

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**SENT TO D.C.**

7-2-07

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name                    **Community House**  
other names/site number   **Winnetka Community House**

**2. Location**

street & number            **620 Lincoln Avenue**                     Not for publication  
city or town                    **Winnetka**                                     vicinity  
state **Illinois**                code **IL**            county **Cook**            code **031**            zip code **60093**

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

**Illinois Historic Preservation Agency**

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

American Indian Tribe

Name of Property **Community House**

County and State **Cook County, IL**

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain):	_____	_____

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#### 5. Classification

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##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

##### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>  3  </u>	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>  3  </u>	_____ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register **None**

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Name of Property **Community House**

County and State **Cook County, IL**

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

**SOCIAL/Civic**

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

**SOCIAL/Civic**

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

**Tudor Revival**  
**Colonial Revival**

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation **Concrete**

Roof **Slate**

Walls **Brick**

other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) (See **Continuation Sheets**)

Name of Property **Community House**

County and State **Cook County, IL**

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### 8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

#### **Social History**

Period of Significance      **1911-1956**

Significant Dates          **1911; 1924; 1931**

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder          **Coffin, Arthur; Hamilton, Fellows and Nedved**

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) (**See Continuation Sheets**)

Name of Property **Community House**

County and State **Cook County, IL**

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### 9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)  
(See Continuation Sheets)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository **Winnetka Historical Society, Winnetka Community House**

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### 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property **3 acres**

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

1 **16 439363 4661827**    3 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_    4 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

(See Continuation Sheet)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

(See Continuation Sheet)

Name of Property **Community House**

County and State **Cook County, IL**

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title **Gwen Sommers Yant**

organization **Benjamin Historic Certifications, LLC** date **April, 2007**

street & number **711 Marion** telephone **847-432-1865**

city or town **Highland Park** state **Illinois** zip code **60035**

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name **(See Continuation Sheet)**

street & number telephone

city or town state zip code

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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WINNETKA COMMUNITY HOUSE  
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## Winnetka Community House: Description

### Summary

Situated on a three-acre parcel of land, the Winnetka Community House (WCH) is located at 620 Lincoln Avenue in northeast Winnetka, Illinois. This rambling, two-story, predominantly masonry, Tudor Revival Style building stretches 340 feet along Pine Street and 100 feet along Lincoln Avenue, at the north edge of the East Elm Business district just beyond where the commercial district meets the early-twentieth century residential area immediately north. The main façade along Lincoln Avenue is fronted by a deep lawn studded with mature canopy trees, while the side façade along Pine Street is fronted mostly by a shallow parking lot. The building is bounded on the west by the embankment of a below-grade railroad bed, and on the south by a municipal parking lot that serves the business district.

Constructed over the period 1911 to 2003, the Winnetka Community House generally grew from east to west through a series of additions. As a result, it is irregularly massed and topped by a complex roofscape. The exterior and interior of the Community House complex are characterized by quality construction and materials, straightforward design, and a high degree of integrity. The main building, constructed in 1911 and reconstructed in 1931 after a disastrous fire, is located at the south end of Lincoln Avenue and primarily contains the main reception area and large meeting rooms. Immediately west of it is the 1924 addition, which primarily contains a kitchen and auditorium. Attached to west end of the latter is the 1931 Douglas Smith Gymnasium, to which in turn, attached to the west, is the 1971 Nursery School wing. Attached to the west rear corner of the complex is the 2003 south wing.

Also attached to Community House, but separate from it both functionally and by ownership, are two buildings that face onto Lincoln Avenue—the 1906, Norman Style, rusticated limestone "Children's Chapel," which is located at the northeast corner of Community House, and the rusticated limestone 1954 Gothic Revival Style Harkness Hall which is located between the church and the main Community House building. The Winnetka Community House complex also includes two freestanding buildings—a ca.1900 Colonial Revival Style frame residence known as "Champion House" located immediately south of the main Community House building on Lincoln Avenue, and an Arts and Crafts influenced Tudor Revival Style brick structure formerly used as an electric substation. It is located in the southwest corner of the property facing the railroad tracks.

