¹³ Alice O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy and the Poor in Twentieth-Century US History*, Princeton (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002).

¹⁴ Dean Spade, *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During the Crisis* (Brooklyn: Verso Publishing, 2020).

how professionalized aid politics by credentialed social scientists from institutions like Connecticut College defined “the poverty problem” in New London as something inalienable from behavior and assimilation. I build off of O’Connor’s historical perspective and Spade’s theoretical framework to explain what was lost in New London’s efforts to mitigate poverty as professionalized aid politics replaced space previously occupied by mutual aid organizations.

Touré Reed’s *Not Alms But Opportunity* explains how local aid groups professionalized and nationalized under the Urban League. This process involved applying sentiments of “deservingness” to Southern Black migrants.¹⁵ In New London as the local organizations began to connect to national politics they adopted uplift philosophies that resulted in anti-migrant sentiments. The processes of professionalization and nationalization described by Reed also led to racialization of poverty in New London. This is exemplified by the Urban League’s 1944 Survey of New London discussed in Chapter 3.¹⁶

James Grossman’s *Land of Hope* frames the Great Migration as a historic event that reshaped the United States rather than an event isolated to poor migrants.¹⁷ My work demonstrates New London as an example of the class-diversity of the Great Migration. Elizabeth Jeter Greene represents a working-class group of migrants that sought to provide for the community through a mutual aid framework, while individuals like Sadie Harrison and Benjamin Tanner Johnson are representative of an elite leadership group, connecting New London aid politics to national figures of Black politics like W.E.B Du Bois. An analysis of the Hempstead neighborhood in Chapter 1 demonstrates the ways the Great Migration changed the city as New

¹⁵ Touré Reed, *Not Alms But Opportunity: The Urban League and the Politics of Racial Uplift 1910-1950* (Chapel Hill: University North Carolina, 2008), 109.

¹⁶ Warren M. Banner and Harvey J. Kerns, *A Study of the Social and Economic Conditions of the Negro Population of New London, Connecticut* (New York: New London Council of Social Agencies by the National Urban League’s Community Relations Project, 1944), Provided by the Connecticut College Leer Center.

¹⁷ James Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

London was not segregated immediately but rather overtime.

Sources and Constraints

I began studying this topic through New London's connection to the events of the Great Migration and the Red Summer of 1919. During the Red Summer, white mobs attacked Black people and symbols of Black prosperity in cities across the country, using violence to buttress racial order in the changing post-war world. Race riots occurred in 26 cities throughout the Red Summer. New London was one of 5 locations involving the military as agents and targets.¹⁸ Lack of historical record made it difficult to find clear accounts of the events. In order to understand the events of May 26 and June 5, 1919, I relied on articles from local newspapers including *The Day*, *The Hartford Courant*, and *Norwich Bulletin*. The information of the Red Summer (and the meaningful gaps in what was recorded) highlighted the larger dynamics of race, poverty, and aid in New London.

In other cities like St. Louis anti-Black violence was prompted by the contestation of residential segregation.¹⁹ I assumed that New London would have been a similar case study. However, what I found through my research was that New London neighborhoods did not become informally racially segregated until the 1940s. In 1919 segregation by class began, mixing Black residents among rural transplants, immigrants, and longtime New London residents. I demonstrated this change through a block-level analysis of 1910 to 1940 of an area in a 1944 Urban League survey recognized as a Black neighborhood. I showed change in residency and conditions over time using Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and Manuscript Census Data from

¹⁸ Voogd, *Race Riots and Resistance: The Red Summer of 1919*, 95.

¹⁹ Walter Johnson, *The Broken Heart of America: St. Louis and the Violent History of the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2020).

each decade.²⁰ The Sanborn Company created maps to assess the liability of urban areas throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, providing detailed street views. I used Sanborn maps of the area near Upper Hempstead Street, Bristol, Fremont and Walker Street in New London paired with manuscript census data to understand who was living in the area between 1910 and 1940; their careers, incomes, ethnicities, family size, and the values of their homes. This processes demonstrated that it was not immediate segregation, but rather a limitation of economic opportunity that allowed for racial segregation overtime. However, this analysis is not without its constraints. The unstable conditions of migrant housing impacted the ability of census records to depict the full impact of the Great Migration. Often migrants moved in and out of communities, filling temporary positions and living in boarding rooms.²¹ Census records and the maps demonstrating housing conditions in Chapter 1 are limited in their reflection of these conditions.

Local aid organizations offer insight into how New London residents contested wealth inequality and poverty. The professionalized sociological survey of New London, riddled with biased explanations of the causes of poverty, notes the existence of earlier community-based aid organizations like The War Canteen and the United Negro Welfare Council (UNWC). To build a greater understanding of the aid organizations, I utilized primary sources from the New London Landmarks Association, New London Historical Society, directories, newspaper archives, and word of mouth provided the information included. Due to the lack of sources, I looked to similar organizations in other cities and national trends.

Despite my best efforts, there were constraints on the ability to understand the entire history of local aid groups. For example, the work of working-class migrants and Black women

²⁰ Banner and Kerns, *A Study of the Social and Economic Conditions of the Negro Population of New London, Connecticut*.

²¹ *Ibid.*

is significantly less preserved than the professionalized documentation of faculty at Connecticut College. There are also discrepancies between my ability to explain the life of Elizabeth Jeter Greene and Sadie Dillion Harrison. Harrison's class status and credentials as a published author leave a paper trail of writings, speeches, newspaper articles about her work, and correspondence with political figures like W.E.B. Du Bois. I relied on the work of local historians and information from Ancestry.com to piece together Greene's life and work.

Positionality

As a student at Connecticut College, I have been privileged to engage in a historical study of aid, housing, and race in New London. I have benefited greatly from the support of my institution and the ways the college has changed so that now students like myself can learn about the complicated history of well-intentioned aid organizations in New London. My work is by no means exhaustive. As a white woman and a non-resident of New London, I learned about the Red Summer, segregation, and co-opting of mutual aid groups through historical perspective rather than lived experience or personal connection. Just as the academics and Connecticut College faculty who failed to effectively study poverty in New London in the first half of the twentieth century, as a student, my work is a product of the environment I wrote and researched in.²² However, this paper discusses the shortcomings of the well-intentioned institutions like Connecticut College and highlights the work of historical figures whose work was not always preserved. Throughout my research I have used primary sources and narratives sourced from different organizations in New London to tell the story of poverty mitigation. The version of this story I have created should not be the sole narrative or go without critique. This piece should be

²² Daryl Michael Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880-1996* (Raleigh: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

a small part of a larger conversation about the complexities of the history of aid provision.

Chapter Overview

Before the first chapter, there is a brief outline of how to access three online maps that contextualize the events discussed throughout the thesis. Map 1 is a general map of New London to show the relative location of the places discussed throughout the paper. Maps 2 and 3 are Sanborn Maps annotated with manuscript census data from 1910 and 1940, providing a snapshot of the neighborhood changes. A final map, Map 4, is a simplified version of Map 1 in the case that the online versions are inaccessible.

The first chapter details the role of Greene's War Canteen which provided aid to poor migrants and Black servicemen in the community. The chapter also serves to provide context for the conditions of New London between 1910 and 1919, including an analysis of Sanborn fire insurance maps to demonstrate the ways in which neighborhoods became increasingly divided by class. The development of the War Canteen was motivated by issues related to exclusion from employment for longtime residents and declining housing conditions for Black migrants and servicemen. Black working-class women organized to mitigate the issues that were affecting their own lives and the lives of those within their communities.

The second chapter outlines how Black aid organizations politicized, demonstrated by the War Canteen reorganization into the United Negro Welfare Council in 1918. Throughout the 1920s, the Black community in New London became more class-diverse and community members like Sadie Dillion Harrison sought to connect local politics to a growing national conversation on Black politics. This chapter explains the growth of Black wealth and community in New London and its relationship to anti-migrant sentiment, as demonstrated by the anti-Black

violence of the Red Summer. Chapter 2 also includes a narrative of events of the anti-black violence in New London on May 26 and June 5 1919, which represented the necessity for the politicization that characterized Black aid organizations of the 1920s.

The third chapter explains the final step of the evolution of aid, the professionalization of aid. Professionalization of aid was characterized by roles previously held by community members changing to require backgrounds in academics and social science. Often community members who relied on aid did not have access to these academic and professional opportunities. As a result, “experts” who removed from the community filled positions that controlled aid provision. This chapter uses the work of surveys from Connecticut College and the Urban League to demonstrate the ways in which credentialed professionals used social sciences to create behavioral explanations for poverty. Professionalization limited aid organizations' effectiveness and ousted working-class Black women like Greene from engaging conversations surrounding aid politics.

My conclusion summarizes the efforts of contemporary local aid groups to “undo” the impacts of a behavioral explanation for poverty. Southeastern Connecticut Community Land Trust (SE CT CLT) utilizes a community-based mutual aid model to create and preserve pathways to affordable homeownership in New London. The group recognizes barriers to homeownership throughout New London history and focuses on shared community stewardship over the organization. The work of organizations like SE CT CLT demonstrates the importance of understanding the evolution of aid organizations and questioning what is lost when community-based mutual aid efforts disappear.

This thesis will tell the story of professionalization of aid in the first half of the twentieth century in three parts. The first part was locally-based mutual aid programs run by working-class

Black women to provide for immediate needs. The second part was politicized aid organizations run by a class-diverse Black community to advocate for the expansion of rights and justice. Lastly, a professionalized view of aid dominated by people removed from the immediate effects of poverty in New London focused on understanding the causes of poverty. In addition to laying out the trends of aid organizations, I center the actors in New London's early aid politics as individuals like Elizabeth Jeter Greene, Sadie Dillion Harrison, Benjamin Tanner Johnson, and others played an active role in creating the national trends.

The story of New London aid organizations from 1910 to 1950 demonstrates what is lost when aid politics abandons mutual aid frameworks and community members' perspectives. Professionalization is not always synonymous with more effective aid, as demonstrated by credentialed studies of poverty failure to provide support. Creating barriers to engaging in aid politics fails to recognize the immense asset of community members in recognizing and organizing to fill unmet needs.

Timeline of Events

1887 Harrison born

1890 Greene born

1891 Wessel immigrated to the United States from Ukraine

1892 Chicago School of Sociology established

1909 Wesleyan University stops enrolling women

1910 National Urban League established
 Beginning of the Great Migration in New London
 New London population surpasses 19,600

1911 Connecticut College established

1917 US entry into WWI
 Greene arrives in New London and establishes the War Canteen

1918 End of WWI
 War Canteen reorganized as the Negro Welfare on War Relief (NWWR)

1919 Red Summer anti-Black violence in New London
 Naval Base undergoes massive construction of 81 buildings to support a staff of over 1,400 men
 Shiloh Baptist Church became the largest Black religious organization in the City

1920 New London population surpasses 25,600
 Negro Welfare Councils began to emerge nationwide
 Harrison purchases the Hempstead Cottage and becomes a close organizing partner to Greene.

1922 After Graduating from Harvard Business School Johnson works with Du Bois on a proposal for a bank in Harlem to support Black businesses

1924 NWWR reorganized as the United Negro Welfare Council (UNWC)

1925 New London Employment Bureau established in 1925 reflecting mix use of non-government organizations and private interests

1926 Cobbley begins as a sociology professor at Connecticut College

1927 Harrison testifies to the Connecticut State Legislature to advocate for a anti-discrimination bill which ultimately fails.
 Johnson arrives in New London and establishes the New England Peoples Finance Corporation (NEPFC)

1928 UNWC office moved from the Arthur Building to 39 Tilley Street

- 1929** Wessel publishes *The Ethnic Factors in the Population of New London*,
The UNWC accepts white membership and reorganizes into the United Welfare Fund
W.E.B. Du Bois visits New London to speak to the Welfare Fund
- 1930** *Harrison and Hackley's Guide for Colored Travelers* published
- 1931** Wessel publishes *The Ethnic Factors in the Population of Woonsocket, RI*.
- 1934** NEPFC closes
Wessel becomes a member of the New London County Chapter of the American
Association of Social Workers and National Housing Committee
- 1935** Harrison leaves New London
- 1939** United Welfare Council Closes
Weiss immigrated to the United States
- 1940** New London Chapter the Urban League established
Reverend Garvin advocated for the expansion of employment opportunity and
desegregation of employers like Pfizer and the local telephone companies
Weiss publishes *Sociology, Socialism, and Emigration*
- 1943** Weiss meets Du Bois at Spelman College
- 1944** Weiss arrives at Connecticut College
Weiss and Cobbledick create the Interracial Council of New London
The Urban League publishes *A Study of the Social and Economic Conditions of the
Negro Populations of New London*
No Black health or welfare workers connected to New London social service agencies
- 1945** W.E.B. Du Bois visits the Interracial Council
Weiss Leaves Connecticut College
- 1960** Coast Guard Academy desegregated

Maps to Contextualize the Evolution of Aid and Housing in New London

Map 1

Map 1 provides general contextual information about the places the thesis will discuss. Each point on the map includes a brief description about its history and its connection to the fabric of New London between 1910 and 1950. The map is of New London in 1958 positioned within contemporary New London on Google Earth. I chose the 1958 map, despite it being a few years from the immediate scope of the topic, because it depicts a New London before the later Urban Renewal projects like the destruction of the Winthrop Cove and changes to Huntington Street. Furthermore, the ways in which the roads are laid out matches well to the Sanborne maps used in Maps 2 and 3, lending itself to a cohesive understanding of layout of New London.

How to Access

The map is accessible through clicking on the link, and downloading the kmz file on a computer that has the Google Earth Application already installed.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SH678Bv1p2sqGlnufHmLk6pDXLMB3g2o/view?usp=sharing>

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1910 and 1940

Manuscript census data and Sanborn Fire Insurance maps together demonstrate the ways in which housing conditions declined between 1910 and 1940 (see Maps 2 and 3, and Table 1). These maps depict an area that became a predominantly Black neighborhood between 1940 and 1944.²³ These maps are further discussed in chapter 1.

How to Access

The map should be accessible through clicking on the link, and downloading the pdf file onto a computer. Once viewing the pdf, you can click on each comment bubble which will reveal who lived in a given property. Table 1 provides a color coded key. If the online version is not accessible, Chapter 1 includes an analysis of Maps 1 and 2.

Link to Map 2: New London 1910

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uzYsM07cCGBcP3qb9WHa5-knoi51IzT6/view?usp=sharing>

Link to Map 3: New London 1940

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1v9pOjuu261D070QlvuYmWwCSSKcr4jPZ/view?usp=sharing>

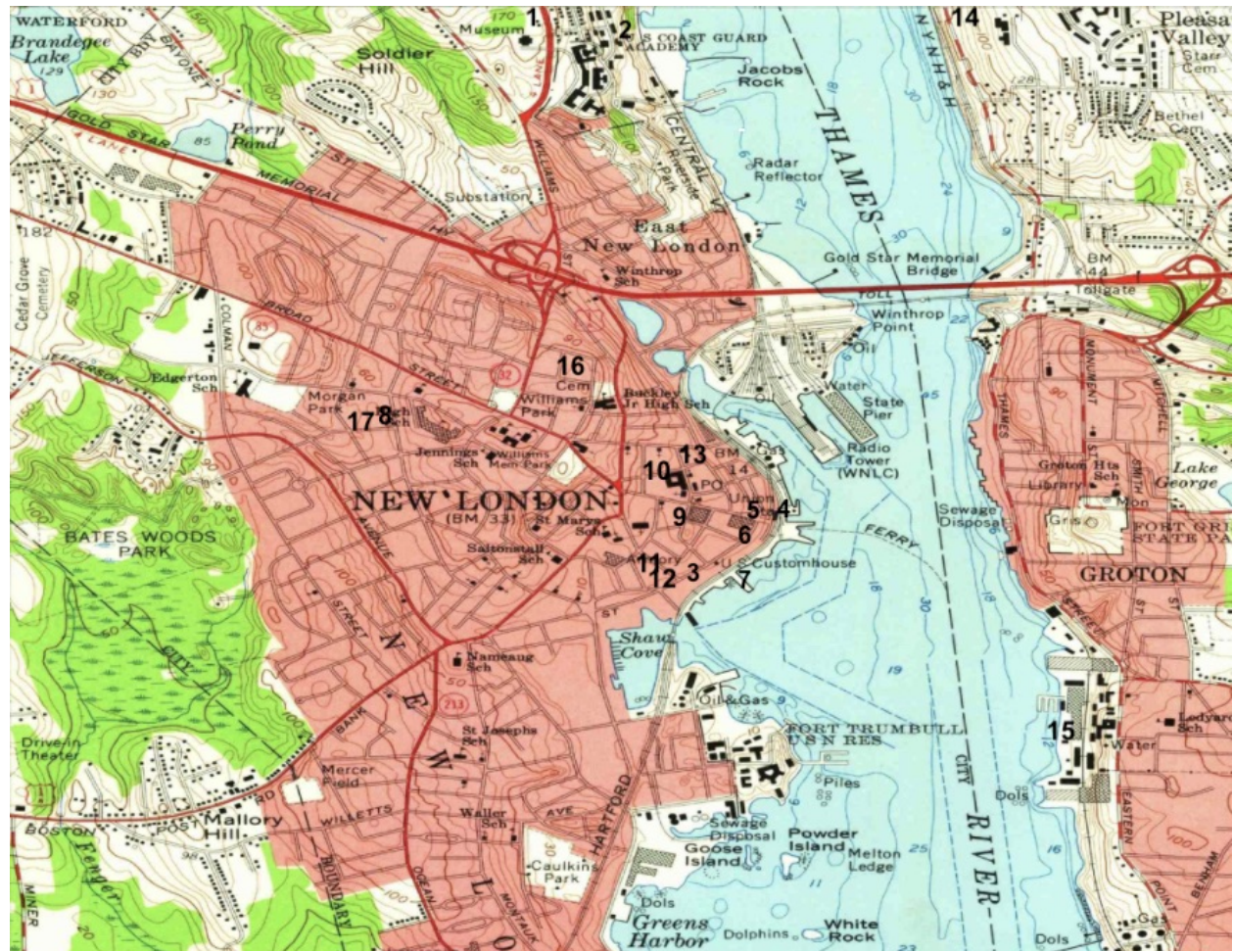
²³ Banner and Kerns, *A Study of the Social and Economic Conditions of the Negro Population of New London, Connecticut*.

