

PUBLIC SERVICE INSTITUTIONS

The Birmingham Community House



The presentation of public services rendered by institutions in Birmingham would not be complete without mentioning the Bir-

Com.-House Hostess



Julia K. Lally
Mrs. Lally is full-time hostess at Birmingham's Community House. In her care is the operation of the House, a publicly supported center of many activities in the community life of Birmingham and vicinity.

mingham Community House which, while not supported through a direct tax upon local property, nevertheless receives a generous annual support by voluntary subscription. The Community House has often been referred to as "the heart of Birmingham." In the sense of a community center for all people, for any and all types of organizations, for the young and the older people, the House performs an unusual and vital function.

The present spacious building, a picture of which you observe above, is the successor of a humble frame house that stood at the southwest corner of West Maple avenue and Bates street, owned by the Episcopal Church. This dwelling was where the "community house idea" was first promulgated.

However, in 1930, following a successful community-wide campaign to raise funds for the present building, the House was finally opened to the public. Contributions and pledges amounting to approximately \$125,000.00 were obtained and ever since, in the spring of each year, a campaign for carrying on the House's work is sponsored and carried to success by local citizens. The budget for 1939-40 was set at \$133,155.00.

It would require several pages to tell the whole story of the Community House, but we shall confine this presentation to these summarized facts, covering the House's activities for 1939: in that year 69,920 persons used the House; 13,653 meals were served;

The City Assessor performs such duties in relation to the assessing of property and levying of taxes and special assessments as are prescribed by City charter and the laws of the state.

1,086 meetings of various kinds were held; 2,789 persons were placed in gainful positions; and 2,089 articles were given out of welfare cupboards, including food, clothing, and coal.

Y. M. C. A. Secretary



Robert D. Lynd
For nearly 20 years Mr. Lynd has been executive secretary of the Birmingham branch of the Y. M. C. A. He is also director of the Y's summer camp near Hale, Michigan. He lives at 367 Fern-dale avenue.

Birmingham's New Postoffice

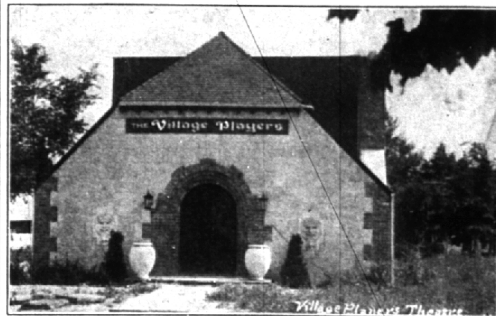


Uncle Sam, after many years of renting space for his Birmingham postoffice, a year ago set aside \$130,000.00 for the site and structure of his own building, work on which is now going ahead in the

half-block bounded by West Maple avenue, Bates, and Martin streets. The land cost \$25,000.00 and the remainder of the federal appropriation is being spent for building and landscaping. The front of the

postoffice will face the Baldwin Public Library on Martin street. The material is brick and cut stone. It will be ready for occupancy within the next ten months.

The Village Players



While not supported by direct Episcopal Church, situated on the taxation, Birmingham has within site where the new postoffice is built its confines an amateur theatrical ing erected, at West Maple avenue organization known as the Village and Bates street. The Playhouse Players. They have a membership was built in 1928, and represents of 240, and own the structure an investment of more than \$200, shown above. The Village Players 000.00. The Players is recognized was started in 1924, and its first as one of the outstanding histrionic offerings were shown in a small one of the organizations in the middle house formerly owned by the local west.

History of Birmingham

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ter began operation of a blacksmith's shop and foundry. Then came the first tavern, built by John Hamilton. It was located at the southeast corner of what is now Woodward and Hamilton avenues. Later, much later, this was developed into the National House, a hostelry which figured largely in the social and commercial history of early Birmingham. Then in 1833 came the first store, operated by Sullivan Kelsey, and three years later, in 1836, Piety Hill had a postoffice. It was in the charge of this same Sullivan Kelsey.

Some persons still living have heard of the old Ball Line Road. It was a mile east of the settlement and, in a somewhat strange fashion, connected with Detroit. It was surveyed in 1819. The early days of the Saginaw Trail, which is now Woodward Avenue, were nothing to boast of. It is something of a skeleton in the highway closet which the early settlers would not speak of if they were still alive to do so.

Followed more roads and, with their completion, added population more persons to work and to live. And then came government.

The township of Bloomfield was organized in 1828, comprising what is now Bloomfield and West Bloomfield townships, with three commissioners elected as its governing body. The following year fifteen highway overseers, nine fence viewers, and three pound masters were appointed. Fifty dollars were voted for the poor, and a bounty of five dollars each on wolves was offered.

Roswell T. Merrill, with his son-in-law, William Brown, purchased the Hunter Foundry in 1832 and moved it to what is now the southwest corner of Woodward and Maple avenues. As his business grew and he added thrashing machines and farm implements to his output, the factory was enlarged and extended westward on Maple avenue.

The second man to open a store in Piety Hill was a Mr. Clock, and he was followed by Orrin Poppleton. Then in 1841 Merrill erected the first brick store for T. A. Flower, who at the same time assumed the duties of postmaster. He was succeeded in the postoffice by H. T. Botsford, Orrin Poppleton, George L. Lee, and J. Allen Bigelow in turn, all of whom were village merchants.

It is now "Birmingham" was not given to the community until many years later. It came at the time when the community was flourishing with small factories and foundries, and it is said to have been suggested by Merrill, who owned a foundry. He said the community resembled Birmingham, England, in its manufacturing propensities and should be so called. This was after Sault Williams built his railroad. In 1839 this picturesque fellow promoted an extension of the Detroit, Grand Haven and Milwaukee railroad. Then the old fire-eater took the

greatest pride in beating the train to Detroit in his stage coach.

Between 500 and 600 people lived here at that time. They found employment at Mortimer Smith's foundry, the tanning mill factory of Jerome Walton, Alonzo Snow's wagon factory, D. B. Fox's plow works, a broom factory, and a brick factory.

The flare of manufacturing died down almost as suddenly as it had begun, and Birmingham then reverted to a more settled type of community, which characteristic it still retains.

Schools and Churches
Birmingham's present educational system had a humble beginning. Prior to the opening of the first school in the community, classes were taught in a log house, in the Township in 1822. It was located at Swan's Plains, a mile north of Birmingham, and Harvey Parke was the first teacher.

In 1824 a district school was opened in the barn on the Hamilton property, and later the Old Red School house was built on West Maple avenue. Many people still living in Birmingham received their early education there. Later the building was torn down to make room for a residence, and the Hill School was erected. Hill School served Birmingham children until 1917 when the present Baldwin High School was built. Hill School, now again accommodating several high school classes, remains the oldest school building in the city. In addition to these buildings, four elementary and junior high schools have been constructed, Adams in 1921, Barnum in 1925, Pierce in 1924, and Quanton in 1927. Adams School was en-

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Postmaster



James A. Byrne
Postmaster Byrne has served Birmingham in his present capacity since July 1, 1933. Within the next ten months he and his staff will be in the new postoffice at Martin and Bates streets.