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The Winnetka Community House is located in the center of the Village of Winnetka, adjacent to the commercial district, but bordering on the residential areas to the north and east. Winnetka is located approximately 18 miles from the center of Chicago, along the north line of the Union Pacific Railway (formerly the Chicago and North Western Railway) and on the western shore of Lake Michigan. The villages of Kenilworth and Wilmette are to the south; Northfield is to the west and Glencoe is to the north. It is situated in New Trier Township on Chicago's North Shore, ¾ mile west of Lake Michigan and 1-1/4 miles east of Route 41, the major transportation route linking Chicago to the North Shore suburbs.

Winnetka was incorporated in 1869, but its origin dates from the 1830s and 1840s, when a small settlement grew up around a tavern known as the "Wayside Inn" located on the Green Bay Trail. Green Bay Road generally follows the route of this trail and located just to the west of the Community House, across the tracks of the Chicago and North Western Railway. In 1853, Charles Peck, a friend of Walter Gurnee, President of the rail line that was to become the Chicago & North Western, arrived, and he and Gurnee laid out and platted land within the boundaries of Winnetka. Peck and his wife Sarah came to be known as the founders of Winnetka and were responsible for naming the village "Winnetka," a Native American term meaning "beautiful land." In the central section of town, where the Community House is located, streets tended to follow a grid pattern. The surrounding roads follow the ravine-cut geography of the land located adjacent to the land where the Community House was built.

#### PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

##### Community House/Harkness House/Children's Chapel Complex--Exterior

The Winnetka Community House is a long, irregularly massed, linear structure oriented east-west on its site. The front of the main building faces east onto Lincoln Avenue. This façade, originally constructed in 1911, and reconstructed in 1931 after a disastrous fire, is L-shaped and retains its integrity from the latter date almost completely. Deeply set back, it is fronted by a broad lawn shaded by mature trees. Both the projecting and recessed portions of this façade are dominated by large, asymmetrically placed cross gables faced with random-coursed, rusticated limestone ashlar. The façade is topped by a complex roofscape of steep, slate-covered slopes visible from grade level. Behind these roofs and not visible from the street are expanses of asphalt-covered pitched or hipped roofs. The roofs are drained by copper gutters and downspouts.

The recessed east façade of the "L" is 36' across, and has a large cross gable containing the main entrance at its south end. This cross gable is fronted by a large concrete terrace with broad stairs at its east end that lead to the sidewalk. The front entry is comprised of twin pairs of wood doors recessed within tall, pointed arch openings trimmed with smooth limestone quoins and voussoirs. Both the arched transoms and the upper panels of the doors are filled with leaded glass in a grid pattern. Centered above and between the front door arches is a tall rectangular window, with trim matching the arched doorway and fronted by a stone balcony on whose face is carved "Community House" in Gothic letters. The window is divided into a six-part grid by limestone muntins. Each window within the grid is steel, and has casement or awning windows with divided lights. Set in the wall directly above the window is a



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pointed arch of voussoirs and centered above it, in the gable end, is a blind lancet. North of this cross gable, the wall surface is half timbered on the second floor and on the first floor has a projecting bay containing three transomed, steel, divided light casement windows separated by stone muntins and flanked by quoins. The bay is topped by a copper pent roof.

The main building's front façade "L" continues is 42' long and has a wall chimney at the east end of the terrace. This chimney matches the wall material to the roof line, where it continues in red face brick and terminates with a simple concrete cap. Like the first floor windows of the entry façade, the windows on this façade are transomed groups of steel, divided light casements, recessed within smooth limestone muntins and are trimmed with smooth limestone quoins. On the first floor there are a pair of windows east of the chimney and a ribbon of five windows west of the chimney. On the second floor there are a pair of windows east of the chimney, and west of the chimney there are a pair of windows and a grouping of three windows.