Table 1: Key to Color Coded Fire Insurance Sanborn Map

Demographic	Color Code
White Renter from the United States	Light Yellow
White Homeowner from the United States	Light Orange
Immigrant Homeowner	Pink
Immigrant Renter	Darker Orange
Black Migrant Renter	Turquoise
Official Boarding House (not including an informal homeowner with temporary borders)	Red
Church, School, or Cultural Center	Green
Factory or Industrial Plant	Purple

Map 4

Below is an additional map, though not as detailed as Map 1, it provides a visual in the case that the online maps are not accessible while reading.



- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">1 Connecticut College2 U.S. Coast Guard Academy3 Bristol Hotel4 New London Train Station5 Sailors' and Soldiers' Monument6 Fisher Island Wharf7 Steam Boat Dock8 Shiloh Baptist Church9 Arthur Building10 New London YMCA | <ul style="list-style-type: none">12 New London Fire Station13 New London Police Station14 Naval Base New London15 The New London Ship and engine Company (NELSECO)16 Hempstead/Bristol/Walker/Fremont Area17 Hempstead Cottage and Haley's Houses |
|--|---|

Timeline of Events Discussed in Chapter 1

- 1910** Beginning of the Great Migration in New London
New London population surpasses 19,600
- 1917** Beginning of World War I and industrialization in New London
Greene establishes the War Canteen
Mass Increase of Black Southern Migrants in New London
- 1918** End of WWI
War Canteen reorganized as the Negro Welfare on War Relief
- 1919** Shiloh Baptist church became the largest Black religious organization in the City
- 1920** New London population surpasses 25,600
Negro Welfare Councils began to emerge nation wide
- 1924** Negro Welfare on War Relief reorganized as the United Negro Welfare Council

Chapter 1

Racial Justice through Mutual Aid: The Emergence of Black-Led Aid Organizations in a Changing New London

Elizabeth Jeter Greene, a key figure in New London aid organizations and politics throughout the twentieth century, demonstrated the ways in which the Great Migration expanded opportunities for working-class Black women, not only to escape the hardships of the Jim Crow South but also to engage in organizing and political work. Greene represented the motivations of migrants to earn living wages and exercise the freedom to contest the limits of citizenship.

In 1890 near Arlington, Virginia, Elizabeth was born to Emma Baxter, a widowed 21-year-old. By her midteens, Elizabeth and her mother moved to Connecticut as an early part of the mass migration of millions of Black migrants from the Jim Crow South to industrializing Northern cities.²⁴ Like many migrants, Emma and Elizabeth moved with the advice and information provided by familial connections and rumors of economic opportunity.²⁵ They made a home in New London. Emma worked as a cleaner in dining cars, and they lived with Emma's widowed brother-in-law, a Black migrant from North Carolina, who worked as a porter on the New London docks.

By 18, Elizabeth married Samuel Jeter, and together they had a daughter, Gladys. Samuel was also a Black Southern migrant, originally from Tennessee. By 1917, Elizabeth and Gladys lived at 115 Green Street in New London in a shared apartment with another Black woman from Virginia who worked as a cleaner for a private family. Elizabeth worked as a dressmaker from home.²⁶ At this time, outside of her day-to-day income-earning work and taking care of her young daughter, Elizabeth established the War Canteen.

²⁴ "Goulet Family Tree," Ancestry.com, accessed February 23, 2022.

<https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/55981139/person/48004382213/fact>

²⁵ Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration*, 67.

²⁶ "Goulet Family Tree," Ancestry.com.

The War Canteen was a mutual aid organization staffed primarily by Black women to support Black servicemen stationed in New London. Throughout World War I, the segregated military excluded Black servicemen from the federal provisions of goods and services afforded to their white counterparts. The War Canteen filled the gaps, providing quality food, lodging, clothes, laundry services, and access to recreation.²⁷ Elizabeth's mission was not uncommon. In cities home to military bases, women's war efforts often provided support to servicemen with goods and services. However, Elizabeth's vision differed from the traditional image of patriotic white women's charity work. The working-class Black women engaged in political advocacy by providing for the unmet needs of marginalized people. Although she may not have foreseen it at the time, Elizabeth's organization would shape mutual aid projects to combat inequality in New London throughout the twentieth century.

This work was contextualized by the the Great Migration, which reshaped the city's demographics as an influx of Southern Black migrants, many of them poor, fled North to escape violence and economic terror. Between 1910 and 1950, New London's Black, poor, and poor Black populations grew. White New Londoner's anti-migrant sentiments, an intersection of racism and classism, contributed to a discrimination in employment and economic opportunities that transcended the class diversity of the Black community. White institutions applied classism to not only poor migrants, but also to the entire Black community, ascribing poverty to race. The racialization of poverty led to the limiting of economic and employment opportunities for all Black residents. Black New London's limited economic mobility relative to other demographic

²⁷ Baker, "New London Landmarks Memo."; Bland Jr., *A View from the Sixties: the Black Experience in Southeastern Connecticut*.

groups, such as European immigrants, resulted in worsening housing conditions and increasing difficulty in accessing homeownership.

It is in the context of this marginalization that the War Canteen reorganized into the Negro Welfare on War Relief (NWWR) in 1918. This change allowed the organization to become more explicitly focused on combating racial inequality.²⁸ Both the War Canteen and the NWWR embraced ideas of low-barrier support and challenged models of deservingness that excluded marginalized people from accessing aid. Community-based leadership proved important as mostly-white managerial professionals and academic-led groups often perpetuated ideas of racialized poverty. The community-led mutual aid emphasised the awareness of an inherently political message: discriminatory systems in place would not provide for the needs and concerns of marginalized people including Black people, as well as middle-income and low-income people.²⁹ This race and class solidarity as a basis for organization empowered community members to mobilize to support one another, building communal support that transcended migratory status and class. This chapter will explain the rise of mutual aid organizations created by working-class Black women and the context of inequality in which they organized.

Inequality in New London 1910-1920

Elizabeth and her co-organizers committed to advocacy work in the context of the extreme economic instability of the Great Migration. After living in New London and other parts of Connecticut through the early 1920s, Elizabeth and her family lived in Brooklyn where she remarried Isham “Erskin” Greene. Erskin was also a Black Southern migrant, born in Tennessee

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Spade, *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During the Crisis*, 1-8.

and moving north after finishing elementary school.³⁰ Like many working-class Black migrants, the family was forced to follow job availability and information gained from a network of fellow migrants and labor recruitment systems.³¹ By 1924 the family had returned to New London. Erskin worked as a chef and Elizabeth cemented her role as a “civic leader.”³² Greene and her family worked to mitigate the harms of economic inequalities that forced them into migratory statuses.

Employment Inequality

New London’s economic inequality and racialized poverty predated the demographic shifts of the Great Migration. Before the wartime economy reshaped the city’s labor system, Black employment was primarily seasonal and inconsistent. Before 1910, most jobs available to Black men in New London included work as custodians, drivers, and domestic servants. Generally, women worked as domestic servants and in some commercial custodial positions. Connecticut companies located outside of New London, such as Pratt and Whitney, Royal Typewriter, and Hartford Machine Screw reserved higher-paying positions for white laborers. Employers reserved most higher-paying jobs for those with union connections, and unions generally denied membership to Black people.³³ A nativist narrative held by both employers and white laborers argued Southeastern Connecticut “did not need” additional Black labor due to an existing diverse pool of immigrants and rural transplants to New London. This ideology

³⁰ “Goulet Family Tree,” Ancestry.com.

³¹ Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration*.

³² “Goulet Family Tree,” Ancestry.com.

³³ Dwight Bauchmen, “VP Stacey Close outlines a History of The Great Migration,” Southeastern Connecticut University, March 25, 2021.

https://www.easternct.edu/news/_stories-and-releases/2021/03-march/vp-stacey-close-outlines-a-history-of-the-great-migration.html

translated into a significant detriment to Black economic mobility of all classes. Employers favored Indigenous people and non-Black immigrants to Black people when hiring.³⁴

Anti-migrant sentiment in response to the influx of different groups within the general population sustained existing inequalities.

By 1917 and the onset of World War I, migration to New London increased as new employment opportunities opened. White laborers who had previously held the positions left to serve abroad. This laboring class included Polish, Lithuanian, and Czech immigrants and their descendants.³⁵ These newly opened employment opportunities offered income-earning positions for poor and working-class Black populations not available in the South, spurring significant population growth as demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2: New London County Population Census Data

Year	New London Population Total	New London County Population	Total Black Population in New London County Population
1900	17,548	82,785	5-20 years old: 494 18-40 years old: 349
1910	19,659	91,253	1,431
1920	25,688	104,611	1,425
1930	29,688	118,966	1,586
1940	30,456	125,224	1,698

Source: *US Decennial Census 1900-1940*³⁶

³⁴ Baker, "New London Landmarks Memo."

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ The census data did not capture the full impact of the population growth of New London between 1900 and 1940 because of the seasonal fluctuations in labor and mini waves of migrations that resulted in people living in a given area for short bursts of time.

David Hendricks and Amy Patterson. "The 1930 Census in Perspective." *National Archive Prologue magazine*. Summer 2002. <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2002/summer/1930-census-perspective.html>; US Decennial Census, New London County by Race 1900, Social Explorer.

As white immigrant laborers left New London to serve in Europe, companies hired a new segregated workforce. In 1910, there was a Black population of 15,174 in Connecticut, with 10,673 living in cities like New London. By 1920, this number grew to 21,046, an increase of nearly 40% in a decade, with a population of 16,655 living in cities.³⁷ Working-class Black Southerners created grassroots networks to support migration into Northern cities, like New London, in the hopes of finding employment, better housing, and safety from the violence of the Jim Crow South.³⁸

The NWWR, previously the War Canteen, collaborated with employers like the Naval Base to place newly migrated Black Southerners in vacant positions. However, owners and managers often objected to intermixing races. For example, the Naval Base separated living quarters by race.³⁹ The U.S. Coast Guard employed Black men but barred their admission to the Coast Guard Academy until the 1960s, despite a history of Black service in the Revenue Cutters, which predated the Coast Guard.⁴⁰ Military employers denied Black servicemen the freedoms of employment, safety, and equal conditions. The status of Black employment reflects the importance and challenges faced by the aid organizations as they sought to support Black economic mobility.

<https://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/Census1900/R13041655>; US Decennial Census, “New London County by Race 1910,” Social Explorer, accessed February 8, 2022.

<https://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/Census1910/R13042142>; US Decennial Census, “New London County by Race 1920,” Social Explorer, accessed February 8, 2022.

<https://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/Census1920/R13042144>; US Decennial Census, “New London County by Race 1930,” Social Explorer, accessed February 8, 2022.

<https://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/Census1930/R13042145>; US Decennial Census, “New London County by Race 1940,” Social Explorer, accessed February 8, 2022.

<https://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/C1940CompDS/R13042147>

³⁷ Close, “Black Southern Migration and the Transformation of Connecticut, 1917-1941,” 195.

³⁸ Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration*, 67.

³⁹ Voogd, *Race Riots and Resistance: The Red Summer of 1919*, 95-97.

⁴⁰ Close, “Black Southern Migration and the Transformation of Connecticut, 1917-1941,” 245.

Housing Inequality

Lack of economic opportunity forced Black residents into lower-cost housing, resulting in residential segregation. Communities became more segregated as the population of the poor migrants in New London increased. The residential segregation resulted not from a formally enforced code. Segregation grew out of a lack of economic opportunity that pushed people into cheaper, overcrowded areas.⁴¹ Many poor and working-class people utilized boarding houses as residents or owners. Between 1900 and 1920, many Black families advertised boarding houses to make homeownership feasible, offering rooms in their homes for rent to defray the cost of living.⁴² New London's racial segregation from 1910 to 1950 looked different than the racialized neighborhoods associated with segregation in other moments in history. Race was not the sole means used to segregate people. Class and race became intertwined in shaping who was subjected to declining housing quality. These forces of racial segregation pushed together a class-diverse population into a small community.

New London's rapid population growth created a housing shortage and further strained already weak infrastructure overtime.⁴³ Manuscript census data and Sanborn maps together demonstrate the ways in which housing conditions declined between 1910 and 1940 (see Maps 5 and 6, and Table 3). These maps depict an area that became a predominantly Black neighborhood between 1940 and 1944.⁴⁴ The Urban League in the 1940s studied this area of New London because of its history as a poverty-stricken Black neighborhood. Occupation segregation and general limitation on economic opportunity resulted in the largest Black community orienting itself in an area whose general qualities declined overtime. Maps 5 and 6 demonstrate the ways

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² US Manuscript Census, "New London Enumeration districts 258 and 262 (1910)."

⁴³ Connecticut Fair Housing Center, "Discrimination, Urban Renewal, and New London's Lost Neighborhood."

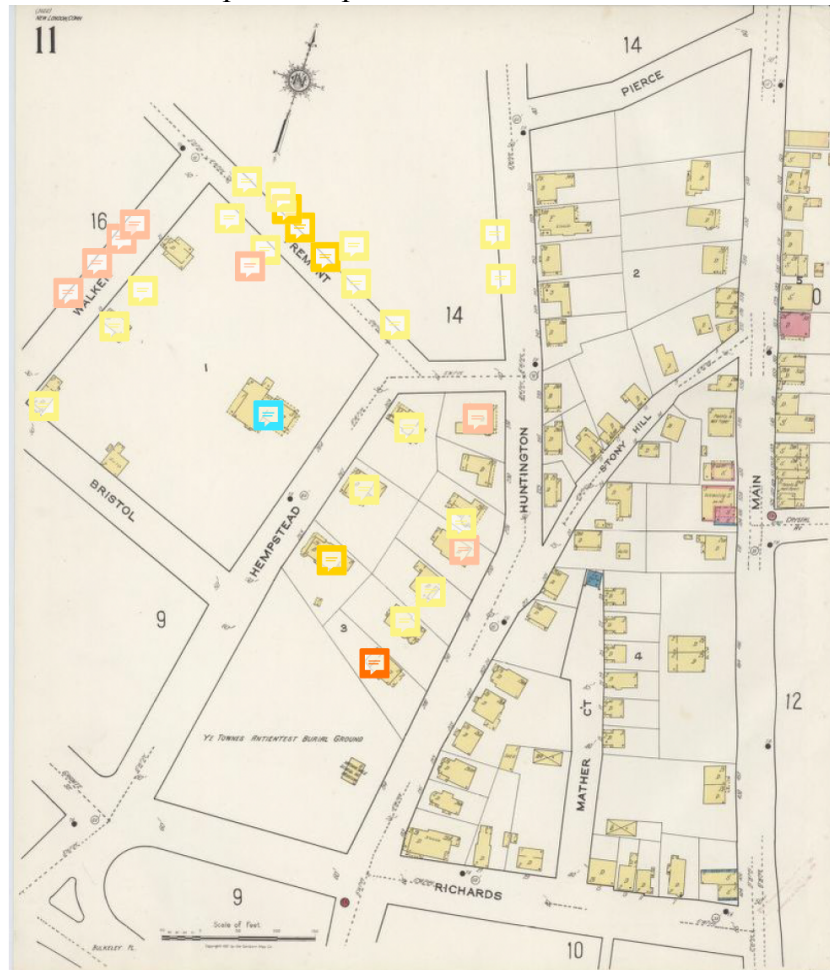
⁴⁴ Banner and Kerns, *A Study of the Social and Economic Conditions of the Negro Population of New London, Connecticut*.

in which the area's conditions declined and became a space for the racialization of poverty between 1920 and 1940, shortly before it became home to a Black community.

