

COMMUNITY HOUSE—WHERE VILLAGERS WORK AND PLAY

Community House Fills Unique Place In Village

(Continued from preceding page) In the same season that another Big Country Festival was given, this time at the estate of Mr. and Mrs. George T. Hendrie, on April 28, 1924.

Facilities Inadequate
Already the facilities of the little house were inadequate, and in the spring of 1924 another benefit was staged to obtain funds for the remodeling and enlarging of the Community House. Mrs. T. J. Donovan opened her home for this event, which was followed by the first membership drive for maintenance funds, to which about 1600 persons responded.

In the fall of 1924, Mrs. Mary Clark Griffith took up her duties as resident hostess. That same season Mrs. Marian Boring Smith began the first dancing classes for children in the Community House. For the next year and a half the uses of the Community House multiplied in many ways. The desire to be of service to the village led to the establishment in the fall of 1924 of the employment office under the direction of Mrs. David Trumbull. Mrs. Whiting W. Raymond was chairman of a volunteer committee to help in the organization of this department and was active in establishing the office.

The little building in which the project was first housed, saw the very beginnings and later development of the new flourishing Village Players. First rehearsals were held there and performances were given monthly.

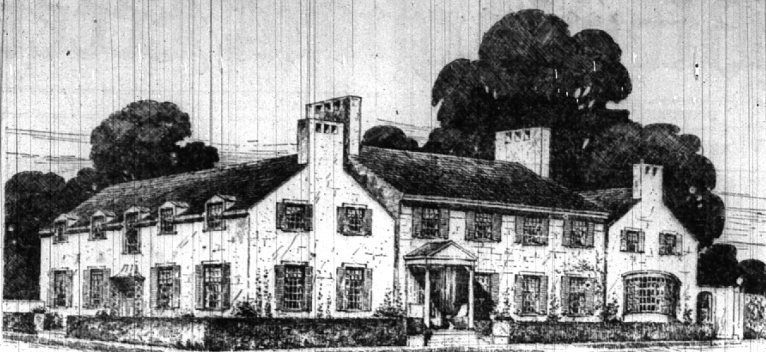
Use Increases
In November, 1925, the young people's Saturday night dances were begun, and calls for the use of the house for parties, meetings and gatherings of all sorts grew apace. In January, 1926, plans for building a larger structure were first discussed.

The adjustments and investigations necessary to organizing the Community House Association so that it would be in a position to properly administer the enlarged facilities of a new building were made with their best judgment, time and energy, so that a dream might become a reality.

A benefit performance on the opening night of the new Birmingham Theater gave a substantial start to the project, and in the spring of 1928 a building fund campaign was launched after a land purchase committee had evidenced its sincerity by buying a suitable parcel of land and donating it to the cause.

\$125,000 Raised
The willingness and enthusiasm of the many people who threw themselves into the task of raising the \$125,000 necessary to build, furnish and maintain the Community House for two years was a sure token of success, and the campaign ended with the necessary funds pledged, so that the Board of Directors felt that the project should be undertaken.

A planning and advisory board, consisting of Whiting W. Raymond, Walter Connolly, Harry Starr, Fletcher Richards, John E. Martz, Clarence Vliet, R. J. Corry, Mrs. P. H. Mann and Mrs. R. C. Dierens, undertook the task of preparing for this building. Consultation with the architect, H. S. Muchman and Fred Farrar, finally evolved the splendid plan



which we now see realized on the corner of Bates and Townsend streets.

In thinking back over this story of effort a few names of those who are now gone come readily to mind. Susan Frances Miller, in whose memory the auditorium is named, was most active in the early planning and was the first president of the Community House.

Two young girls who were most devoted in their efforts for the Community House were Florence Adams to whose memory the lovely carved fire place in the Ruth Shain room is dedicated, and Margaret Bell who was active in so-acting the furnishings for the new house and always helpful in other work.