The projecting (east) wall of the main building's front façade "L" is subtly, yet intricately massed and textured from the north to the south end of its 66' length. At the north end is a large rusticated limestone cross gable, adjacent to and slightly stepped. Behind this there is a shorter wall gable whose surface is stepped vertically at the first floor, second floor, and roofline. The first floor of this wall gable is rusticated limestone; the slightly cantilevered second floor is supported by limestone brackets and is half timbered and features decorative cross bracing, while the slightly cantilevered wall gable above is also half-timbered. The remaining southernmost two-thirds of the façade is red tapestry brick, slightly stepped behind the other two wall projections and laid in American bond with irregularly spaced projecting stretchers and headers to add more texture to the façade's wall surface. The window type and placement on this façade add yet another dimension of pattern and texture. On each floor of the wall gable there are two symmetrical, steel, transomed casement windows. They repeat the grouped, limestone muntin type of similarly sized, divided light windows contained in the other limestone-faced portions of the main building's front façade. The windows of the adjacent wall gable projection are also steel with divided lights, but are contained in single openings, vary greatly in size, and are not aligned. The brick-faced south end of the façade has a single fenestrated bay at the far south end. Its windows are single-hung, wood, divided light sash that are vertically aligned, but the lower sash is taller than the upper sash.

Harkness Hall is a two and a half-story rectangular addition between Community House and the Children's Chapel. It touches the northeast corner of Community House and is attached to the south wall of the Children's Chapel. Completed in 1954 and virtually unchanged, it was constructed as a school for the Winnetka Congregational Church, but never has been either owned by or a functional part of Community House. Gothic Revival in style, Harkness Hall shares characteristics of height, scale, material and detail in common with one or both buildings, forming a visually compatible bridge between the Tudor Revival Style Community House and the Norman Revival style Children's Chapel.

The addition's exterior reads as an elongated "U," each segment of which is topped by a gable roof and drained by copper gutters and downspouts. The long central segment, which contains the main entrance, measures approximately 85', faces south and is perpendicular to the north end of the recessed portion of Community House's front façade. On its roof's south face are a pair of identical copper-roofed shed dormers, each containing two pairs of

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multilight steel casement windows. It has a slightly projecting, crenellated entry tower at its east end. This tower breaks through the roofline and rises to a height nearly reaching the base of the shed dormers. To the west of the tower are four bays of paired multi-light steel casement windows that are aligned on the first, second and basement levels. The first and second floor window surrounds are smooth limestone with straight lintels and sills, but have quoins on each side; a stone mullion separates the paired windows within each surround. Centered in the spandrel area between each of these pairs of windows is a stone shield with carved religious symbols. The basement window pairs are recessed in simple rectangular openings cut into the dressed limestone foundation. The main entry to Harkness Hall, which comprises the first floor of the tower, has a pair of recessed, segmental arched wood doors pierced with windows in a grid pattern and flanked by large copper lanterns. Sheltering the entry doors is a molded limestone, segmental arched canopy. Directly above it, the wall to the top of the second floor is divided vertically into three sections by stone muntins. A stone spandrel separates the multilight leaded windows lighting each floor. On the first floor, above the segmental canopy are three small, recessed fixed windows, while on the second floor is a tall grid of three transomed casement windows. A smooth limestone surround visually ties the tower doors and windows together. Incorporated into the bottom of the surround on its east side is the cornerstone, into which is carved "Harkness Hall, Winnetka Congregational Church School, 1954".

The eastern segment of Harkness Hall is oriented perpendicular to the central portion of the building. It has steel casement windows that repeat the alignment and detailing of the windows on the south wall of the center section. The north and south (side) façades of the east segment are two narrow bays wide. On the south façade, there is a central wall chimney that matches the surrounding wall material, steps inward at the first floor and near at the top of the chimney, and has limestone highlighting the shoulders, step and cap. The east façade of this eastern segment of Harkness Hall, which faces Lincoln Avenue, extends 45 feet, is three bays wide and has broad windows, which on the second floor slightly break through the roofline, becoming shed wall dormers. Immediately behind and west of the eastern segment, Harkness Hall jogs north one bay. This bay is two stories in height and has a crenellated roofline. It continues the materials and window vocabulary of Harkness Hall and provides a link to the south wall of the Children's Chapel.