Table 3: Key to Color Coded Maps 5 and 6

Demographic	Color Code
White Renter from the United States	Light Yellow
White Homeowner from the United States	Light Orange
Immigrant Homeowner	Pink
Immigrant Renter	Darker Orange
Black Migrant Renter	Turquoise
Official Boarding House (not including an informal homeowner with temporary borders)	Red
Church, School, or Cultural Center	Green
Factory or Industrial Plant	Purple

Map 5: Hempstead Street 1910



Source: *US Census and Sanborn Fire Insurance Map provided by Library of Congress* ⁴⁵

In 1910, before the Great Migration began to affect New London, upper Hempstead, Bristol, Fremont, and Walker Street housing conditions generally resembled other neighborhoods throughout New London. In 1910 the area was primarily residential and mixed-income, with no factories or industry. Occupations of residents varied. The census lists wage-earning workers like laborers and salary-earning employees like teachers, clerks, and doctors living among one

⁴⁵ In maps 5 and 6, I chose not to include the use and ownership of all buildings because they are generally a continuation of the highlighted pattern.

US Manuscript Census. "New London Enumeration districts 258 and 262 (1910)."; "Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from New London, New London County, Connecticut," Sanborn Map Company 1921, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division. https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn01152_007/.

another. The area was a mix of single-family and multifamily homes. Multifamily homes often included the owners, who rented out other apartments within the building. The majority of residents were white, American-born renters living in multifamily homes. However, there was still some diversity in ethnicity and citizenship status. The spread out buildings consisted of a density of residents per-building relative to the 1940s.

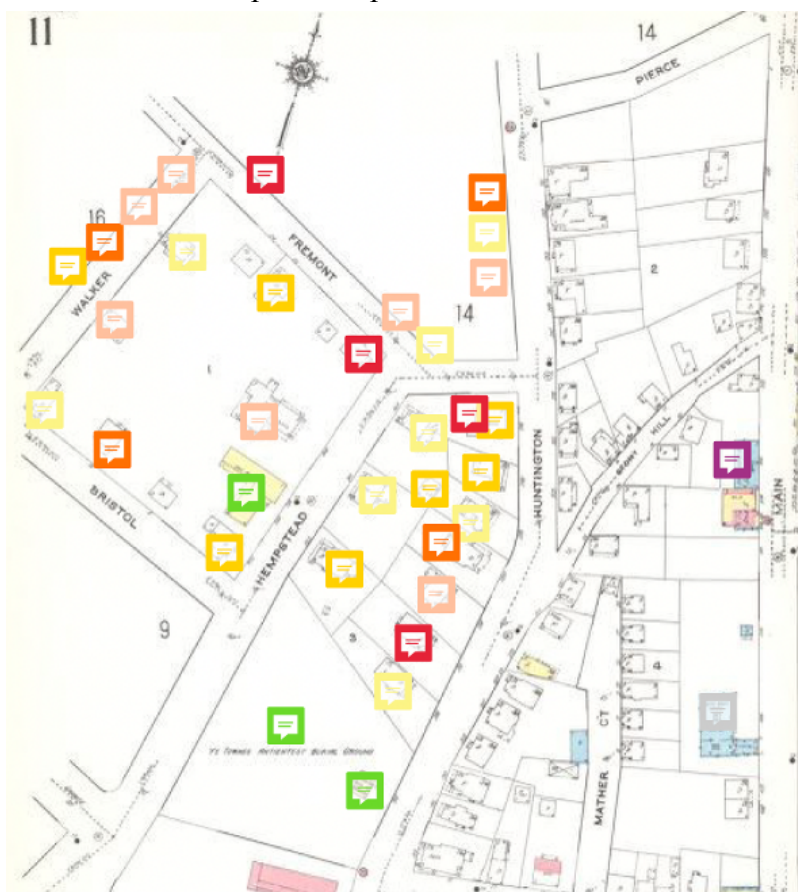
The description of residents living in this area demonstrates class and ethnic diversity. For example, a white widow from Connecticut owned a house at 255 Hempstead Street. She was unemployed and had several young children and one servant, a woman from Ireland. Neighboring, 269 Hempstead Street consisted of two households and seven residents. A white widow rented the first apartment with her young daughter and two adult sons, a doctor, and a real estate agent. The second apartment was home to a wealthy, white extended family from Connecticut that owned the building. 269 Hempstead street demonstrates class diversity present within the buildings themselves.

Across the street from the renters at 269 Hempstead Street, a Black migrant couple from Florida and North Carolina rented a building. However, in the census, the couple is not listed as head and wife like their white neighbors, but rather as “Head servant” and “servant.” The census lists their occupations as cook and housekeeper for a white family that lived on the same block. The house behind the Hempstead Street family, 206 Huntington Street, was owned by a wealthy Irish family. Families of varying sizes and backgrounds lived in the same area and enjoyed the same public streetscape.

On Walker street, one block from Hempstead street, there was a cluster of renters in multi-family homes. Many of the apartment buildings were mixed in immigration status and ethnicity. However, residents in this area mostly worked as laborers. For example, 24 Walker

street was home to 2 households and 12 residents. The first apartment was rented by a family from Russia and the father was employed as a carpenter. The second apartment was rented by a family from Connecticut. The father was employed as a helper at the shipyard. In this area the buildings were closer together than they were on other streets, a pattern we see pervade through the rest of the neighborhood in the following decades.

Map 6: Hempstead Street 1940



Source: *US Census and Sanborn Fire Insurance Map provided by Library of Congress*⁴⁶

⁴⁶ US Manuscript Census, “New London enumeration districts 6-40 and 6-44 (1940),” Ancestry.com, accessed July 25, 2021.

<https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2442/images/m-t0627-00524-00191?ssrc=&acklabel=Return>; “Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from New London, New London County, Connecticut,” Sanborn Map Company, October 1951. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division. https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn01152_008/

By 1940, the area was no longer solely residential. The center of the community consisted of a day nursery, laundry, and other services with storefronts including a sheet metal factory. The residents were less mixed-income than they had been 30 years prior. What had previously been occupied by a mix of wage and salaried people became more monolithic in class status. In 1920, many families had means of support other than income, like inheritance or generational wealth. By 1940 almost no families in the community had “received more than \$50 or more from money wages or salary.” The incomes ranged between \$400-\$1,200, with few outliers. The neighborhood mostly consisted of people with working-class and labor-intensive jobs, rather than the wealth of the past. As a result of fewer wealthy residents, homeownership declined. Many rented homes were multi-family and consisted of people who may have not operated a formal boarding house but housed 1 to 3 boarders. Most community residents were renters, the property owners often did not live in the apartment buildings as they had in 1920.

In 1920 property owners lived in the building and rented whole apartments to other families. By 1940, renters and property owners housed boarders in single rooms of shared living spaces. Several boarding houses operated in the outlined area. Boarders were generally single sexed and included single men who worked as laborers or women working office jobs. Boarding houses and multi-family homes offered a solution to the difficulty of obtaining homeownership. At 25 Fremont Street, a white widow from Rhode Island rented and operated a boarding house valued at \$40. The lodgers consisted of seven women from New England who worked as teachers, librarians, and clerks. Her neighboring apartments were valued between \$26-\$50, while neighboring homes were valued between \$2,000-4,000, with one outlier valued at \$5,000. Unlike the early 1900s, primarily immigrants resided in the area, and there were fewer white

Connecticut residents. As a result of the apartment-style living and demand for increased housing, more buildings were being constructed tightly together.

By 1940, New London consisted of fewer people from Connecticut. Most residents living in the area had moved to New London less than 10 years prior. In addition to Black migrants, many white migrants from rural parts of the East Coast moved to the New London urban center for employment. Homeowners in this area consisted of people new to the community who had moved to New London from places like Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, New York, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Map 6 demonstrates the way in which homeownership decreased for both immigrant and American-born residents.

Maps 5 and 6 demonstrate declining conditions between 1920 and 1940; increased density, less homeownership, and less wealth. Between 1940 and 1944, lack of economic opportunity for Black people (including new migrants) and disinvestment in the community of upper Hempstead, Bristol, Fremont, and Walker Streets led to the area becoming the primary Black community of New London.⁴⁷ The changes occurring between 1920 and 1940 exemplify the ways in which class segregation pre-dated racial segregation. Racialized poverty paralleled the growth surrounding the professionalization of aid organizations.

⁴⁷ Disinvestment was the pattern of housing markets available to immigrant and migrant people failing to reflect the middle-class prosperity of wealthier areas. The lack of private interests and federal programs to support homeownership in these areas led to a narrative that Black communities were inferior and unfit for homeownership. This narrative justified further segregation and other practices to protect white property value.

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2019), 20; Banner and Kerns, *A Study of the Social and Economic Conditions of the Negro Population of New London, Connecticut*.

Failure of Existing Aid to Recognize Inequality

New London's Black mutual aid tradition emerged in this context of increasing class segregation. White secular aid groups failed to meet the needs of these new migrants. The largest secular aid group of the early twentieth century was the Associated Charities of New London Incorporated. The group was directed by white women who separated those who supported the organization and those who received aid. Although they may not have been formally segregated, their advertisements and pamphlets made no note of serving aid recipients of color despite the stark increase in poor Black residents during their time of operation. Associated Charities consisted of several smaller women's groups including a daycare center, a nurses' station, a needlework guild, United Workers groups that help connect unemployed poor to laboring, and the Louis Pennies society which fundraised for needy families. Their annual reports from 1910 to 1916 ignored the racial or ethnic segregation.⁴⁸ In particular, they neglected the way in which the conditions facing long-time Black residents and immigrant communities shaped the poverty in New London. White-run aid groups failed to discuss the harms of structural barriers to impoverished marginalized people because it was not seen as a causal factor of poverty. Colorblindness acted as a means to preserving white wealth, as Associated Charities failed to address systemic causes of poverty. The War Canteen and the NWWR emerged to fill the gap left by Associated Charities' failure to address the problems faced by New London's Black residents.

⁴⁸ Associated Charities of New London Incorporated, "Annual Report For the Year Ending in 1914," New London County Historical Society.

Image 1: Cartoon featured in the New London Associated Charities 1915 Annual Report



Source: *The New London Historical Society*⁴⁹

This aversion to “alms” is demonstrated by *Image 1* from the first page of the Associated Charities’ 1915 annual report.⁵⁰ The cartoon emphasizes the ways in which Associated Charities,

⁴⁹ Associated Charities of New London Incorporated, “Annual Report For the Year Ending in 1915,” New London County Historical Society.

⁵⁰ The term “alms” had a negative connotation in twentieth-century aid politics. Organizations like Associated Charities and other organizations committed to uplift politics, like the Urban League, thought that material goods or money donated as charity to people living in poverty encouraged complacency. These organizations believed recipients must meet a standard of deservingness and were committed to the value of “work” as both an economic and social force

based their aid framework around the standards of deservingness. The first panel of the cartoon depicts a suited man with a top hat labeled “individual charity” lowering a basket of food to a mass of outstretched hands labeled “poverty.” Below printed is: “HELPING THE POOR IN THEIR POVERTY.” In the second panel of the graphic, the suited man labeled associated charities is giving the needy masses a ladder labeled “organized effort” which shows the path to success written five rungs: 1) “Relief” from deprivation, 2) “Work,” 3) “Health,” 4) “Education,” 5) “Reciprocity.” The two-image graphic emphasizes the ways in which those engaged in aid saw themselves as separate from those they served. Due to the separation of those providing aid through charity and those accepting, administrators of the associated charities held an ideology of moral obligation to go beyond simply meeting the needs of the impoverished to change the behaviors they deemed as causal to poverty. This organization of aid provision sustains the notion that poverty is a result of behavior rather than structural inequality. New London’s poverty between 1910 and 1920 was caused by an intersection of racism and classism and the denial of economic and housing opportunity. Associated Charities failed to address the true causes, while mutual aid groups directly challenged this tradition of hierarchy, by empowering marginalized communities to organize amongst themselves.

of American life. There was a belief that alms without work or employment as a measure of deservingness would further encourage behavior that resulted in poverty.

Reed, *Not Alms But Opportunity: The Urban League and the Politics of Racial Uplift 1910-1950*, 109.

Conditions Favoring Growth of Aid Organizations

The Growth of the Baptist Church

In the context of groups like Associated Charities failing to address an influx of Southern migrants, alternative institutions embraced migrants which brought new diversity in class, experiences, and politics to established groups. The Black Baptist Church was not only a function of ministry or place to privately exercise religion it also became a social space for discussion of public concern. Between 1917 and 1919 New London's Baptist denomination membership surpassed that of any other denominations, as Shiloh Baptist Church became the largest Black religious organization in the city. A large proportion of Black migrants in New London came from Virginia and Baptists made up 80% of Virginia's Black Residents. As Virginians and other migrants moved North they brought with them the tradition and political convictions associated with worshiping in independent Black churches and plantation praise houses. Shiloh's first deacons and Pastor Thomas L. Crocker were both originally from Virginia.⁵¹

Southern migrants brought with them a tradition of expectation of independent Black churches which combined spiritual uplift with racial self-reliance that was not possible in churches with white leadership. This emphasis on civil rights in Southern churches is emblematic of a larger history of racism and the failure of Reconstruction. The church's autonomy and financial strength made it the most logical institution for the pursuit of racial self-help as people turned increasingly inward as they struggled without the aid or protection of the federal government and sought to maintain family and community cohesiveness. They looked within communities to provide education, provide aid, facilitate economic development, and address

⁵¹ Laura Natusch, "Shiloh Baptist Church," Visit New London: New London's Black Heritage Trail, 2021. <https://visitnewlondon.org/black-heritage-trail/shiloh-baptist-church/>

political concerns, tapping their greatest strength from the tradition of churches.⁵² The Great Migration brought these ideologies to New London's Black institutions.

Through the growth of a congregation drawn from a new diverse community, Shiloh began to establish a community presence beyond religious services. The Black church opened to both secular and religious groups in the community in the context of segregationist practices which denied Black residents access to public spaces like restaurants and the workplace. Shiloh Baptist came to signify a public space for the community to utilize. Between 1880 and 1920, the public arm of the Baptist church served as one of the most effective ways for Black communities to organize and challenge structures of oppression.⁵³ Linwood Bland Jr., a prominent New London civil rights activist who migrated to New London as a child in 1935 and lived in the Hempstead Cottage, explains how he relied on Shiloh Baptist as a community center:⁵⁴

We walked right out of our church in North Carolina, right into Shiloh Baptist Church. We were in attendance at Shiloh every Sunday. And we attended summer school at the church, also. The summer events were made up of games and other recreational activities, plus refresher school subjects. The school subjects were various, but, as a rule, the summer would almost invariably end with a spelling bee.⁵⁵

Restricted and over-policed in other spaces, the church became a space for marginalized people to practice politics and meet unmet needs. In the 1930s, Shiloh's leadership highlighted ideas of racial uplift with an annual Black History week. In the 1940s Reverend Albert A. Garvin, Sr., vocally advocated for the expansion of

⁵² Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in The Black Baptist Church 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 5.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Schuch, "73 Hempstead Street."

⁵⁵ Bland, *A View from the Sixties: the Black Experience in Southeastern Connecticut*, 25.

employment opportunities and desegregation of employers like Pfizer and the local telephone companies so that they may supply non-white people with adequate jobs. Revered Garvin became the first Black candidate for elected office.⁵⁶ Garvin and Bland both demonstrate Shiloh meeting unmet needs of the community through the provisioning of services and political advocacy.

Despite the ways in which men monopolized positions of authority within the church, women organized the large number of social welfare services and the fundraising activities that sustained churches. Nationally, local fundraising projects led to the construction of entire churches and schools, providing food and clothes for the poor, establishing assisted living facilities and orphanages, and the creation of other welfare services. Beyond immediate production of services, women organizing for the church also contested racist ideology and institutions through advocacy. Black women organized through Baptist churches against anti-lynching laws, voting rights (both Black and women's), equal employment, and educational opportunities.⁵⁷ Women simultaneously advocated for provisioning for meeting the community's needs, and more broadly demanding expansion of citizenship.

