"An Organized Campaign of Nagging"
Gender and the Creation of Cleveland's
Pioneer Birth Control Clinic
Jimmy Meyer

In the 1920s, two young, upper-class Cleveland women, new mothers themselves, empathized with the plight of less-privileged women, uninformed about effective contraception. They utilized existing networks of reform to create the Maternal Health Association (MHA) Birth Control Clinic, a private, voluntary, woman-centered health service. Family ties and gender figured heavily in the clinic's founding, staffing, and early management. Rather than openly agitating for change, MHA founders stretched acceptable reform parameters to legitimate the tainted cause of birth control. Their cautious actions helped shape the pattern of clinical contraceptive service common across North America, a pattern which endures in the 1990s.