Originally built in 1906 as the third Winnetka Congregational Church, the Children's Chapel faces Lincoln Avenue and predates Community House. It is basically rectangular with a large square belfry tower breaking forward in its southeast corner. The building measures approximately 60 feet wide by 85 feet long, and matches the predominant wall and roof materials of the Community House complex's Lincoln Avenue frontage. The Children's Chapel is sheltered under a broad, steeply pitched, front facing gable roof. On its north, Pine Street, side the roof extends uninterrupted from the ridge of this two-story structure down to the top of the low first floor walls. The roof is drained by copper gutters and downspouts

On the east, Lincoln Avenue, façade projects the massive, three-story tower. This tower has a pair of splayed, stepped, battered buttress that rise nearly two stories at the outside corners. The front, east, façade of this tower contains the main entry, which is accessed by a flight of broad stone steps that lead to the Chapel's pointed arch main entry. This entry contains a pair of monumental painted wood doors decorated with strapwork hinges and recessed panels filled with diagonal, wood strips. The first floor of each of the tower's side walls contains a single pointed arch

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window. High above the tower's entry doors are two stepped lancet windows that light the staircase to the belfry. This belfry is located below the tower's crenellated roofline and is open to the exterior on each of the four sides by an arcade of three pointed arch openings. Within it is the bell from the congregation's previous church. Cast by Mc Shane Co., Baltimore, it is inscribed "Easter, April 1896" and "Make a Joyful noise unto the Lord." The rest of the Children's Chapel's front façade, which is recessed behind the tower and immediately north of it, is comprised of the east gable end of the chapel, with its tall, central pointed arch stained glass window flanked by battered buttresses. A Celtic stone cross adorns the peak of the smooth limestone coping of the parapeted gable roof. Below the cross, in the upper end of the gable, is a pair of small, pointed arch, lancet windows. A larger pair of similar lancet windows are located at the north end of the front façade and have sills that are at the same level as the main window. Like the gable lancets and the tower arcade openings, these windows are separated by short, limestone columns, and like all the window of the Children's Chapel, their tops are outlined with a thick band of smooth limestone, while their sides are bordered by rusticated quoins. The north edge of the front façade wall is formed by an attached stepped, battered buttress. A limestone water table bands the top of the entire foundation at grade.

The Children's Chapel north façade, on the side facing Pine Street, is one story and is divided into seven bays by buttresses. The easternmost bay is occupied by a side entry whose single door and steps accessing it are a smaller version of the main entry. Adjacent to the side entry is the basement entry, which is located immediately below the easternmost window. It is approached by concrete steps bounded by a wrought iron railing and has a rectangular, painted wood door similar in detail to the side entry door. The remaining six bays of the north façade have broad rectangular window openings that alternate between the stepped, battered buttresses and are aligned with the basement windows. These first floor windows openings each have three wood, stained glass windows that pivot and are topped by transoms, while the basement windows are boarded shut.

The Children's Chapel rear façade, which faces west toward the parking lot, is at the opposite, parapeted gable end of the building. It matches the window and buttress detail of the front gable façade. A single plane with battered end buttresses, this façade has a large central, first-floor pointed arch. The upper half of the arch is filled with a stained glass window, while the lower half has been filled in with stone matching the surrounding wall. Below this window is a rectangular basement window, and above it, in the gable end, is a pointed arch lancet window; both of these windows have been boarded shut. Flanking the central arched window, and equal to it in height, are tall battered, stepped buttresses. Next to the south buttress, is a small rectangular window opening whose sill corresponds to the level of the central window's original sill. This rectangular window opening has been filled with stone matching the surrounding wall. Below the window is a fenced storage area. Turning the corner, the chapel's rear south façade has two rectangular windows of identical height and placement as that adjacent on the west wall, and like it have been filled in with stone. Immediately east of these windows, the west, rear, façade of Harkness Hall intersects the Children's Chapel.

The Children's Chapel *per se* retains a very high degree of integrity although most of its original perpendicular south annex was demolished to build Harkness Hall. Otherwise, exterior alterations to the building are few and not located on primary facades. The most notable change involves the blocking up of the window in the rear southwest

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corner, and the elimination in 1954 of the stairs and door at the north end of the west (rear) façade.<sup>1</sup> This door opening was sealed with stonework matching that of the surrounding wall.