Identity and Creating Networks of Care

Black women's work is largely unrecorded, failing to capture the representative role of women as the majority Baptist church members. The Black Church sought to provide men esteemed positions to emphasize Black uplift, while simultaneously offering women a separate and unequal status. However, women challenged these roles through

⁵⁶ Natusch, "Shiloh Baptist Church."

⁵⁷ Higgenbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in The Black Baptist Church 1880-1920*.

determining the gendered division of labor to include advocacy and organizing work.⁵⁸ Women like Greene created networks of care outside of male-dominated institutions. Black women functioned within the gender hierarchy of the Church to contest gender norms, and advocate for intersectionality on issues related to race, class, and gender. Many Black women's working in organizing and aid work related to the church worked specifically on projects related to fundraising, teaching in Sabbath schools, ministering to the sick, and teaching mothers' training schools.⁵⁹ The Black church offered a forum to engage in public discourse on the subordination of women. Secular efforts also utilized aid organizations to carve out a space for women to empower themselves and their communities as exemplified by Greene's leadership in the NWWR and the War Canteen.

Women's work within the church set a precedent that fostered the political mobilization of women. Fannie Barrier Williams, the founder of National Association of Colored Women (NACW), explained in a speech in 1900:

The training which first enabled colored women to organize and successfully carry on club work was originally obtained in church work. These churches have been and still are the great preparatory schools in which the primary lessons of social order, mutual truthfulness and united effort have been taught... The meaning of unity of effort for the common good, the development of social sympathies grew into women's consciousness through privileges of church work.⁶⁰

Mutual aid was influenced by the work of the women in the Baptist Church. Yet, the Church's hierarchical structure, different from that of mutual aid, perpetuated class tensions and systems of deservingness. Uneducated or unassimilated Black migrants faced punitive requirements for aid as they challenged ideas of middle-class proprietary or threatened to stall a

⁵⁸ Ibid, 4.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 18.

⁶⁰ Quoted in: Higgenbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in The Black Baptist Church 1880-1920*.

politics of racial uplift.⁶¹ Conversely, organizations like the Canteen, NWWR, and UNWC emphasized aid without hierarchy, providing for a community without standards of deservingness. There was some tension between the Church and the newly established aid groups, a survey in 1944 explains:

“Instead of cooperating with the Church, the [aid organization] was taking our youth and training them away from the church. No organization can succeed unless it works hand in hand with the colored ministers.”⁶²

Leaders of Baptist women’s committees mostly belonged to an emergent class of educated women elite consisting of administrators, journalists, teachers, and wives of ministers.⁶³ Baptist aid was more progressive than New London’s white Associated Charities group which largely consisted of economic elite wives, but remained less equitable than the NWWR. The Black mutual aid organizations run by working-class women like Greene consisted of those who depended upon aid. Those who accepted support were expected to help give back by being involved in the organization, making it equitable and sustainable.⁶⁴ If organizations are run by the people that depend on them they are run efficiently and effectively, empowering communities. When organizations are run hierarchically they perpetuate discriminatory practices which fail to recognize racism and classism at the root of issues that cause wealth inequality forcing marginalized people to seek aid.

The creation of the War Canteen and the NWWR established a formal mutual aid framework that empowered all parts of New London’s Black community, especially women, and poor or working-class migrants. After the war, the group reorganized to better accommodate the

⁶¹ Ibid, 17.

⁶² Banner and Kerns, *A Study of the Social and Economic Conditions of the Negro Population of New London, Connecticut*.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Baker, “New London Landmarks Memo.”

community's changing needs, but the emphasis on community leadership and mutual aid continued. The United Negro Welfare Council (UNWC) was established in 1924, adopting a more outwardly politicized messaging as a new generation of community members utilized Greene's framework to continue advocating for better housing and community conditions, as well as a general expansion of citizenship. Sadie Harrison continued the work of Elizabeth Jeter Greene as the development of aid networks responded to the changing conditions of the city in the post-war era.

Timeline of Events Discussed in Chapter 2**1919** Red Summer

Naval Base undergoes massive construction of 81 buildings to support a staff of over 1,400 men

1920 Harrison purchases the Hempstead Cottage and becomes a close organizing partner to Elizabeth Jeter Greene, working as a secretary under Greene.

1922 After Graduating from Harvard Business School Johnson works with Du Bois on a proposal for a bank in Harlem to support Black businesses

1924 Negro Welfare on War Relief reorganized as the United Negro Welfare Council (UNWC)

1925 New London Employment Bureau established

1927 Sadie Dillion Harrison testifies in front of the Connecticut State Legislature to advocate for a anti-discrimination bill ultimately fails
Johnson arrives in New London and establishes the New England Peoples Finance Corporation (NEPFC)

1928 UNWC office moved from the Arthur Building to 39 Tilley Street

1929 UNWC reorganized as the United Welfare Council and began offering membership to white people

1935 Harrison left the New London

Chapter 2 **Organizing in Response to Violence**

On February 18th, 1927, nearly 100 Black residents from industrial cities like New London, New Haven, and Old Saybrook gathered to testify in front of the Judiciary Committee of the State Legislature to advocate for a bill to prohibit discrimination in places of public accommodation. The speakers explained discrimination had increased since the end of the war and throughout the 1920s, partially due to anti-migrant sentiment against working-class and poor Black populations. Sadie Dillion Harrison of New London's United Negro Welfare Council (UNWC) was among the speakers. As reported in the *Hartford Courant*, Harrison spoke on behalf of the group:

“As American citizens the negroes are entitled to the protections granted in the bill, although she considered it pathetic that any group of citizens should have to plead against discrimination.”⁶⁵

Harrison advocated for policy changes while recognizing the very notion of Black activists having to advocate against discrimination perpetuated was exhausting for activists and organizers. Ultimately, the failure of the state legislature to pass the bill barring racial discrimination reflected the necessity of localized mutual aid organizations collectively politicizing to meet the unmet needs of their communities.⁶⁶

This chapter will demonstrate the politicization of New London's Black-led aid organizations as the Negro Welfare War Relief (NWWR) became the United Negro Welfare Council (UNWC). Politicization represented a moment in which aid organizations expanded beyond meeting immediate needs and sought to advocate politically for safety and access to resources. An influx of Black migrants to New London created growing Black class diversity

⁶⁵ “Negroes Ask for Removal of Racial Bans,” *Hartford Courant*, February 19, 1927. Newspapers.com. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/369418985/?terms=%22Negroes%20Ask%20for%20Removal%20of%20Racial%20Bans%22&match=1>

⁶⁶ Ibid.

offering new opportunities for the community.⁶⁷ Simultaneously, a white backlash to the new opportunities for the Black community came in the form of physical violence and further segregation. Contextualized by the changing urban landscape, the UNWC in the early 1920s reflected a moment between the working-class-led mutual aid organizations of World War I and the professionalization aid of the 1930s.

Growth of Class Diversity

As discussed in chapter 1, a wartime expansion of wage-labor employment opportunities caused a boom of economic activity and a newfound vitality in the New London area. By 1919, The United States Navy constructed 81 buildings to support the staff of 1,400 men and 20 submarines.⁶⁸ The construction demonstrated the importance of industry during wartime. Even in the context of segregation, the new availability of wage-labor jobs improved conditions of Black life in New London. Wartime expansion and new hiring practices allowed for a growing Black middle class in New London. In addition to migrants who took positions in labor-intensive work, there was also a growth of Black Businesses and social circles. Sadie Dillion Harrison and her family reflected this growth and its impact politicizing aid organizations.

Sadie Dillion Harrison

Sadie Dillon Harrison was born in 1887 to a family deeply rooted in Black politics and advocacy circles. Her mother, Halle E. Tanner Dillon Johnson, was the first female licensed physician in Alabama. She was recruited from Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania and offered a position by Booker T. Washington at the newly established Tuskegee Institute. In her

⁶⁷ Reed, *Not Alms But Opportunity: The Urban League and the Politics of Racial Uplift, 1910-1950*.

⁶⁸“African Americans in the U.S. Coast Guard,” United States Coast Guard Historian’s Office, last modified 2021. <https://www.history.uscg.mil/Browse-by-Topic/Notable-People/Minorities/African-Americans/>

time at the Tuskegee Institute, she cared for students, faculty, and staff, established a training school for nurses, and created a local dispensary to serve the needs of local residents.⁶⁹ In addition to her mother's successes, Sadie's maternal uncle, Henry Osawa Tanner was a famed expatriate painter in the Harlem Renaissance. Her maternal grandfather, Benjamin Tucker Tanner was a well-known clergyman in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He published *The Christian Recorder*, an early African American Newspaper.⁷⁰ Sadie's upbringing was inextricably linked to broader national Black politics.

A family photo of the Tanner family in 1888 (Image 1), when Sadie was only a year old, symbolizes their class status. It is not enough to diminish all family photography of the late 19th century to a practice of just wealthy families, but rather recognize the ways in which working-class and marginalized people often obtained portraits not to imitate bourgeois but to show pride in their family member's accomplishments.⁷¹ A simplistic narrative of the Great Migration often remembers migrants as part of a monolith of shared experiences, excluding the memory of a Black middle class and Black upper class. Sadie Dillion Harrison's life demonstrates how class diversity was an integral part of the Great Migration's effect on New London.

⁶⁹ "Dr. Halle Tanner Dillon Johnson," Changing the Face of Medicine, last modified June 3, 2015. <https://cfmedicine.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/>

⁷⁰ Schuch, "Hempstead Street."

⁷¹ Nicole Hudgins, "A Historical Approach to Family Photography: Class and Individuality in Manchester and Lille, 1850-1914," *Journal of Social History* 43, no.1 (Spring 2010): 559-586. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20685425?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

Image 1: Tanner Family 1888



Right to Left: (First Row) unknown, Sadie Dillion, Halle Tanner Johnson, Benjamin Tucker Tanner, Sarah Elizabeth Miller, Bertha Tanner, unknown. (Second Row) Henry Ossawa Tanner, unknown, Isabella Tanner
*Source: Ancestry.com*⁷²

In 1913, Sadie married Scott Charles Harrison in New Jersey. The couple and their young daughter lived in Indiana until he died.⁷³ She arrived in New London in 1920, where she became a close organizing partner to Elizabeth Jeter Greene, the President and Founder of the War Canteen. Harrison initially served as an agent for the UNWC, then secretary under Greene until

⁷² "Tanner Family Tree," Ancestry.com, accessed February 23, 2022.

<https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/171658034/person/342232315229/stor>

⁷³ Ibid.

she ultimately became the president of UNWC.⁷⁴ Harrison's network of family and colleagues demonstrates the class diversity of the politically active New London residents of the 1920s.

Furthermore, Harrison's status as a homeowner exemplified the class diversity of New London's Black population. Manuscript census data from 1910 to 1940 of upper Hempstead Street show no other single Black woman homeowners. Harrison's home at 73 Hempstead, known as the Hempstead cottage, was first sold to Black buyers by abolitionist Savillion Haley in the 1840s in an effort to provide pathways to homeownership for free Black people. Harrison purchased the house from the Bush family whose grandparents had purchased the home from Haley.⁷⁵ For the Hempstead Cottage to be available for Harrison to purchase, it had to begin by being purposefully created for free Black people in the 1840s, 80 years before Harrison's purchase, and be preserved through generations of Black homeownership.

The presence of an increasing Black population and Black mobility, symbolized by successes like homeownership, created racial tensions in Northern cities. These tensions culminated in the violence of the Red Summer of 1919. Discussion surrounding the context of the Red Summer frames Black responses in defending themselves from white assaults as a challenge to respectability. However, resistance also embodies the ways in which Black politics was reframing to emphasize the necessity for social and political change.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Baker, "New London Landmarks Memo."

⁷⁵ Schuch, "Hempstead Street."

⁷⁶ Jonathan S. Coit, "Our Changed Attitude': Armed Defense and the New Negro in the 1919 Chicago Race Riot," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 11, no. 2 (April 2012), 224-256.
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-the-gilded-age-and-progressive-era/article/our-changed-attitude-armed-defense-and-the-new-negro-in-the-1919-chicago-race-riot1/ABFAA302ABCC4ABBB01A45C1891F96A7>

Red Summer in New London: White Supremacist Response to the Black Mobility

White mobs attacked Black people and symbols of Black prosperity in cities across the country throughout the Red Summer of 1919, using violence to buttress racial order in the changing post-war world. Race riots occurred in 26 cities throughout the Red Summer. New London was one of 5 locations involving the military as agents and targets.⁷⁷ Racial tensions rose to levels not seen since Reconstruction, even in communities where no Black murders resulted as a direct consequence of white mobs.⁷⁸ The violence was a direct response to Black mobility that emerged in New London during World War I. Upon the end of the war, Black mobility was met with thousands of white men ending their deployment abroad and returning home. In the case of New London, many men who had previously served abroad returned stateside to be stationed or employed by the Naval Submarine Base which became a major employer of Black men during the war.⁷⁹ Documentation of the violence affirmed an association between criminality, race, and poverty, furthering an already present anti-migrant sentiment. In addition to the visible anti-migrant and racist violence on the streets throughout the Red Summer, the same ideas influenced the response of aid organizations. This need to combat anti-migrant and racist notions necessitated groups' politicization.

The military subculture of New London provided a complex environment for the Red Summer. Black servicemen had achieved successes and experienced freedoms overseas during the war, returning stateside with new definitions and demands for freedom in their own community. In military cities like New London, the appearance of uniformed Black men

⁷⁷ Voogd, *Race Riots and Resistance: The Red Summer of 1919*, 95.

⁷⁸ Cameron McWhirter, *Red Summer: The Summer of 1919 and the Awakening of Black America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company 2011), 53.

⁷⁹ Voogd, *Race Riots and Resistance: The Red Summer of 1919*, 95-97.

threatened White civilians and servicemen. White anxiety suggested uniformed Black men minimized the prestige of white military status. As a result, white entitlement involved reducing any temporarily esteemed status of their Black compatriots to restore the dynamic of military culture to its pre-war marginality.⁸⁰ In the years following the end of the war, the government observed the performance and role of Black troops in communities to determine the future racial composition of the military. In the post-war era, the discourse surrounding civil rights claims and uplift politics forced Black men into the role of targets of violence, upholders of the law, and activists for change. Conversely, white soldiers' positions of power allowed them to incite riots and stop them.⁸¹ Furthermore, it is also important to understand how Black communities flourished in the concessions made by white entitlement allowing Black access to socio-economic mobility during World War I. Mobility through accumulation of wealth and the newly established businesses and organizations explained in chapter 1 was perceived as a threat against white supremacy and white entitlement to racial hierarchy. These tensions of post-war New London culminated in the violence of the Red Summer.

Raid on the Bristol Hotel

On May 29, 1919, police arrested two white, young Navy sailors for fighting on Long Cove Bridge in New London. Upon arrest, the sailors reported a group of Black sailors was waiting beneath the bridge to attack them. The white men became enraged when unable to free their fellow sailors from arrest.⁸² The sense of entitlement among the white sailors and anger towards Black life in New London fueled their raid of The Bristol Hotel, a popular leisure space

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Walter Ricker and James Nathaniel Upton, *Encyclopedia of American Race Riots: Volume 2, N-Z* (Westport: Greenwood Press 2007), 554-555.

⁸² Voogd, *Race Riots and Resistance: The Red Summer of 1919*, 95.

for Black sailors and civilians on Bank Street. The Bristol Hotel also symbolized the Black community's economic stability.

The violent white sailors threw several Black patrons into the street and beat them. Both Black and white reinforcements arrived and violence ensued, gathering a crowd of over 5,000 people, many participants members of either the Navy or Coast Guard. Due to its size and ferocity, police and firemen failed to stop the riot. Violence continued until the Marine Corps arrived with firearms and dispersed the crowds. Police arrested 20 sailors and soldiers, a disproportionate amount Black.⁸³

Image 1: 1911 postcard of the view of Bank Street from the corner of State street



Bristol Hotel was located at 90 Bank Street, a building on the right side. The riot spilled out onto this area of Bank street.⁸⁴

*Provided by New London Landmarks Inc.*⁸⁵

⁸³ Ibid, 95.

⁸⁴ Lonnie Braxton II, "The Hotel Bristol," Visit New London: New London's Black Heritage Trail, 2021. <https://visitnewlondon.org/black-heritage-trail/the-hotel-bristol/>

⁸⁵ 1911 Postcard of Bank Street, New London Landmark Inc, accessed February 24, 2022.

