

Week Ends Eleven Years of Unselfish Service to Birmingham

Saturday Night Dances Safeguard Youngsters

High School Boys And Girls Prefer Community House Affairs To Road House Dances

It is Saturday night amid the flashing incandescents of a metropolis. The soft moan of a saxophone filters down from the windows of a brightly lighted hall along with the savage tom-tom of the drums and intermingled with them is the murmuring surf of many feet.

Saturday night and youth is dancing. Cars are parked in rows about the hall. Girls and boys are strolling about between dances, pushing their way through a throng of "stags." Or perhaps they are all boys without complaint, paying their nickel a dance to "kiss" around with said hostesses. Or maybe it isn't brightly lighted hall, but a hole-in-the-wall where youth rubs shoulders with the underworld; where the next couple may just as well be a gangster and his "moll" as your boy or your girl.

Dancing youth is a problem that has always been with us—a problem that recent years have seen complicated by the "jazz" period. It is leaving that every mother and father faces with the coming of adolescence in their children. It is a problem not easily solved, either, for youth has the urge to dance and dance it will.

Birmingham has the dance-hall problem whipped and has had it that way for the past six years. There never has been a dance hall in Birmingham within the memory of the present day residents.

Started Six Years Ago

And there isn't any need for one, thanks to the far-sightedness of a few women in the community who have given their time and energies to furnishing dancing for the boys and girls of high school age with the help and co-operation of the Community House. For long before the present building was more than a wild dream, a few mothers, headed by Mrs. Harvey Whelan, realized that some dance program was arranged for within the village, their sons and daughters would be elsewhere.

The old Community House didn't offer much in the way of facilities. It was a small, low-ceilinged and lacking in facilities. But it did have a band, and their children's friends.

At first they just dropped in. Somebody played the piano and the rest danced. The idea caught on with other parents.

"I can't go out to dance tonight," a youngster would ask.

"Yes, if you go to the Community House," the reply.

For the parent knew that there would be no dangers there. They would be around their friends and chaperones and they felt free themselves to drop in for a minute and see how the boys and girls were getting on. So they encouraged their children to go. And the youngsters liked to go. Most of them always preferred to go to the Community House to dance. They prefer if they can find it.

Local Boys Play

The Saturday night dances grew and grew. They outgrew the old Community House before the new one was completed but they had no place to go to until the present building was opened and the Community Hall and lounges were thrown open to them. When these facilities were available children had to drop in.

Every Saturday night, throughout the winter season, the young people of the village dance at the Community House, and it is a real community affair. The orchestra is a local organization of boys of high school age, directed by Dick Brown. They are paid for their playing from the proceeds of the dances. Usually the boys get five cents for the dance—just to take care of the music. The lights, management and all other details are the contribution of the Community House. The boys' task includes always there are present two or three of the committee that has this activity in charge. Usually there are half dozen or more parents who have dropped in to see the dance. The committee wishes more parents would come. It is proud of the dances, proud of the way the boys and girls conduct themselves and of the way the youngsters enjoy themselves. It is proud of the fact that every mother and father visit at the Community House to see what they are like. Mr. Whelan is still in charge, but the dances have been attended the dances each week. Mrs. Whelan is still in charge, but the dances have been attended the dances through the years by Mrs. W. B. Brown, Mrs. L. M. Baker, Mrs. J. L. White and Mrs. W. H. Burgess. These women are still on the job, excepting Mrs. Burgess who has moved away from the village, and they take their turns at the dances.

Exchange Club Has Weekly Luncheon

Some thirty members of the Exchange club meet once a week for lunch at the Community House.

The Exchange club is a service organization of business women of Birmingham, who meet to become better acquainted on with the business and well known for mutual advancement and to be of service to others.

The Exchange club is a regular customer of the Community House. Its president this year is Oscar Anderson and its membership embraces and includes many of the business women of the community.

HOSTESS PLAYS IMPORTANT ROLE

The Community House is a place where they can enjoy themselves in the milky way, to bring place that is wholesome and safe, and close to home.

And Birmingham youth, as a result, isn't swelling the attendance at the road houses and "sandwich shacks."

Worth maintaining, isn't it?

Mrs. Edith Wall

is working. She helps the red cross in the kitchen, helps arrange the table, if she's asked, and often stays there to look after when the merry-makers have gone.

Do the boys in the games room need an older hand to help them? Mrs. Wall is on the job to do it. Can she help with something special in the way of decorations for the table at a Rotary meeting? Is there a young girl committee in doubt as to what to do for her group's dinner party? Is the club that's meeting properly equipped with chairs and tables?

All these things are part of Mrs. Wall's official and unofficial duties.

Does a newcomer in the village seek out the Community House for information? Mrs. Wall is there to welcome her and direct her to the proper person. Are there visitors from another community? Her's the duty to show them about and to make them feel at home.