Thrift Shop Opened
During the period following the building campaign, the work of the Community House went on as usual—the activities multiplying to the extent that the employment office and thrift shop had to be taken to another building.

The thrift shop, an innovation introduced by Miss Grish, was set up to find a way of helping those families with reduced incomes to outfit themselves with clothing at a small cost. Outgrown and discarded clothing was assembled and in this way a double service was rendered to the community. Quantities of clothing were, and still are, given away also through the medium of the Community House.

In April, 1929, the cornerstone of the new building was laid and on March 17, 1930, the new house was opened to one of the largest public gatherings ever seen in Birmingham. A reception in the afternoon followed by dancing in the evening proclaimed the interest of the village by the remarkable attendance.

Mrs. Warren Pease was chairman of this house warming and Miss Griffith, Mrs. William McClure, Mrs. Fred Trumbull and others, through the staff of the Community House, assisted in making the day a success.

Brucker Speaks
The opening of the house was followed by the formal dedication on April 28, 1930, at which F. H. Holt acted as chairman. Gov. Wilbur M. Brucker, then attorney-general, was the speaker.

The usefulness of the new Community House is only beginning to be felt. The building houses the Girl and Boy Scouts and the Business and Professional Women's club of their own. A games room for boys, donated by Judson Bradway, is maintained. The athletic exchange, Lions and Gryphette Clubs meet weekly for luncheon. The Girl Reserve and club for household employees meet twice each month from September to June. At 7 P. M. dinners are held monthly; the employment office is open daily from 8 to 12; the thrift shop is open three afternoons a week from September to June and Saturday night dances for young people are held weekly throughout the winter months.

A Friday night dancing club for young married folk has recently been sponsored by the Community House. The Thursday Musicals, Farm and Garden Club, and the Gardeners Club hold monthly meetings. The American Association of University Women and the Women's Literary Club make use of the house for occasional gatherings.

Luncheons, teas, receptions and dinners are given in increasing numbers, and the house has even been the scene of two weddings.

Welfare Work Stressed
Welfare work done in the village has always been a major concern of the Community House staff. Mill and shoes for children

are two specialties of Community House relief, although inevitably welfare work leads into many fields.

During the past year the Village Commission has supplied the funds to pay for charity nursing in the village and for the services of a trained welfare worker. Both of these activities have been housed in the Community House and have fitted into a scheme of community co-operation for public relief.

The Community House is organized and incorporated with a land-holding Board of Trustees composed of Henry Hart, Charles

R. Randall, Clarence Vliet, Ray E. Palmer, Charles J. Shain and John E. Martz.

The Board of Directors is the policy-forming body, but the house in the last analysis belongs to the residents of Birmingham, since it is they who have built it, who supply the money to maintain it and who use it more and more each year.

Might
Justice, in New York city, might leave the bandage on her eyes, since it can do no harm and may help the benighted.—Detroit News.

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Mrs. Hope F. Halgren
Executive Director of the Community House.

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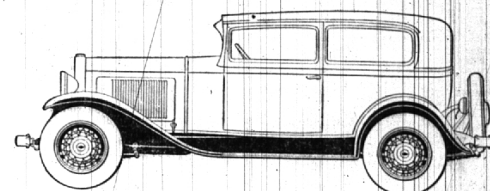
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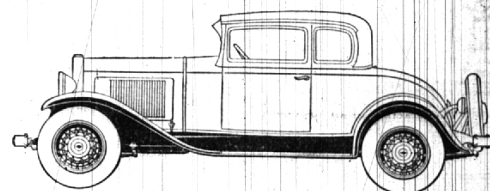
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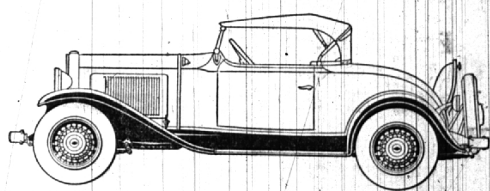
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