Documentation of New London's Red Summer violence perpetuated an unequal remembrance of events. Few Black accounts of the New London violence exist today. Mainstream and local newspapers perpetuated a dominant white narration of events finding Black people guilty, rather than understanding the violence as a target persecution rather than a “race riot.” Newspapers’ sympathy for white stories failed to recognize the systemic causes for the racial tensions. *The Hartford Courant* uplifted and reinstated a white supremacist narrative that individual and violent actions of Black men caused the “riots.”⁸⁶

On May 30, 1919, the day following the first instance of violence, *The Hartford Courant* transformed claims of Black instigation into the accepted and unquestioned understanding of the events. The headlining piece titled: “*Negro Sailors Attack White at New London*” described the violence as the “worst riot in years,” codifying the narrative that the violence, though shocking, was not an isolated incident of racial tension rather part of a pattern of Black instigation. *The Hartford Courant’s* retelling of the story found “the trouble began when [Black] sailors went to the Coast Guard Academy and attacked white sailors.”⁸⁷ This short statement was repeated through newspapers, yet there was no elaboration or further evidence.⁸⁸ The short sentence served to generalize a story of Black violence in order to justify white violence against Black servicemen and civilians alike.

The Courant claims after the initial attack, a mob of angry white men followed the Black sailors who were guilty of the attack at Coast Guard to Bristol Hotel, where they had taken refuge. The description of the Bristol Hotel as a haven for Black criminality rather than a space of Black leisure tries to justify the white violence that resulted in the raid on the Bristol Hotel

⁸⁶ “Negro Sailors Attack White at New London,” *Hartford Courant*, May 30, 1919, New London Public Library.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ “Marines Prevent Battle of Races,” *New York Tribune*, May 30, 1919, Newspapers.com. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/79053590/?terms=%22Marines%20Prevent%20Battle%22%20of%20Races&atch=1>; “Mob of White Sailors Assault Negroes: Policeman Luckily Subdue Serious Riot,” *The New London Day*, May 30, 1919, 16-17, New London Public Library.

and the beating of Black patrons at random. Furthermore, *The Courant* seeks to find the victim civilians and sailors at fault by claiming those targeted in the raid were naval men who were dressed in “civilian clothing although supposed to be in uniform.”⁸⁹ The notion that the Black victims were “supposed” to have done something differently, distracts from the violence inflicted upon them. Would such violence not have been perpetrated on men in uniform? Does the status of employment by the Navy or Coast Guard raise their position in the social hierarchy above that of Black civilians?

Black socio-economic mobility through employment and military service threatened white entitlement to racial hierarchy. This fear of Black mobility is illustrated clearly in the white fear of Black men in uniform. *The Hartford Courant* reduces the relevancy of a history of racial disparity and structural racism, demonstrating a pervasive sense of white supremacy. *The Courant* contextualizes the violence: “For some time there has been bad blood between the white and Negro Sailors,” failing to explain segregation in the city.⁹⁰

This dynamic of military agents as both victims and perpetrators was instrumental to the significance of the violence in New London. White perpetrators perceived uniformed Black men as a threat to whiteness and white masculinity. In the context of Black mobility, working-class white men feared being in the same socio-economic bracket or class as Black people. The white protectionist narrative seeks to uphold the idea that Black communities were at fault for the violence. This narrative protects the white military from responsibility for the violence, as demonstrated in mainstream newspapers like the *Hartford Courant*.

Black newspapers that served Connecticut included: *Colored American Magazine*, *The Philadelphia Tribune*, and *The New York Age*. Their writings, along with news passed through

⁸⁹ *Hartford Courant*, May 30, 1919, 1.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 1.

friends, family, and acquaintances informed a more detailed understanding about events like the Red Summer. Black newspapers also served as catalysts to encourage migration to the North, as racial violence was more frequent in the South.⁹¹ However, mainstream newspapers failed to include Black witnesses or perspectives of the violence. *The New London Day* reported a white mob trying to “‘clean up’ every [Black person] on the street.”⁹² When papers like *The Norwich Bulletin* did report on the accounts they blamed Black violence, claiming Black men started the riots when they “‘went into the Coast Guard and beat up some white soldiers,” but providing no evidence or specifics, failing to recognize Black men as individuals.⁹³

The Day did include one Black perspective on the events of May 29, 1919. A letter to the editor from Reverend J.S. Blake, a New London resident and pastor of the Baptist Church in Norwich. Reverend Blake supported a dominant narrative of the violence being at the fault of “ill-bred” Black victims on behalf of the “twelve million of negroes true and loyal.” The letter titled “Deplores Acts of Lawless Negroes” refers to those beaten and arrested outside the Bristol Hotel as criminals who are not “self-respecting members of the race.”⁹⁴ The newspaper weaponizes Blake, as a reverend and respected community figure to frame Black victims as the problem.

Another Instance of Red Summer Violence

Less than two weeks after the attacks on Bristol Hotel, another instance of racial violence occurred on June 5, 1919. At 10:00 p.m. two white-uniformed patrolmen, Hill and Murphy

⁹¹ Stacey Close, “Black Southern Migration and the Transformation of Connecticut, 1917-1941,” in *African American Connecticut Explored*, ed. by Elizabeth Normen (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2013), 191.

⁹² *The New London Day*, May 30, 1919, 16-17.

⁹³ “A Riot Started by Negro Sailors In New London,” *The Norwich Bulletin*, May 30, 1919, Newspapers.com. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/320392464/?terms=A%20Riot%20Started%20by%20Negro%20Sailors%20In%20New%20London&match=1>

⁹⁴ Reverend J.S. Blake, “Letter to the Editor: Deplores Acts of Lawless Negroes,” *The New London Day*, May 30, 1919, New London Public Library.

followed two Black men, John Lightbecker and Jerry Beecher, to Fisherman’s Wharf, a popular bar on Bank Street. *The New London Day* reports Lightbecker and Beecher, wrongfully dressed in civilian clothing and delivered a bag to a “gang” of Black sailors. Allegedly, one of the sailors paid the men, and Hill and Murphy intervened supposedly under the impression that Lightbecker and Beecher were bootleggers. The officers pursued Lightbecker and Beecher as they ran for safety along the railroad tracks towards John Street before narrowly escaping.⁹⁵

Image 2: A painted postcard of the wharf area and railroad tracks where Lightbecker and Beecher escaped.



Provided by *The New London Landmarks Inc.*⁹⁶

When Hill and Murphy returned to the Wharf, they found the bag did not contain liquor. Allegedly, Hill and Murphy left with the bag and were met by a “gang of 30 or 40 sailors who threatened to take the bag away.”⁹⁷ This moment was the beginning of a demonstration in which

⁹⁵ “New London Police Stop Riot Started By Sailors,” *The New London Day*, June 6, 1919. New London Public Library.

⁹⁶ 1911 Postcard of Steam Boat Dock, New London Landmark Inc., accessed February 24, 2022.

⁹⁷ *The New London Day*, June 6, 1919.

the Black community of New London rebelled against the police brutality suffered by the Black patrons at the Fisherman's Wharf.

Later in the evening, Lightbecker arrived at the New London Police Station requesting the return of his bag. He was denied and told that if he came back with Beecher he could potentially retrieve it. When Lightbecker returned with Beecher, police arrested both men for intoxication.⁹⁸

Meanwhile, after hearing about the chase and the potential crime committed by Black men, Lieutenant Benjamin Beede allegedly ordered Patrolmen Clayton Wetherbee to dress in civilian clothing and try to locate the bootleggers. The bootleggers he was referring to were Beecher and Lightbecker, who had just been arrested. Reportedly, while patrolling Wetherbee encountered the group of at least 40 Black sailors and civilians on State Street near the corner of Bradley.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Image 3: A painted postcard of the area near the Soldiers' and Sailors' monument near the corner of State and Bradley Streets where the demonstration occurred.



Provided By New London Landmarks Association¹⁰⁰

The Day referred to the group as a “gang,” reporting: “The sailors, many of whom had been concerned in the affair on the wharf, were in an ugly mood.” After overhearing threats of what the group might do, Hill ordered every New London police officer to the scene. Wetherbee ordered the crowd to disperse and began making arrests when the crowd refused. In an act of defiance, the sailors refused to be arrested. Dallas Carey, a Black sailor from the naval base, held on to another member of the crowd about to be arrested to protect him. The crowd began to link arms, holding onto one another in an act of civil disobedience. *The Day* reported Wetherbee punched one sailor in the jaw, and another officer, Walter Rehn “handled” Carey, resulting in serious injury to Carey.¹⁰¹

In response to the crowd’s resilience and failure to disperse, Wetherbee drew a revolver and pointed it at the crowd. More law enforcement officers were called to the scene from nearby.

¹⁰⁰ 1911 Postcard of the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument, New London Landmark Inc., accessed February 24, 2022.

¹⁰¹ *The New London Day*, June 6, 1919.

By 11:15, only about an hour and 30 minutes after the initial abuse, the rebellion was completely quelled. Police made nine arrests, only three were identified as having been active in the resistance: Fests W. Keefe, Kallock H. Ratcliff, and Dallas Carey, all stationed at the naval base. The 6 other men arrested received a “severe warning” before being released from their unwarranted arrests.¹⁰²

Despite the military personnel and institutional involvement on May 26 and June 5, 1919, the only military document describing the racial violence is a brief memo.¹⁰³ The memo from the city of New London to the naval base detailed a damaged fire hydrant hit by a vehicle transporting marines the night of the May 29th demonstration. The city billed the Navy, and the Navy refuted arguing the damage was not a result of the Navy’s negligence but rather the poor visibility due to the foggy mist and Bank Street’s inadequate streetlights. The bill traveled from the city of New London to the naval base, and the correspondence between officials left a bureaucratic paper trail that commemorates the racial violence.¹⁰⁴ The absence of discussion regarding the personal and human cost of riots, and the existence of the paper trail on property damage demonstrates the ways in which local government and military were more concerned with the property damage of riots than the persecution of Black servicemen and citizens.

Documentation of the riots informs the significance of the Red Summer. The short memo detailing property damage and the white-washed newspaper accounts demonstrate the pervasiveness of white supremacy that shapes the way the violence was understood and remembered. This historical memory codifies the view that violence was instigated by Black actions. The violence on May 26 and June 5, 1919, demonstrates white entitlement empowering both uniformed and non-uniformed men to police the Black community of New London because

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Voogd, *Race Riots and Resistance: The Red Summer of 1919*, 95.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

of a perceived threat to the status quo of racial hierarchy. On May 30th outside of the Bristol Hotel, white men both in-uniform and nonuniform demonstrated white entitlement to public spaces, pushing an anti-integration agenda by attacking a visible symbol of Black culture in New London. On June 5, 1919 Black civilians and soldiers stood together in protest after Lightbecker and Beecher were subject to harassment because of Hill and Murphy's intolerance. Police banded together in whiteness because the existence of the group of Black sailors and civilians protesting was a threat to white entitlement to racial hierarchy. Mutual aid networks, like the NWWR, supported the Black community of New London and servicemen through provisioning of goods but were unable to prevent violence. The Red Summer encouraged the politicization of organizations so that they could better protect their communities.

Changing Landscape of Aid Politics

Tensions Between Resistance and Conformity

The violence of the Red Summer, as well as the failure of the media and government institutions to recognize the impact of the violence demonstrated the need for political advocacy by Black-led organizations. The post-Red Summer era reflects a moment in which aid groups are politicizing to go beyond meeting needs in order to create political change to better the status of Black New Londoners. One of the ways Black aid groups sought to politicize was to connect to other aid groups and political actors outside of New London.

There is a tension between the meaning of politicization as a practice of conformity or resistance. A narrative of a unified response to the Red Summer violence in Black politics is over-simplistic. Accommodationist practices developed in response to segregation, disenfranchisement, and lynching often guided Black Americans to counteract harmful visions of

Black people by seeking to uphold an exemplar status. Aid organizations that practiced this uplift philosophy often compiled with standards of deservingness. An opposing view rejected the politics of respectability and conformity.¹⁰⁵ The development of aid organizations in New London found itself in between the two struggles using politicization as a forceful tool to advocate for civil rights while placing community members in positions of power.

The Development of the United Negro Welfare Council (UNWC)

In 1924 the NWWR reorganized to become the the United Negro Welfare Council (UNWC). The UNWC expanded aid past the war effort to support a Black community that other aid programs excluded. The newly established group was based on the same mutual aid framework as the War Canteen and NWWR, placing community conversations in non-hierarchical structures. The UNWC was funded by a community chest under the condition that Black citizens and other benefactors would raise the first major part of the budget.¹⁰⁶ However, the UNWC focused less on fulfilling immediate needs and sought to create and support policies that would benefit Black communities. The UNWC had two main political objectives: 1) “no separate work for Black populations should be started but the existing agencies should administer to Black people on the same basis as others,” and 2) “There is a need for specialized work among Black populations, arguing welfare work for Black populations fosters a race consciousness and subsequent segregation.”¹⁰⁷

Harrison’s work challenged class-based misconceptions about Black poverty and opposed the idea that poverty informed behavior. Harrison utilized her wealthy background and leveraged

¹⁰⁵ Coit, “Our Changed Attitude’: Armed Defense and the New Negro in the 1919 Chicago Race Riot,” 224-256.

¹⁰⁶ Banner and Kerns, *A Study of the Social and Economic Conditions of the Negro Population of New London, Connecticut*, 32.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 33.

her class status to cut against the inherent conservatism of uplift politics. Encouraging wealthy residents to financially and politically support the system.¹⁰⁸ She was able to use her positionality to advocate against class-based behaviorism.

New Partnerships

Nationwide as organizations sought to politicize they expanded networks to build coalitions by establishing relationships outside of their immediate communities. Negro Welfare Councils emerged in cities across the country in the early 1920s.¹⁰⁹ New partnerships often included white residents and professionals, as well as political actors related to national Black politics. The New London Welfare Council began offering membership to everyone in 1929.¹¹⁰ These new coalitions sought to use nonprofit and private partnerships, as well as policy changes to better the conditions of Black life and citizenship.

The New London Employment Bureau, established in 1925, reflected the way poverty was being mitigated through the mixed use of non-governmental organizations and private interests. Federal and state-level governments had failed to provide adequate social services prompting local interests involvement. The Business Service Bureau was a network of social, welfare, and economic development organizations and business interests that helped match employers to potential workers.¹¹¹ The racially-mixed coalition sought integration of Black workers into the economy, a symbol of mutual aid frameworks of the War Canteen that had become mainstream due to effectiveness. The Arthur Building itself reflected this private

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Baker, "New London Landmarks Memo."

¹¹⁰ Banner and Kerns, *A Study of the Social and Economic Conditions of the Negro Population of New London, Connecticut*, 32.

¹¹¹ Mary Beth Baker and Laura Natsch, "38 Green Street," Visit New London: New London's Black Heritage Trail, 2021. <https://visitnewlondon.org/black-heritage-trail/38-green-street/>

interest. Henry D. Barrows, a white, wealthy patriarch of a longstanding family in New London history, owned the Arthur Building. Barrows owned several properties and 16 office spaces throughout New London, many occupied by the UNWC office and Black-owned businesses between 1910-1920. The Black-owned businesses included a window cleaning business, several tailors and dressmakers, a jeweler, and later a vacuum cleaning company.¹¹² The office spaces were an important part of the organization of aid groups, but partial professionalization and need for offices benefited white property owners.¹¹³

New London's connection to W.E.B Du Bois reflected its ties to national discussions of Black politics. W.E.B Du Bois corresponded with Harrison and visited the Hempstead Cottage on trips to New London.¹¹⁴ Du Bois celebrated Harrison's publishing of *Hackley and Harrison's Hotel and Apartment guide for Colored Travelers* in 1930. The guide became the precursor to the better-known guidebook by Victor Hugo Green, *The Negro Motorist Green Book*. The publication was created through information shared through the network of welfare councils and the successes of the mutual aid frameworks. The accommodations safe for Black travelers included her own home, Hempstead Cottage, which functioned as a tourist home to Black travelers from 1930 to 1950.¹¹⁵ The coalition forged between the UNWC and other localized organizations demonstrate their successes in building a framework for providing aid alternatives to government provisions. Du Bois and Harrison's working relationship began in a discussion about accommodations and extended over the decade.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Baker, "New London Landmarks Memo."

¹¹³ Reed, *Not Alms But Opportunity: The Urban League and the Politics of Racial Uplift, 1910-1950*, 163.

¹¹⁴ Sadie D. Harrison, *Sadie D. Harrison to W.E.B. Du Bois April 26, 1933*. Letter, From University of Massachusetts Amherst, *W.E.B Du Bois Papers*. <https://credo.library.umass.edu/search?q=name:%22Harrison,%20Sadie%22>

¹¹⁵ Edwin Hackley and Sadie Dillion Harrison, *Hackley and Harrison's Hotel and Apartment Guide For Colored Travelers* (Philadelphia: Hackley and Harrison Publishing Company, 1930) New York Public Library Digital Collections.