The west façade of Harkness Hall, which is three bays in length, matches the height of its south, main, façade as well as the alignment and surround detail of its windows, the materials of its roof, and its wall surfaces. A chimney matching the wall material, and with a limestone cap, is found at the north end of the roof. On first floor, stepped buttresses identical to those of the Chapel's side façade on Pine Street alternate between the divided steel windows. This first floor is actually the rear wall of the church's building's original annex, which was otherwise demolished, except for Harkness' interior light court; the present window openings were cut in the existing wall at the time of Harkness Hall's construction. The earlier building's basement entrance, with a pair of simple recessed panel wood doors, is located at the north end of the façade, while the south end intersects perpendicular to Community House's side (north) wall. Filling the inside corner of this junction is a diagonal, single story projecting entry vestibule. This entry, approached by a flight of concrete steps, matches the wall material of Harkness Hall and has a flat roof which is accessed by a pair of second floor French door at the south end of Harkness Hall's rear façade. The rectangular opening of this diagonal entry is filled by an undivided transom, below which is a pair of wood doors with two raised lower panels and a single leaded glass upper panel.

The irregularly massed Pine Street façade, facing north, is 340' long and has four sections—a large rectangular block at the east end (the side wall of the main Community House, reconstructed in 1931), a recessed middle section (which was constructed in 1924), a deeply projecting adjoining section (the 1932 Douglas Smith Memorial Gymnasium) and at the west end, the slightly recessed 1971 nursery school wing.

The easternmost block of the Pine Street façade continues the Tudor Revival Style of the main building's primary façade but in a more simplified fashion. Taupe brick faces its 40' long expanse. This section is topped by a side-facing parapeted gable roof whose short steep north face is treated completely as a skylight and whose south face, with its long, shallow slope, is covered with asphalt. The roof parapet has a limestone coping bordering the north face, a tile coping bordering the south face and a brick chimney that matches the wall material at its west end. The slope with the skylight is divided by vertical bars into six sections that correspond to the six bays of the north façade. Each section is then subdivided into two rows of eight rectangular glass panels. The windows of the north façade's first floor, which alternate with one story rubblestone buttresses, are comprised of three tall, pointed arched multipaned steel windows flanked by smaller, rectangular, steel multipane casements topped by a transom. The windows on the second floor are paired, wood multipane double hungs, flanked by single double-hung matching windows. The west façade of this block, which is one bay wide, continues the fenestration of the north façade. Like the Lincoln Avenue section of the main building, this side façade has excellent integrity from its 1931 reconstruction.

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<sup>1</sup> Travelletti and Suter Architects, Chicago. "Church School Addition, Winnetka Congregational Church, 630 Lincoln Avenue, Winnetka," Job #259, November 2, 1953, Sheet number 2 (Located in Village of Winnetka, IL, Department of Community Development, building permit files.

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The recessed center section of the Pine Street façade is one and a half stories high with long, low proportions. Designed in the Prairie Style in 1924, it has a broad, shallow-pitched gable roof sheathed with asphalt shingles and drained by painted metal gutters. At the east end of the roof is a tall, square brick chimney that has been extended. The original bottom third, which matches the taupe brick of the first floor, had a concrete cap and an additional concrete band set not far beneath it. The extension continues the original form, is sheathed with tan brick and has a concrete cap. The addition's half story is half timbered.

The first floor has two broad projections, one at either end. The east projection, which is original to the building, is faced with taupe brick banded at the roofline with a soldier course of red brick. It is six bays wide, with the Matz Hall auditorium entry constituting the westernmost bay. This entry has a vestibule that is stepped forward and topped by a shallow gabled roof with overhanging eaves; its front-facing gable end is stucco. The entry vestibule has paired glass aluminum doors and is sheltered by a canvas awning. Its landing is accessed from the west by a concrete ramp, and from the north by a flight of concrete steps. Both the ramp and stairs, constructed in 1979, are bounded by a wrought iron railing. West of this entry on the first floor is the kitchen, fronted by a shrubbery-screened utility court. The kitchen façade has an off-center, single doorway which is fronted by a concrete stoop that is screened on two sides by a low concrete wall. The kitchen entry is flanked by a single window and a pair of 8/1 wood true divided light windows whose openings are accented with a header course, flat arch and limestone sills. A basement entry, with a single steel door, is located under the main kitchen door. The half-timbered second floor above the kitchen has two wall dormers, sheltered under pent roofs with deep overhanging eaves that each contain a band of three 8/1 wood true divided light windows.