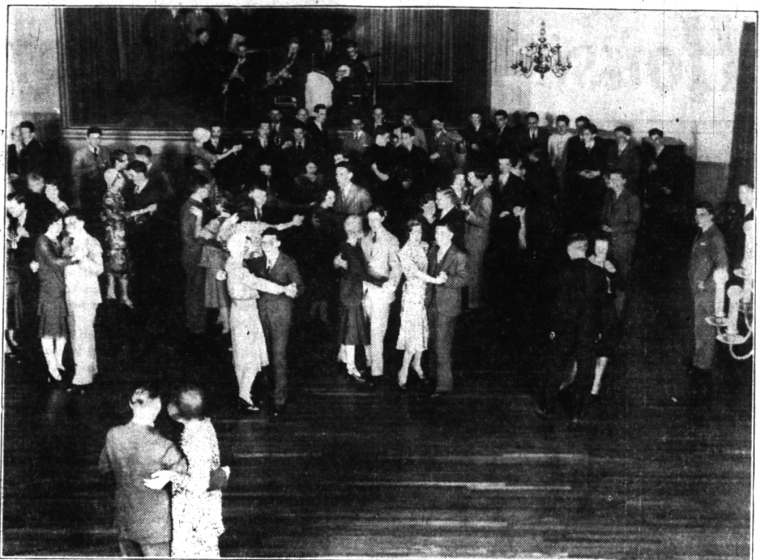
And when there are large civic affairs at the Community House, Mrs. Wall helps as she sees them to make the general arrangements come true and to add the little touches that are so essential to give the affair the real "home" atmosphere.

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The position of hostess is almost as old as the Community House. It is the first position that was created and it embraced all phases of the operation at the start. But Mrs. Wall finds plenty to do with the social side alone. She's busy every day.

For there were something over 50,000 people who used the Community House last year and entertaining 50,000 people is no sinecure.

A Regular Sight Each Saturday Night



Between 75 and 100 couples attend these dances every Saturday night. Parents are always welcome, too, and the younger children, from 12 to 15 years, may now dance from 8 to 9:30 o'clock, preceding the senior party.

Work In Welfare Shows True Spirit of House

(Continued from Page One)

fer to go down to the deepest depths of privation rather than accept a single dot of public welfare.

It gave Milk For Babies.

It is to these people that the Community House has been a true friend. It has made minor loans, it has supplied the names and addresses of families who needed help.

In addition, the Community House has been distributor for such other help. At Thanksgiving time and Christmas the Good fellows came to the Community House, supplied the names and addresses of families needing food baskets, and with the help of the various churches, sent out more than 400 baskets. Private individuals, too, came to the Community House at these holiday times, and the families they might help. The investigations made by Mrs. Lynch again supplied the names and addresses of families who needed help.

In all, 720 home visits have been made, and 100 office hours have been conducted. There are 100 cases on record in the Community House, and also in the Township records, which are being cared for by public and private agencies.

Daily there have been gifts coming to the Community House, and daily a spirit of helpfulness and a desire to make the aid as inconspicuous as possible. That is why Birmingham has not been doing better before, and that is why it is being done now.

For the Community House has another year to face, a year in which its relief efforts will be continued and if possible increased.

For Birmingham is an "old" community in the country where a salesman for a magazine—regardless of its merit—would quickly run out of prospect.

For Birmingham is an "old" community. Nobody has compiled the roster of the advertising men, and those closely connected with the publishing business, who reside here and it would cover a considerable sized sheet of paper. They are thick, as the saying goes.

Here the Poor Richards' manager of the many advertisements that makes use of the facilities of the Community House for a series of dancing parties adds to the reviewer's list of the profession, and he sends out the notices, collects the fees and pays the bills. The others just come to the parties, dance and make merry.

And the Community House, with its splendid dance floor and cozy parlors, offers an ideal place for these parties.

The Reason Why Many Enjoy Tasty Meals

Because the activities of the Birmingham Community House are many.

Because they touch different lives differently.

Because it is a policy not to parade the aid given to others—

Because its tasks are done quietly and without the fanfare of publicity—

Because of these facts, this special section of The Birmingham Eccentric has been prepared to reveal the activities of the Community House to you, that you may know the deep part it plays in the daily lives of us all, and may realize fully its worth and need, and the need for it in our community.

The Birmingham Community House Association and the committee in charge of the annual roll call is most appreciative of the good wishes of the members of The Birmingham Eccentric in helping to make this section of the magazine a reality and in providing the means to help the community which its Community House has done and is doing.

THE COMMUNITY HOUSE ASSOCIATION.

POOR RICHARDS ENJOY DANCES

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History of Community House Reveals Spirit

Is A Memorial To Unswerving Devotion Of Public Spirited Men And Women

By RUTH SHAIN

The only worthwhile narrative of past events is the story of the people, who shaped and moulded these events. There is a distinctiveness about institutions, their personality is derived from the workers who give them life and develop them. The spirit of villages shines forth through the agencies of the institutions they foster. Some-how Birmingham has a highly personalized identity—fine looking buildings, purposeful organizations and alert and resourceful people.