<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/173daf10-fc1f-0136-584e-3b945bc8b699/book#page/5/mode/2up>

¹¹⁶ Harrison, *Sadie D. Harrison to W.E.B. Du Bois April 26, 1933*.

Harrison's half-brother, Benjamin Tanner Johnson, was also a major figure in the Black politics of Southeastern Connecticut. Johnson's career focused on economic uplift for Black communities, emphasizing the promotion of Black business opportunities to break a cycle of economic hardship and systematic disenfranchisement. Johnson graduated from Howard University where he studied entrepreneurship in 1919 and earned a Masters' degree from Harvard Business School in 1921.¹¹⁷ His relationship with Du Bois began in 1922 as they corresponded with plans to start a bank in Harlem to support Black Businesses. He later served as the secretary of Canton, Ohio's Urban League until 1927 when he had to flee Canton due to threats from the KKK. He resided with Harrison at Hempstead Cottage.¹¹⁸

Figures like Benjamin Tanner Johnson worked within partnerships with private interests to make progressive change. Johnson founded New England Peoples Finance Corporation (NEPFC) in December of 1927, likely influenced by the mutual aid work of his sister's organization. Johnson organized a conference for Black activists from New England cities held at New London's YMCA to create a forum to discuss "the larger economic freedom of the Negro in New England."¹¹⁹ The conference resulted in the expansion of the NEPFC and the establishment of an office in the Arthur Building which also housed the UNWC.¹²⁰ The NEPFC provided Black applicants with mortgages and loans to invest in businesses, houses, and cars. Johnson developed the project in response to the denial of loans to Black applicants. In addition to her other work, Harrison also served as the secretary of NEPFC.¹²¹

In 1928 the UNWC moved from the Arthur Building at 38 Green Street to 39 Tilley Street. Green Street was home to storefronts, shops, offices, and service centers. Alternatively,

¹¹⁷ Baker, "New London Landmarks Memo."

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ "Economic Conference Held in New England," *New York Age*, December 10, 1927, New London Public Library.

¹²⁰ Baker and Natusch, "38 Green Street."

¹²¹ Schuch, "73 Hempstead Street."

Tilley Street was more residential and had a diverse makeup, many of whom were Black.¹²² The following year the staff and leadership of predominantly Black women extended membership to include white people to advocate for integration and demonstrate the organization's effort to alleviate the struggles of both poor white and Black people.¹²³ Expanding to white membership also allowed for a larger base of contributors.

By the onset of the Great Depression in 1930, the mutual aid framework for provisioning of aid and the UNWC unraveled. The mutual aid framework could not survive as unemployment stripped contributing communities of their income. In 1935 Harrison left UNWC and moved to Delaware to become the Superintendent of the Industrial School for Colored Girls. Johnson remained the manager at NEPFC at 38 Green Street until the organization's closure in 1934.¹²⁴ In 1939 The UNWC followed the national pattern of becoming affiliated with the Urban Leagues, shifting away from the locally based mutual aid framework established by the Greene and War Canteen over 20 years prior.¹²⁵ The mutual aid groups sought to improve the social, political, and economic lives of local populations by providing direct support. The New London Urban League was not run by the same community members and did not exercise the same low-barrier requirements to aid applicants. As discussed in the following chapters, the Urban League used data to create a causal explanation for poverty and sought assimilation to mitigate poverty.

Identity and the Professionalization of Aid Organizations

Johnson and Harrison's advocacy work tied local organizations to national events of Black politics and conversations surrounding racial advancement. Their economic status

¹²² Baker, "New London Landmarks Memo."

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Baker and Natusch, "38 Green Street."

¹²⁵ Baker, "New London Landmarks Memo."

privileged them in networking with prominent figures such as Du Bois and connecting New London local mutual aid groups to others state-wide. The establishment of new partnerships occurred in a way that had not been possible for previous leaders like Greene. Class diversity within New London allowed the city to be a space for the contestation of the position of Black Americans in society. This unrest reverberated through all smaller communities; including people connected through the Baptist church, economic and social elite, professionals, working-class men and women, and migrants. These groups intersected to create an environment that allowed mutual aid groups to flourish. Unfortunately, there is little preserved public history of Black migrants and the Black women that created and supported aid organizations. The story of Harrison and Johnson's lives is recorded due to their status associated with homeownership, professional titles, and published works. The work of other working-class migrants and Black women is less preserved. Despite her impact, the founder of the UNWC, Elizabeth Jeter Greene's personal history is not easily accessible.

Timeline of Events Discussed in Chapter 3

- 1891** Wessel immigrated to the United States from Ukraine
- 1892** Chicago School of Sociology Established
- 1909** Wesleyan University stops enrolling women
- 1910** National Urban League Established
- 1911** Connecticut College Established
- 1926** Cobbledick begins as a sociology professor at Connecticut College
- 1929** Wessel publishes *The Ethnic Factors in the Population of New London*,
The UNWC accepts white membership and reorganizes into the United Welfare Fund
W.E.B. Du Bois visits New London to speak to the UN WC
- 1930** *Harrison and Hackley's Guide for Colored Travelers* published
- 1931** Wessel publishes *The Ethnic Factors in the Population of Woonsocket, RI*.
- 1934** NEPFC closed
Wessel becomes a member of the New London County Chapter of the American
Association of Social Workers and National Housing Committee
- 1935** Sadie Harrison left New London
- 1939** United Welfare Council Closed
Weiss immigrated to the United States
- 1940** New London Chapter the Urban League established
Weiss published Her autobiography *Sociology, Socialism, and Emigration*
- 1943** Weiss meets Du Bois at Spelman College
- 1944** Weiss arrives at Connecticut College
Weiss and Cobbledick create the Interracial Council of New London
The Urban League publishes *A Study of the Social and Economic Conditions of the
Negro Populations of New London*
No Black health or welfare workers connected to New London social service agencies
- 1945** W.E.B. Du Bois visits the interracial council
Weiss leaves Connecticut College

Chapter 3

The Professionalization of Aid 1925-1945

“We are not doing much and I know little of what is being done. It’s all confusing to me and I plan to resign”

- Sadie Dillion Harrison, President.

“The people of the community will not identify themselves with the organization because we have no program. It’s a job for trained workers and we need money to do a real job which is needed.”

- Reverend Garvin, Acting Treasurer.

“We’ve done a good job and have aided some worthy causes. We need a man trained in social welfare who can get these people together. We had a woman once, but a man could be free from community cliques.”

- Elizabeth Jeter Greene, Secretary.¹²⁶

Community leaders expressed defeat in the new landscape of aid politics as those with professional credentials came to displace community members, specifically Black women. The politicization and new partnerships of the 1920s had initially allowed for broader coalition building. However, by the end of the 1920s partnerships with professionals in social sciences displaced community-based leadership. By the 1930s, New London’s aid groups of the previous decade were unrecognizable. In 1929 the UNWC reorganized into the United Welfare Fund, expanding membership beyond their initial base of mutual aid benefactors and a community chest. The United Welfare Fund consisted of a more formal base of memberships and partnerships with white philanthropists and academics. The group continued in some capacity but with no official headquarters, and projects no longer involved political advocacy. The new era of projects consisted of community events for children, occasional financial assistance for

¹²⁶ Banner and Kerns, *A Study of the Social and Economic Conditions of the Negro Population of New London, Connecticut*, 33.

families and burials, as well as transportation for “stranded transients.”¹²⁷

Professionalization of aid was characterized by roles previously held by community members changing to require backgrounds in academics and social science. Often community members who relied on aid did not have access to these academic and professional opportunities. As a result, “experts” with distance from the communities they studied filled positions that controlled aid provision. The mutual aid model that had once informed the War Canteen was unraveling. New London’s Official Council of Social Agendas released a statement on the reorganization of the UNWC:

“We know much cannot be done with what we allow them, but if they cannot spend that amount intelligently it would be foolish to put more money in the organization.”¹²⁸

There was popular thought among white integrationists in the social sciences that Black institutions were inherently inferior and unable to create effective institutions.¹²⁹ This view justified social scientists in New London in excluding residents from engaging in aid work and politics.

The politics of community organizing shifted as the rise of social sciences pushed local entities like the UNWC to professionalize. In this context, professionalization is not synonymous with more effective organizations but rather with placing social scientists and experts in positions related to aid provisioning. Displacement of community members from aid politics led to harmful conclusions on poverty and race, as professionalization focused too much on studying conditions rather than meeting unmet needs. In New London, this pattern was demonstrated by Connecticut College’s early sociology and economics departments’ study of poverty, as well as

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880-1996*, xvii.

the transition from the community-based UNWC to replacement organizations that found behavioral explanations for housing and income inequality. New London aid provisioning changed dramatically between the mid-1920s and 1945, reflecting the final step in the transition from the mutual aid organizations of the War Canteen to the professionalized organizations of the remaining twentieth century.

Additionally, the politics of who engages in aid provisioning demonstrates the complexity of the role of women. While many women without access to professional credentials were hurt, women with credentials could use institutions like Connecticut College to advance. Simultaneously, within the elite circles of academia, women who were able to engage in aid politics were subject to obstacles as the field became increasingly male-dominated.

The National Trend of Professionalizing Aid

The Chicago School of Sociology, first established in 1892, rose to prominence between 1915 and 1935 as theories came to specialize in urban sociology. A rapidly urbanizing and industrializing country contextualized the rise of the Chicago School's urban sociology to explain poverty in the changing cities. The Chicago School's methodologies and understandings relied heavily on qualitative research and data analysis. The focus on data and surveying was a reaction to nineteenth-century "armchair" sociology, which philosophized without the close connections to qualitative research or social policy. Urban sociology of the 1920s and 1930s tried to create close connections to the city, embracing concerns of American cities including issues related to crime, urban decay, race relations, and the family.¹³⁰ However, sociologists often used the guise of scientific methodology to codify problematic perspectives on relevant issues. The

¹³⁰ "The Chicago School: Social Sciences," Britannica Online, accessed April 6, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chicago-school-social-science>

status of an academic institution allowed for social scientists to pathologize poverty in categorical terms, and use statistical methods to associate poverty with specific behaviors, concluding that behavioral explanations for poverty were based on objective knowledge. The work of the Chicago School informed a pattern of professionalizing aid. The academic trend encouraged cities to mitigate poverty, not through new systems of aid provision but rather through engaging in research to name and categorize poverty.

An educated class of civic leaders and business interests, similar to property owners like Henry D. Barrows, may have been inclined to engage with this study of poverty because of a fear of the changing city. Cities like New London changed drastically between 1915 and 1925. Cities grew and industrialized, the Great Migration and increased European immigration reshaped demographics, housing segregation created worsening conditions, and racial tensions increased. This unrest affecting the lives of white upper and middle-class families and businesses may have encouraged the urban sociological study of the area. In New London there was increased concern about rising crime rates.¹³¹ Throughout 1922 the *Norwich Bulletin* published recurring reports on “crime waves” which they described as a result of “abnormal condition” in large cities like Detroit.¹³² The articles do not discuss specific instances in New London, but rather general opinions on the role of crime in the cities. One article cites a survey of Detroit in which the police commissioner found “common sense” or “a lack of that which has so much to do in furnishing the inspiration of crime.” The *Norwich Bulletin* suggested reviving the sensibility of the earlier city through increased policing and sentencing.¹³³ These articles reflect the fear towards the idea of a changing city which contextualized the rise of credentialed and

¹³¹ “Checking Crime,” *Norwich Bulletin*, June 12, 1922, Newspapers.com. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/320393001/?terms=%22crime%22%20%22poor%22&match=1>

“Turning Aside Criticism,” *Norwich Bulletin*, April 11, 1922. Newspapers.com. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/320384490/?terms=Turning%20Aside%20criticism&match=1>

¹³² *Norwich Bulletin*. June 12, 1922.

¹³³ *Ibid*; *Norwich Bulletin*. April 11, 1922.

professionalized social sciences to provide explanations for the changes.

Connecticut College: Sociology to Explain Unmet Needs

A board of Wesleyan University alumni established Connecticut College for Women in 1911 in response to the University closing its doors to women in 1909. A growing suffrage movement and a demand for professional and educational opportunities for women contextualized the creation of the college. The city raised \$135,000 to win the bid for the college's location to be in New London, nearby the Coast Guard Academy. The city's businesses and organizations offered widespread investment in the college with the hopes of a new opportunity to better the city.¹³⁴

Connecticut College embodies the national trends of professionalization of aid between 1925 and 1945. Unlike other women's colleges at the time, Connecticut College offered an opportunity to integrate career training into each of the 16 academic programs. The college designed curriculum to encourage students to pursue professional paths after graduation.¹³⁵ Katherine Blunt, President of the college from 1929 to 1943 and 1945 to 1946, encouraged women to participate in field research. She was featured in the *Journal of the Association of American University Women*, directing professors to reject nineteenth-century “armchair” sociology and provide students with “contacts with life which vitalize theory and destroy ‘ivory tower isolation.’”¹³⁶ By the end of the 1920s, the sociology department began to engage with the New London community in an effort to understand issues of poverty and race.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Katherine Bergeron, “A History of Excellence: A Look At Connecticut College’s First Century,” Connecticut College, 2019. <https://www.conncoll.edu/media/new-media/at-a-glance/PresidentsHistory3-1.pdf>

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ “Blunt, Katharine (1876–1954),” *Women in World History: A Biographical Encyclopedia*. Encyclopedia.com, accessed April 10, 2022.

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/women/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/blunt-katharine-1876-1954>

¹³⁷ “Prof. Hafkesbrink, Garrett, Cobble Dick, Jones Retire,” *The College Voice, Connecticut College*, May 16, 1967. https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1023&context=ccnews_1966_1967

The new professionals differed from the previous generation of organizers. Unlike the women of the New London Associated Charities or the Black working-class women who organized the War Canteen, the academics utilized pathologizing vocabulary to explain the reason for conditions rather than focusing merely on meeting needs. Educated women from outside of New London served as faculty at the college and taught a student body of young white women interested in building careers.¹³⁸

Bessie Bloom Wessel and Quantitative Surveys in New London

Bessie Bloom Wessel (1889-1969) was a well-known sociologist and faculty member of Connecticut College's sociology department. She immigrated to the United States from Ukraine in 1891. After earning her B.A. from Brown University and M.A. and Ph.D. from Columbia University, Wessel joined the Connecticut College Faculty. She served as a professor of economics and sociology, eventually becoming the chair of the social science department. In addition to her role at the college, she also worked on a number of community initiatives. She served as the chair of the Committee on Public Welfare from 1932 to 1935 and a member of the New London County Chapter of the American Association of Social Workers and National Housing Committee from 1934 to 1936.¹³⁹ Her most celebrated work was her research of conditions of poverty in small cities in Connecticut and Rhode Island.

¹³⁸ There were no known Black students through the early years at Connecticut College. New London native, Lois Taylor became the first when she enrolled in 1927 and graduated in 1931. 5 other Black students enrolled at the College between 1927 and 1966.

"Connecticut College Equity and Inclusion Milestones," Connecticut College, accessed April 27, 2022. <https://www.conncoll.edu/equity-inclusion/action-plan/milestones/#:~:text=1927,She%20graduates%20in%201931>.

¹³⁹ Marla Brettschneider, "Bessie Bloom Wessel," *The Shalvi/Hyman Encyclopedia of Jewish Women* The Jewish Women's Archive, December 31, 1999. <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/wessel-bessie-bloom>>.

Wessel's *The Ethnic Factors in the Population of New London*, featured in the 1929 *American Journal of Sociology*, reflected a version of academics similar to the Chicago School, using specific qualitative research to study issues related to poverty and the family.¹⁴⁰ The survey was a response to the lack of assimilation among migrants and immigrants in New London. She recognized the demographic resulting from the Great Migration and immigration as a catalyst for the rise of the city's poverty and social disorder.¹⁴¹ The purpose of the survey was to provide data on the ethnic makeup of the newly diversified population in New London to inform community programs on how to best "Americanize" the poor.¹⁴² The aims of the survey demonstrate how social scientists assumed race and ethnicity created cultural or behavioral reasoning for marginalized people to be living in poverty.

Wessel's methodology sought to depict "the variance of ethnic fusion and national origins other classifications fail to show." The study surveyed 1,189 families with at least one school-aged child. The surveys asked for the birthplaces of both parents and four grandparents. The study organized the data into categories to answer the research questions: "1) What stocks have contributed to the population to what degree? What is the population by descent? Or by ancestral origin?" and "2) to what extent is the population 'native' or 'American'?"¹⁴³ The study did not conclude with guidance on the process of "acculturation" in schools and community programs. It provided the data so that other social scientists may better create programs tailored to the given population.¹⁴⁴ Most of the survey focuses on how to best classify race. Several pages of the study define different classifications.

