



Martha Clark Parlin and Robinson S. Parlin – *Philanthropy*

Martha Clark Parlin was born in Wheeling on December 11, 1887, the daughter of Scottish immigrants, and became a high school teacher after attending the Thomas Normal School, Chicago University, and Columbia University. She rose to become the supervisor of Home Economics at Wheeling High School, retiring in 1942 after 30 years of service. After her retirement, she remained active in the Wheeling community serving on the board of Children and Family Services, the Women's Club of Wheeling and its Book Review Circle, the Wheeling Pan-Hellenic organization, and the Wheeling Garden Club.

Robinson S. Parlin was born in Watertown, MA, on March 25, 1887, of Scottish highlander ancestry and, after service in the Army during World War I, became an agent for the Internal Revenue Service assigned to the Wheeling, WV, office. He was an amateur photographer and after arriving in Wheeling created a photographic album of various sites in the city and throughout the State of West Virginia, showing coal communities, lumber camps, railroads, city views, and nature scenes during the 1920s.

Martha and Robinson apparently met through their common membership in Vance Memorial Presbyterian Church and were married August 18, 1937. He was 50 years of age; she was 49. They had no children, and they lived quietly in Meadow Estates in a home they built. They also saved their money.

When she died in 1968, she left an estate of nearly \$900,000; when he died 14 years later, his separate estate was valued at nearly \$800,000. Their wills were nearly identical and provided for the creation of charitable trusts, the income of which was to be used for the promotion of the health and welfare of crippled or mentally challenged children or the blind in Ohio County, West Virginia. Throughout the years since, the charitable trusts have grown to the point that combined they are just under \$10 million and annually provide nearly \$500,000 in financial support to a variety of Wheeling-based charitable organizations that promote the physical and mental well-being and education of challenged and underprivileged children in Ohio County, West Virginia.

In no small part because of the Parlin Trusts, the Wheeling area is the smallest community in the country supporting an Easter Seals Center (the only such organization in West Virginia), supporting the Augusta Levy Learning Center for autistic children using Applied Behavioral Analysis (the first such organization in West Virginia), and supporting Wheeling Country Day School's Center for Multisensory Learning to identify dyslexia at a young age and stimulate different pathways for learning and overcoming dyslexia. But these are just a few of the charitable organizations receiving funding. Others during the years include the Laughlin Chapel, Oglebay Foundation, the J.B. Chambers YMCA, the Miracle League of the Ohio Valley Baseball Field, Oglebay Institute, and both Ohio County Schools and West Virginia Northern Community College for the purchases of devices to assist visually impaired children to attend classes. Scores of charitable organizations have also received annual financial support from the Parlin charitable trusts.

The Parlins came from humble backgrounds and lived modest lives, but what they have accomplished through their generosity and foresight has changed the lives of countless Wheeling children whom they never expected to know and whose gratitude they never expected to receive. This is indeed the true measure of a philanthropist, at least in Wheeling.