From far afield have come comments about Birmingham's Community House. Considered as a human institution, it is unmatched by another in many towns, and even in many states.

Our Community House had its inception in the mind of Charles McCurdy. The complex motive in his mind was to have a place where the talents and inclination to help in a broad program of community endeavor who are attracted by a strict sectarian set of duties. The first committee devised to carry out this idea had as its chairman Mrs. George W. Strelinger and its secretary Mrs. Charles Shain.

Started in Spring of 1921

The League of St. James Women under this leadership in January 1921, decided to sponsor the construction of a community house which, according to the resolutions should be "big enough to house mass meetings, concerts as part of its physical duties, and should be broad enough spiritually to undertake the leadership of the social and welfare work of Birmingham."

Because the tasks are done quietly and without the fanfare of publicity—

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Another Fete day was instituted on July 26, 1923 on Mr. and Mrs. Hendrie's estate, where the police again assumed to raise money for the maintenance of the project. Dancing, a style show, fortune telling, cafeteria, and flower sale were the chief attractions and netted the cause \$128.11.

There soon came as resident hostesses two enthusiastic girls from Grand Rapids, Mary Martin and Dorothy Dickinson from Fresh Vassar. Camp Fire Groups, child-to-house mass meetings, concert cookery were new projects instituted by these girls, while Mrs. Peters took over the nursing and conduct of a day nursery for children of pre-school age. A business office was also organized in October, 1923, in the Community House program.

In November of this year Mrs. Miller resigned the presidency and the leadership then fell to Mrs. Shain to remain until September 1924 when Mrs. Fredrick Heit took charge. During those seven years much of the stirring history of the Community House was written. New schools, the new library, the new City Hall, the new Court House, the new City Hall, the new Court House, the new City Hall, the new Court House.

The first Community House Roll call took place in April 1924. It was headed by Mrs. John Marietta and Mrs. Whiting Raymond and earned \$1950.

Inaugurated Christmas Carolers

Beneficial Christmas carol singing boomed the remainder of the year. At Christmas, the Community House was the recipient of a good many gifts. A good will—a tree, a Christmas Eve celebration and gay candles made a most beautiful picture of a surprised citizenry.

Carols were sung by Camp Fire Girls groups strolling through the village from house to house. The Civic League, an activity sponsored by the Community House, took charge along with Miss Griffith. There was no longer any doubt in the people's minds that the enterprise was established as an attractive, wholesome, and useful one. In February 1925, Mrs. John Marietta's annual meeting, it was disclosed that more than 7000 persons had used the Community House since the start of 1925. The Girl Reserves became a new group under the leadership of Mrs. Whiting Raymond. Their first president being Miss Jane Wall.

Two ladies adorned the cake on April 28, which was cut by Mrs. Frank Miller, the first president of the Community House. Mrs. Whiting Raymond was the guest of honor. Mrs. T. B. Smith was general chairman, the whole lowdown of the enterprise was given by spring showers, latticed recesses, and gay flowers.

So far as the Community House adds now an information and unemployment bureau under Mrs. Shain. It was the first nucleus of a building fund. About \$400 was set aside that spring.

Welfare Work Begun in 1926

Welfare work received much attention during the winter of 1926 and 1927. The practice of making the Community House the center and clearing point for distribution of funds for the relief centers of the villagers was continued and broadened. The Men's Club was started. Mrs. Whiting Raymond in this idea of centering welfare activities in one responsible person. Mrs. Whiting Raymond was the general director of village charity.

Three winter-while women were already members of the Board by this time. Mrs. Harvey Whelan, Mrs. R. H. Manan, Mrs. E. E. Wilson and the third birthday party April 28, 1926 found the little house far from the Community House. The house was transformed beyond recognition. The house was transformed beyond recognition. The house was transformed beyond recognition. The house was transformed beyond recognition.

The third Roll Call for membership was held in the Community House numbered its friends by the hundreds. To read the list of names was a task. The Community House sound like a telephone directory. Men entered the group as advisory members. Mrs. Whiting Raymond, Vliet, Earl Potter, and Whiting Raymond representing the first committee of the Community House. The activities became multiple, the house overflowed daily. Night (Continued on Page Four)



Mrs. Charles Shain, house on the corner of Bates and West Maple. This ancient dwelling was rebuilt, and under Mrs. John Marietta was decorated and furnished. A sign with "Birmingham Community House" was hung in the hallway and the efforts of a mass of workers were given to local habitation and a name.

Mrs. Miller First President

The first board to administer the destinies of this new project had Mrs. Frank Miller as president, Mrs. Charles Shain, vice-president, Mrs. Arthur Hartwell, secretary, Mrs. John Marietta, treasurer, Mrs. Albert E. Peters and Mrs. T. B. Donovan. Soon Mrs. George Hendrie, Mrs. Seymour Adams, Mrs. Whiting Raymond and Mrs. Whiting Raymond.

HAS ACTIVE DIRECTION

Mrs. Hope Halgren

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