¹⁴⁰ Bessie Wessel, "The Ethnic Factors in the Population of New London," *American Journal of Sociology* 35, no. 2. (September 1929). From University of Connecticut, *Peoples of Connecticut Project Records*. <https://archives.lib.uconn.edu/islandora/object/20002%3A860140982>

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 18.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 19.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 20.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 257.

“The term *racial* in this article refers to the stocks that these ethnic groups represent. It is used as an adjective to apply to the hereditary or biological aspects of the problem and does not mean to signify that these groups represent entities that may be called races.”¹⁴⁵

Wessel’s explanation of race as synonymous with the ethnicity of grandparents demonstrates the ways in which social sciences of the era utilized race as a mode of perception contingent upon the circumstances of the moment.¹⁴⁶ Wessel developed a specific understanding of race to explain the conditions of poverty. She notes that different definitions of race may be employed to answer other questions.

“*Native origin* describes any child all four of whose grandparents were born in this country. This classification was made at the time as being analogous to the preceding one [homogenous] and on the assumption that a child all four of whose grandparents were born in this country is definitely a type as a child all four of whose grandparents were born in Italy (Boas).”¹⁴⁷

“*Intramariage* indicates that the marriage is between two individuals of the same ethnic group. There is no evidence that more than one racial strain has entered into the family unit, within the generations covered by the investigation. Both parents are of the same stock.”¹⁴⁸

“*Intermarriage* is a term describing any union that results in bringing into the mating process more than one racial strain. According to this definition the marriage between a man of Italian- Irish ancestry and a woman of Italian Greek ancestry constitutes an intermarriage. This again is somewhat of a departure from current definitions of intermarriage but is adopted on biological grounds. The parents are really of different stocks.”¹⁴⁹

“*Mixed refers* to any child all four of whose grandparents are not the same origin and who is therefore a product of fusion.”¹⁵⁰

“*Ethnic fusion* is a process involving both intermarriage and changes resulting from the presence of mixed offspring in the population. The mere

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 21.

¹⁴⁶ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 11.

¹⁴⁷ Wessel, “The Ethnic Factors in the Population of New London,” 21.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

fusion of principals in marriage has only relative significance in a study of the population. The changes in population depend upon the number and type of offspring and upon migration.”

Language throughout the survey like “offspring,” “mating,” and other terms reserved for the study of processes of nature and animals exemplifies the ways in which the research driven sociology focused on pathologizing and studying communities with unmet needs rather than building a system for aid provision through collaboration with the community. New London served as a laboratory for social scientists:

“The Experience in making surveys covering four school communities and involving 26,000 racial histories would seem to indicate that the community area lends itself readily as a unit or laboratory within which population can be studied through which process of acculturation can be comprehended.”¹⁵¹

Like much of its time; the research was to understand a culture associated with the increased poverty observed in New London.

Parallel studies in the field of biology and psychology would throw light on physical and mental adaptation of children from immigrant families. In essence, however, Americanization is a process of acculturation. Social anthropology offers tools for the study of cultural adaptation. The community area represents the area which encompasses a school population. It offers a regional base and social unit for scientific investigation in various fields. The concept of a "cultural area" is obviously borrowed from anthropology. Such a tool offers the opportunity for concentrating scientific investigation upon a given unit. It has pragmatic significance in education and social work, more particularly in community planning.¹⁵²

Wessel explains detailed ethnic classifications of children and families in New London as a tool for understanding the sociological impact of diverse ethnicities living within one city. Data was presented with the belief that it would be helpful to community programs to assimilate *nonnative* residents to alleviate poverty. Wessel’s work reflects the ways in which early

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 269.

¹⁵² Ibid, 263.

sociological research pathologized conditions of poverty. *The Ethnic Factors in the Population of New London* explains that poverty is caused by *nonnatives* inability to “americanize.”¹⁵³ Her conclusions assume there is a natural process for assimilation, that in order to become American people must ascend a class scale.

Despite meticulous efforts to gather data on the conditions of poverty and the process of experts creating studies that are understood as objective knowledge, the conclusions were ultimately products of the expert’s biases.¹⁵⁴ This survey was emblematic of patterns happening throughout Northern cities, as social scientists began to draw conclusions about assimilation and poverty, creating a normative framework of assimilation as synonymous with becoming middle-class. In Chicago and New York the Urban League conducted surveys on poor Southern Black migrants, so that the Urban League could create programs tailored to acculturate Black migrants.¹⁵⁵

Connecticut College Faculty and New London as a Laboratory for Aid

Connecticut College offered students and professors to create professional careers related to social sciences. The college’s connection to New London aid politics was much larger than Wessel’s survey in 1929. Many students at Connecticut College were not long-time residents of New London but rather women from all over the Northeast and faculty from across the country, living at the college while studying downtown New London. The college's relationship with aid politics in New London demonstrated a national trend as sociology departments utilized specific neighborhoods as laboratories for research and experimentation for understanding the function of

¹⁵³ Ibid, 26.

¹⁵⁴ Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880-1996*, 7

¹⁵⁵ Reed, *Not Alms But Opportunity: The Urban League and the Politics of Racial Uplift, 1910-1950*.

social uplift and reform.¹⁵⁶

Melville Robert Cobbledick (1902-1969) began as a sociology professor at Connecticut College in 1926.¹⁵⁷ He was a key actor in the integration of Connecticut College academics into the local community for the benefit of the college's sociology program. In 1929, Cobbledick was one of the first white members of what had previously been the UNWC and reorganized into the United Welfare Fund of New London.¹⁵⁸ Like the new partnerships of the 1920s, Cobbledick's position as a sociologist benefited the group as it allowed the organization to connect with Du Bois, predating Du Bois' stay at the Hempstead Cottage. In 1929, Cobbledick wrote to Du Bois inviting him to join the group for a public meeting to speak on the issue of race in New London:

We are interested in the promotion of a better understanding on the part of the people of this city of race in its broader aspects which will result in greater interest in affairs of more immediate concern...¹⁵⁹

When Du Bois agreed to speak at the college it reflected the connection of local organizations to events of national politics.¹⁶⁰ The organization once run by Elizabeth Jeter Greene, creator of the War Canteen, slowly expanded beyond a community of working-class residents or Harrison's class diverse coalition. Ultimately, the group became part of a national broader political and academic conversation.

¹⁵⁶ O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy and the Poor in Twentieth-Century US History*, 23-25.

¹⁵⁷ "In Memoriam," *Connecticut College Alumnae News*, March 1969.
<https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1169&context=alumnews>

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ M.R. Cobbledick, *The Negro Welfare Council of New London to W.E.B. Du Bois*, Letter, January 27, 1929, from University of Massachusetts Amherst, *W.E.B Du Bois Papers*.
<https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b050-i135>

¹⁶⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois, *W.E.B. Du Bois to The Negro Welfare Council of New London*, Letter, January 30, 1929, from University of Massachusetts Amherst, *W.E.B Du Bois Papers*.
<https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b050-i135>

Despite the changing landscape of aid politics and the decrease of the UNWC's political power, Harrison remained a critical actor in the discussion of New London aid and issues of race. Connecticut College celebrated Harrison for her writings and network of contacts nationwide and her "qualifications to discuss the various phases of the [negro] problem."¹⁶¹ In March 1930, the same year Harrison published *Harrison and Hackley's Guide for Colored Travelers*, she spoke to the advanced sociology class on "race and immigration problems" taught by Wessel.¹⁶² As a woman with professional and higher education credentials she was able to maintain a connection to the professionalized conversations of aid not available to working-class voices.

The trend of professionals extended beyond professors. Dorothy Schaffter (1894-1993), the president of Connecticut College from 1943 to 1945, was a trained expert in housing justice.¹⁶³ The college benefited from placing credentialed professionals, like Schaffter, in esteemed positions because it legitimized the women's college within the elite circles of academia. Despite the ways in which faculty and students were placed hierarchically above New London organizers and activists, they still contended with the barriers to women in male-dominated fields.

Schaffter's extensive background in public administration and research made her an exemplary academic to represent the college's efforts to grow their social sciences. Her research codified public health laws in New Jersey, she surveyed housing conditions on behalf of Illinois

¹⁶¹ "Recognition of Soviet Is Debate topic: Connecticut College Women's Meets team from Smith Advanced Sociology Class Meets," *Hartford Courant*. March 2, 1930. Newspapers.com. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/369017652/?terms=Smith%20Advanced%20Sociology%20Class%20Meets&match=1>

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ In 1943, the same year in which Schaffter began her term as President, Cobbledick split the sociology department into the economics department and the sociology department. The administrative decision represented the ways in which the two fields began to differentiate from one another.

local governments and served as a member of the national association of housing officials. She was also a member of the committee on law and administration of the Citizens Housing Council of New York and a member of the executive committee of the Poughkeepsie Better Housing League.¹⁶⁴ The college celebrated her accomplishments upon the appointment as they reflected hopes for the college's role in New London. The work that was originally done by community organizers was becoming increasingly academic and related to the career development of professionals. Experts were not experts in their specific communities, but rather in fields of social science that allowed for solutions and methodology to be applied to different cities.¹⁶⁵

Hilda Weiss (1900-1981) had a similar career to Wessel, Cobblestick, and Schaffter. Her work used data-driven research to highlight patterns of poverty and behavior. However, Weiss was more politically active than her peers. Weiss was born in Germany and studied sociology and economics at the University of Frankfurt and Sorbonne. Her personal experience working in the Zeiss Optical Factory in Jena, Germany informed her research on labor conditions and comparison of Zeiss to the Ford Motor Company factories in Detroit, Michigan. Her first published research highlighted the ways in which a culture of unionization created better working conditions for employees, especially women. Her autobiography *Sociology, Socialism,*

¹⁶⁴ “Ec., Soc. Department Split; Warner and Cobblestick Heads.” *Connecticut College News*, October 4, 1943. https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1016&context=ccnews_1948_1943; “Writer, Researcher Dorothy Schaffter Dies.” *Washington Post*. October 11, 1993. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1993/10/11/writer-researcher-dorothy-schaffter-dies/cbe209b0-c67e-4a16-8c53-6021ed8dcf5a/>

¹⁶⁵ Wessel’s work on both *An Ethnic Survey of Woonsocket, R.I. (1931)* and *the Ethnic Factors in the Population of New London (1929)* demonstrate the ways in which sociologists used the same methodologies and found similar conclusions in different cities.

Bessie Wessel, *An Ethnic Survey of Woonsocket, Rhode Island* (New York: Arno Press, 1970).

and Emigration published in 1940 discusses her professional experiences and education in Germany that led her to become a sociologist. She notes that her ability to engage meaningfully with research on the worker was linked to her “commitment as a citizen” and her advocacy for the “cause of socialism.” Her sociological education and the political context of German communism in the mid-1920s allowed her to “pursue her professional and political interests in equal measure.”¹⁶⁶

In 1933 Weiss escaped Germany and lived in France before immigrating to the United States permanently in 1939. Despite the limited space for socialist ideals in the United States, Weiss stressed the limits of sociology, blurring the lines between politics and objective understandings of twentieth-century sociology. In 1958 Weiss' study “Industrial Relations, Manipulative or Democratic?” argued the harms of capitalism obscured democratic ideals and subjected poor workers to undesirable conditions.¹⁶⁷ Weiss claimed that her work often had the purpose of not only highlighting sociological patterns but also discussing “her own experiences, strengths and weaknesses.”¹⁶⁸ Weiss' experience as a Jewish immigrant working in working poor conditions was reflected in her research throughout her career. She recognized the limitations of research and the ways in which one's own experience can inform better insight to poverty and aid provision.

After arriving in the United States, Weiss worked as a sociology professor at several colleges in the South. At North Carolina College for Negroes, at which she was the first and only white woman to serve as a professor.¹⁶⁹ She also worked at Clark University, Asheville College,

¹⁶⁶ Hilda Weiss, *Soziologin, Emigrantin: ihre Autobiographie aus dem Jahr 1940* (Hamburg: Kovac, 2006).

¹⁶⁷ Hilda Weiss Parker, “Industrial Relations, Manipulative or Democratic?” *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 18, No. 1 (Oct., 1958) 25-33. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3485017?seq=1>

¹⁶⁸ Weiss, *Soziologin, Emigrantin: ihre Autobiographie aus dem Jahr 1940*, 4.

¹⁶⁹ Hilda Weiss, *Interracial Council to W.E.B. Du Bois February 3, 1945*, Letter, from University of Massachusetts Amherst, *W.E.B Du Bois Papers*. <https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b106-i228>

and Spelman College. At Spelman College in 1943, Weiss worked closely with Du Bois. Even after leaving the college the same year, Du Bois and Weiss remained close professional colleagues throughout the rest of her career.¹⁷⁰ Letters between Weiss and Du Bois discussing professional advice provide a clear example of the ways in which activism had professionalized, meshing together progressive causes like labor rights and personal gain or the ability of academics and activists to make their work a paid profession.

Weiss' work demonstrates the ways in which the experience of the individual impacts their work. As aid politics became increasingly dependent on social sciences, conclusions and images of populations created by academics were understood as objective knowledge. Ideas and assumptions in social sciences about poverty reflected their originators. Social scientists were influenced by historical, social, personal, and ideological factors.¹⁷¹ Weiss' awareness and concern regarding positionality is not seen in the writings of other sociologists in New London at the time. As aid and politics surrounding how best to distribute aid in New London became increasingly professionalized, actors in hierarchical or professional positions shaped concepts of who deserved aid and the politics over how best to mitigate poverty.

Issues of Gender within the College

Connecticut College allowed affluent white women distanced from poverty to advance professionally as faculty and students while simultaneously displacing women without credentials. The professionalization of aid legitimized credentialed white women engaging in social work and sociology. However, at the same time, credentialed white women faced scrutiny as the field became increasingly male-dominated as it professionalized.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Hilda Weiss, *Hilda Weiss to W.E.B. Du Bois February 20, 1945*, Letter, from University of Massachusetts Amherst, *W.E.B Du Bois Papers*. <https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b108-i433>

¹⁷¹ Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880-1996*, 6.

¹⁷² O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy and the Poor in Twentieth-Century US History*.

This trend is demonstrated within the Connecticut College social science departments in comparing the careers of Weiss and Cobblestick. Weiss's sociological studies, politics, and personal experiences demonstrate the ways in which her thinking was more progressive than many of her peers. She had held more titles and publications than Cobblestick. However, despite her credentials, there are moments throughout her career in which she is being subordinated. Letters and correspondence from the social science department between 1944 and 1945 frame Weiss as an assistant to Cobblestick rather than an equal coworker. As she handled much of the logistics in planning speakers, writing thank yous on behalf of Cobblestick or the department, and picking up guests from the train station.¹⁷³

The Interracial Council of New London

Although Weiss was more progressive than her counterparts, her work was still tied to the context of professionalization that displaced community members. When Weiss arrived as a new faculty member at Connecticut College in 1944 she worked closely with Cobblestick to create the Interracial Council of New London.¹⁷⁴ This was a response to a national trend. Groups like interracial councils, or commissions on interracial cooperation were formed primarily by liberal white Southerners in response to increasing unrest and racial tensions after World War I. Local groups worked to oppose anti-black violence and educate communities on issues associated with race.¹⁷⁵ The Interracial Council of New London planned discussions led by the College, rather than provide aid or projects planned by a coalition of community groups and members.

¹⁷³ Weiss, *Interracial Council to W.E.B. Du Bois February 3, 1945*; Hilda Weiss, *Interracial Council to W.E.B. Du Bois February 15, 1945*, Letter, from University of Massachusetts Amherst, *W.E.B Du Bois Papers*. <https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b106-i230>

¹⁷⁴ "New Faculty" *Connecticut College News* Vol.30 No. 1. October 4, 1944.

http://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=ccnews_1944_1945

¹⁷⁵ Reed, *Not Alms But Opportunity: The Urban League and the Politics of Racial Uplift, 1910-1950*.

In February of 1945 Weiss wrote to Du Bois on behalf the Interracial Council of New London. Weiss explained in the group as “as headed from Connecticut College.” The letter invited Du Bois to speak at the council’s February meeting and arrive shortly before the event with time to meet some New London residents the Council deemed “outstanding citizens.”¹⁷⁶

As a subject we should like to suggest: ‘What the Negro wants’, or something like that. The Subject, ‘Colonies in the Postwar World’, seems to be too difficult for the city people... The meeting is scheduled to take place in the city, not at the college; hence the audience will mainly be composed of city people. We shall try to invite as many professors and students as possible to attend the meeting, of course.¹⁷⁷

The private letter demonstrates a condescending attitude towards “city people.” It also demonstrates the ways in which the college and Interracial Council was focused on national and international trends related to Black politics. Anti-colonialism had been an animating cause for Black politics in the 1930s due to the Italo-Ethiopian War (1935-1936). The war resulted in Ethiopian becoming colonized by Italy. The conflict reflected a long tradition of Ethiopia's agency in remaining an independent state in the continent that was increasingly colonized.¹⁷⁸ This exemplifies the ways the aid politics of New London that had previously been bottom-up in determining its focus shifted to a top-down approach, as exemplified by Connecticut College’s choice of community discussion topics. Despite Weiss' dedication to socialism and liberty for marginalized people, she still carried biases separating those engaged with professionalizing aid from community members. Even if her formal writings did not formally express these sentiments her private correspondence did. Private correspondence on the Interracial Coalition demonstrates the organization as attached to notions of deservingness and not community-based.

¹⁷⁶ Weiss, *Interracial Council to W.E.B. Du Bois February 15, 1945*.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Britannica Online, "Italo-Ethiopian War," *Encyclopedia Britannica*. May 27, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Italo-Ethiopian-War-1935-1936>

The Urban League and End of Local Aid Groups

As the UNWC began to decline, United Welfare Fund sought to replace previous community leaders with educated professionals by allotting an executive salary, not for community members like Greene or Harrison, but rather to “attract employees of superior training and well-rounded experiences.”¹⁷⁹ In 1934 Tanner’s New England People’s Finance Corporation (NEPFC) closed, and in 1935 Sadie Harrison left New London. By 1939 the UNWC officially closed.¹⁸⁰ As of 1944 there were no Black health or welfare workers connected with any New London social service agencies.¹⁸¹ The “professionalization” and emphasis on social science as a profession rather than a means to provide aid to community members effectively ousted the previous generation of civic leaders and made positions of power within aid organizations inaccessible to working-class Black women like Elizabeth Jeter Greene.

The New London chapter of the Urban League was established in 1940 to study the issues facing Black New London.¹⁸² The National Urban League, established in 1910, sought to connect and mobilize urban Black communities, focusing on issues related to growing migrant populations in Northern cities, discriminatory housing and labor markets, and political groups with alternative visions to Black uplift politics. The Urban League's uplift vision was shaped by theories of assimilation and pioneered by the Chicago School of Sociology, which similarly influenced Wessel's research. As a result of their emphasis on assimilation, the Urban League’s economic-focused policies associated Black behavior with racial and economic inequality. As a result, even in efforts to alleviate poverty through research, Urban League policies in practice

¹⁷⁹ Banner and Kerns, *A Study of the Social and Economic Conditions of the Negro Population of New London, Connecticut*, 71.

¹⁸⁰ Baker, “New London Landmarks Memo.”

¹⁸¹ Banner and Kerns, *A Study of the Social and Economic Conditions of the Negro Population of New London, Connecticut*, 55.

¹⁸² Baker, “New London Landmarks Memo.”

disseminated ideas of poor shaming and an inherent connection between poverty and behavior.¹⁸³

The National Urban League sought to make “democracy more real in various communities” with over 50 branches throughout the United States, the Urban League emphasised “scientific analysis of minority problems.”¹⁸⁴ In the 1940s, the league amassed funds through grants to carry out research projects in urban areas. J. Harvey Kerns was an advisor to the research branch of the Urban League and directed a survey in New London.¹⁸⁵ Similarly to academics like Wessel, the Urban League utilized data collection and research to highlight the “ills of the city”.¹⁸⁶ In 1944, as part of its nationwide community relations project, the Urban League published *A Study of the Social and Economic Conditions of the Negro Populations of New London, Connecticut*. The research was conducted for the New London Council of Social Agencies so that they may better understand the conditions and causes of poverty in New London. The data was obtained through questionnaires to both Black residents and other community leaders on industrial concerns, public and private institutions, business establishments and family schedules.¹⁸⁷

Statistics Supporting A Behavioral Explanation for Poverty

The Urban League’s survey questions highlighted anti-migrant and anti-poor sentiments ingrained in the biases of social scientists. Although the survey sought to highlight the inequalities suffered as a result of segregated employment and lack of economic opportunity for

¹⁸³ Reed, *Not Alms But Opportunity: The Urban League and the Politics of Racial Uplift, 1910-1950*, 3-8.

¹⁸⁴ Harvey J. Kerns, “National Urban League,” 1945.

<https://crowd.loc.gov/campaigns/mary-church-terrell-advocate-for-african-americans-and-women/speeches-and-writings/mss425490424/mss425490424-62/>

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid; Banner and Kerns, *A Study of the Social and Economic Conditions of the Negro Population of New London, Connecticut*, 8,

Black residents, the conclusion is an argument that behavior and inability to assimilate results in poverty. The survey finds housing as the most pressing issue facing Black people in New London. The National Urban League's housing policy emphasized the need to insulate a "better class" of Black Americans from "uncultured" Black people as a way to combat social disorganization.¹⁸⁸ The New London survey demonstrates this philosophy, drawing a connection between social behavior and poverty: "substandard and unsanitary housing conditions are factors which condition social behavior. Unless improved, repercussions will appear among both white and colored residents."¹⁸⁹

The survey goes on to link the housing crisis to the behavior of Black migrants. A section entitled "New Migration and the Housing Problem" explains the conditions of migrant men's housing. The survey claims Black male migrants sought sleeping accommodations at the police station. Black churches and fraternal organizations urged families to open their homes, framing it as an act of patriotism, but the overcrowding often resulted in health and fire hazards. One survey taker who opened her home as a boarding house described her experience: "The situation was pathetic. I rented cots, moved my parlor and dining room furniture out, and took every available room to help those men have a place to lie down. For two weeks, I had 17 living in my home." Another woman said she acquired an empty building, rented army cots, and accommodated an average of 40 men weekly for six months.¹⁹⁰

One Black resident interviewed by an Urban League survey taker concluded on the

¹⁸⁸ Reed, *Not Alms But Opportunity: The Urban League and the Politics of Racial Uplift, 1910-1950*, 3-8.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 16.

¹⁹⁰ As discussed in Chapter 1, the unstable conditions of migrant housing impacted the ability of census records to depict the full impact of the Great Migration. Often migrants moved in and out of communities, filling temporary positions, and occupying boarding rooms described by the Urban League Survey. Census records or the maps demonstrating housing conditions in Chapter 1 do not reflect these conditions.

Banner and Kerns, *A Study of the Social and Economic Conditions of the Negro Population of New London, Connecticut*, 19.

Urban League's efforts: "Council members said we want to improve conditions for our regular colored people because many newcomers will leave. I believe they are only passing the buck."¹⁹¹

The survey sought to separate "regular" residents from migrant residents, characterizing migrants as monolithic and as part of a stream of people that had traveled from White Plains, Westchester, Yonkers, and other smaller towns outside of New York to New London.¹⁹² The survey found migrants at fault for the housing crisis rather than the faulty infrastructure and lack of economic opportunity.

The survey explains the ways in which interviewed subjects understand the behavior of migrants to impact the conditions of housing, businesses, health, school, crime, and race relations in general.

"The 'Negro Yankee' looks with disdain on the 'new' Negro migrants, accusing them of the new problems in race relations which they claim have affected their former status in the community."¹⁹³ Kern's analysis of New London race relations.

"Surveyed teachers reported a greater number of increased tardiness and absences among Black students than white students. Many children of recent migrants are from Southern communities where compulsory school attendance is not enforced may account for many of the attendance problems."¹⁹⁴ Kern's on student behavior.

"Black youth are often charged with delinquency because the environment in which they live contributes to behavior patterns."¹⁹⁵ New London Head of Police.

"Black owned Businesses Should solicit patronage other than solely Black customers by making their stores and conduct more attractive."¹⁹⁶ Kern's analysis of Black business in New London.

The Urban League survey demonstrates the trend of cataloging damage, a label that emerged in the study of sociology in the aftermath of World War I. The survey lists the

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid, 9, 18.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 23.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 44.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 18.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 71.

characteristics and problems of people living in poverty, linking the two as explanative of one another. During the interwar years, the idea that culture shapes personality came to dominate the social sciences. The culture-and-personality theory gave social scientists the language to pathologize poverty.¹⁹⁷ Kerns and Banner sought to mitigate poverty by highlighting the challenges to assimilation for poor people. The survey served as a foundation for the Urban League's goal of acculturating poor Black migrants so that they may escape poverty. However, the view that acculturation allows for the alleviation of poverty assumes a specific behavior or facet of identity is an explanation for poverty. The Urban League's emphasis on social science worked in conjunction with the Chicago School and the work of academics like Wessel to create an understanding New London's wealth inequality and housing issues can be mitigated through a process of acculturation and americanization that resulted in individuals ascending to middle-class.

Conclusion

By the 1930s professionalization of aid had come to oust community members from positions of power within aid organizations, as well as their ideas of the ways aid should be provisioned. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, during World War I the adoption of mutual aid practices and community-based aid work that emerged as organizations like the War Canteen and Shiloh Baptist Church embraced poor Black migrant ideologies. By the 1930s, poverty knowledge-making institutions like the Chicago School of Sociology, Connecticut College, and the Urban League had come to dominate aid politics and subsume local organizations. This version of aid politics failed to recognize poor Black migrant organizers as an asset. Instead they

¹⁹⁷ Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880-1996*, 4.

imposed a harsh assimilationist move that dismantled established systems of mutual aid. The poor-shaming of professionalized social sciences led to harmful conclusions about how specific behaviors associated with race and ethnicity contribute to poverty.

Conclusion

Contemporary Community-Based Organizations Undoing a History of Harm by Professionalized Aid

Social agencies and civic groups should organize efforts to clean up Ward II, as improvement in appearance of existing Negro neighborhoods is one means of breaking down prejudices against the entrance of Negro families into previously non-negro neighborhoods... Similar campaigns have been used in other communities with similar problems and produced helpful results.

- The 1944 Urban League Survey¹⁹⁸

The 1944 Urban League survey concluded Black families must engage in “community clean-up” type projects to alleviate segregation and barriers to equitable housing. This quote demonstrates professionalized aid organizations focus on explaining potential causes of poverty rather than providing aid to affected people. This version of aid politics left poverty mitigation to individuals to ascend class status without aid organizations providing any meaningful support in doing so. Ideas of acculturation exacerbated existing anti-migrant and anti-poor sentiments. As a result aid politics became less effective in meeting people’s needs and the barriers to housing equity became higher.

The association of poverty with failure to acculturated led to the label of “blight” which was used to describe working-class and/or neighborhoods of color as damaged beyond repair and harmful to the city. The label of “blight” justified urban renewal projects in cities across the country in the following decades. New London became one of the most drastic examples of urban renewal in the Northeast. The destruction of Winthrop Cove between 1962 and 1967 resulted in the demolition of 690 homes, displacing 667 families, disproportionately families of color.¹⁹⁹ The displacement of families coupled with faulty appraisals that would not cover

¹⁹⁸ Banner and Kerns, *A Study of the Social and Economic Conditions of the Negro Population of New London, Connecticut*, 33.

¹⁹⁹ Connecticut Fair Housing Center, “Discrimination, Urban Renewal, and New London’s Lost Neighborhood.”

replacement housing, and the state and city's failure to create affordable replacement housing created long-lasting barriers to homeownership.²⁰⁰ Today, New London aid organizations recognize the harmful effects of professionalized aid's dissemination of behavioral explanations for poverty. The Southeastern Connecticut Community Land Trust (SE CT CLT) uses a mutual aid framework to mitigate housing inequality through protecting affordable homeownership in New London.

SE CT CLT is responding directly to the effects of Urban Renewal. City and state level planning destroyed neighborhoods because credentialed city officials and private interests labeled the areas "blighted."²⁰¹ The justification for the destruction of neighborhoods can be traced back to the original evolution of aid from community-based groups to professionalized academics who did not experience the impact of housing inequity. Contemporary aid groups seek to "undo" the impacts of a behavioral explanation for poverty by looking within the community and viewing personal experience as an asset in the mitigation of housing inequality.

The community land trust model was first established during the 1960s by Black sharecroppers in Georgia who had lost their homes to foreclosure. The organization grew into New Communities Inc., creating the tool of a community-based land trust framework.²⁰² Today there are over 225 formal community land trusts in the US in cities and towns that have struggled to maintain consistent levels of homeownership rates for working-class residents. Community land trusts are nonprofit organizations that seek to act as a community organizing asset through creating pathways to permanently affordable housing opportunities. Land trusts are governed by the community, consisting of a board of residents, general member representatives, and public officials. They vary in size and structure but generally work to advance both rural and urban

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² "Our History," New Communities Inc. 2017. <https://www.newcommunitiesinc.com/new-communities.html>

agricultural projects, develop commercial spaces to serve local communities, create affordable rental and cooperative housing projects, and conserve land or urban green spaces.²⁰³

The SE CT CLT in New London was established in 2010. The group's mission is “to hold land for the development and stewardship of permanently affordable housing, land for food production, green spaces, and facilities for community organizations.” They do so through creating accessible projects that allow for community collaboration that advance community development, support and promote issues related to social justice, and further neighborhood revitalization.²⁰⁴ Similar to the ways in which the War Canteen, NWWR, and UNWC relied on funding through community members and a portion of a community chest, the SE CT CLT is funded through membership, community gifts, partner organizations like Equity Trust (a revolving loan fund related to supporting socially conscious projects for stewarding property). Members are eligible to purchase a SE CT CLT home or other holding. Membership dues include a \$25 annual fee, but the fee can be waived for economic reasons, eliminating standards of deservingness or requirement of credentials.²⁰⁵ Connection and funding from the community allows for the decision-making to respond directly to the needs of the community, rather than the interests of a private institution. The group also continues to honor shared community governance as it partners with other community organizations to host meetings and events to discuss issues related to homeownership and future projects.

The community-based model has proved effective in accomplishing the land trusts missions. In 2018 SE CT CLT acquired and sold their first home to an income-qualifying

²⁰³ Southeastern Connecticut Community Land Trust, Accessed April 27, 2022. [https://sectclt.org/#:~:text=The%20Southeastern%20Connecticut%20Community%20Land%20Trust%20\(SE%20CT%20CLT\)%20is.and%20facilities%20for%20community%20organizations](https://sectclt.org/#:~:text=The%20Southeastern%20Connecticut%20Community%20Land%20Trust%20(SE%20CT%20CLT)%20is.and%20facilities%20for%20community%20organizations;); “Our History,” New Communities Inc.

²⁰⁴ Southeastern Connecticut Community Land Trust, accessed April 27, 2022.

²⁰⁵ Ibid; “Southeastern Connecticut Community Land Trust,” Equity Trust, 2021. <http://equitytrust.org/southeastern-connecticut-community-land-trust/>

homeowner. The house is a two-family home which provides housing to the homeowner and a reserved rental for a low-income member of the community.²⁰⁶ SE CT CLT exercises continued concern for maintaining affordable homeownership even after the initial sale of a home, as there are requirements for the affordability of renting out other spaces in multi-family home, and restriction on the ways in which the house can be resold in the future so that the affordability of the home can continue even after the immediate buyer moves away.

In some ways Connecticut College students, faculty, and staff have increasingly drawn attention to the ways in which the college was tied to harmful scholarly and development practices in New London, including the ways in which the college invested resources into the destruction of the Fort Trumbull neighborhood. My thesis is reflective of a department and administration that supports critical inquiry into the college's position within the community. Additionally, the college's Holleran Center is dedicated to supporting the land trust. Each year the Holleran Center allocates two students to intern for the group providing them with whatever support or research assistance they may need at no cost to the organization. However, there is a continued challenge of creating pathways to ethical and sustainable community engagement and study from private institutions that benefit not only the student or researcher but also the organization or project.

The SE CT CLT represents a contemporary example of the effectiveness of community-based organizations like the historic War Canteen or UNWC. The challenges faced by SE CT CLT and contemporary barriers to homeownership in New London are representative of a long history of the racialization of poverty that can be traced back to the anti-migrant sentiment beginning in 1910. The evolution of New London's aid organization and housing from 1910 to 1950 represents how the professionalization of aid is not synonymous with effectiveness.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

Professionalized aid politics resulted in a study of poverty by credentialed academics and social scientists that dominated and ultimately subsumed aid politics. Professionals prevented community-based organizations from meeting immediate needs as they established the flawed notion that specific behaviors led to poverty and poor housing conditions. Contemporary organizations and social science must center lived experiences and perspectives that can demonstrate the needs of the community. Understanding the history of what is lost when aid politics abandons community voices demonstrates how the community-based and mutual aid models for aid provisioning must be preserved and applied to continued struggles related to housing.

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