Between the two first floor projections is the Matz Hall auditorium side wall.. The taupe brick of its tall first floor is articulated with regularly spaced pilasters with limestone caps. Lending further interest to the wall, and running between the pilasters, is a continuation of the red brick soldier course that bands the low first floor roofline east of the Matz Hall entry. In the narrow, half timbered second floor band, the rhythm of the first floor bays is continued by a clerestory of broad wood awning windows with vertical divisions that alternate with stuccoed wall segments corresponding with the placement of the pilasters.

The west projection, constructed in 2003, serves the auditorium's northwest fire exit and backstage area by providing the former with a vestibule fronting an exterior exit, and the latter with freight elevator and loading vestibule. The west projection is one story, sheathed in buff brick, and continues the pilaster and red brick soldier course motifs, as well as the half timber band, which here is a parapet that continues the dimensions and echoes the rhythms of the adjacent half-story. Double steel door are located between the addition's easternmost pilasters and are accessed by a broad flight of concrete steps, bounded by brick wing walls with limestone copings. At the west end of the 1924 addition is a tall square roof chimney that is sheathed with taupe brick, ends in a simple limestone cape, and is attached at the bottom of its west wall to the Douglas Smith Memorial Gym wing immediately west. As a whole, the visible portion of the 1924 addition has excellent integrity. The 2003 secondary entrance is both sensitive and compatible, echoing the preconstruction elevation of this area, which was virtually unchanged from 1924. Prior to 2003 the fire exit looked basically the same but was not bumped forward from the building plane, had double wood doors with upper divided lights, and opened directly to the exterior onto a similar landing, but one bounded by lower,

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stepped wing walls. On the second floor of the bay immediately west was the single wood stage door, which was accessed by a staircase completely screened by a tall brick wall.

Constructed in 1932 in a restrained Tudor Revival Style, the Douglas Smith Memorial Gym is the tallest segment of the Pine Street façade. The projecting front half of this addition, which faces north and is visible from the street, is topped by a steeply pitched, slate covered gable roof that is oriented east-west and has copper gutters and downspouts. The gym's primary façade, which faces north, has a slightly projecting cross gable at the east end, a wall gable at the west end, and a small gable in between. The visible north end of its east (side) façade also has a tall wall gable. The roof covering the south, rear, half of the gym, which is not visible from the street, is a north-south gable covered with asphalt shingles. The wall surface of the front gabled portions of the gym's facades are sheathed with taupe-color face brick and are minimally adorned with rusticated limestone quoins that are located at the building edges and flank the east doorway, half timbering supported by limestone brackets in the center of the second floor, and tall, blind lancets in the gable ends.

There are two exterior entrances, both located on the primary, north, façade of the gymnasium: (1) the main entry, which is at grade on the east end of the cross gable and (2) a fire exit on the second floor at the west end of the wall gabled section. The main entrance, which is sheltered by a canvas awning and recessed in a splayed, smooth limestone-trimmed, pointed arch opening, has a divided-light transom and double wood doors with upper glazed panels. Above and west of this doorway is a limestone horizontal plaque carved with "Douglas Smith Gymnasium." The second floor exit, with its single, flush steel door, is accessed by a dog-leg concrete staircase whose side walls are faced with tan brick topped by concrete stringers and bounded by a wrought iron railing. Fenestration on the Smith Gym is minimal, and is primarily comprised of fixed, wood, multi-light thermopane windows in punched openings. On the east, side, façade there are two rectangular windows on the second floor, and on the first floor there are three stepped lancet windows that light an interior staircase. Behind the front gable on the second floor of this façade are three rectangular windows. On the primary, north, façade, above the main entrance, there are a pair of tall windows, and the basement is lighted by six individual windows. One deeply recessed sliding aluminum window is visible on the second floor on the gym's west façade. Farther south on the second floor and not visible from the street, are four fixed undivided aluminum windows.

The overall integrity of the Douglas Smith Gym is good, with the most visible changes occurring in 2003. These consisted of the introduction of the auxiliary exterior exit on the second floor and the replacement of the building's few windows with new existing sash. The windows retain their original openings however, and generally replicate the material and division patterns of their operable originals, although the large paired window over the main entry had a four part, transomed configuration whose divided-light windows were held together by substantial muntins.<sup>2</sup> The original central skylight along the ridge of the rear gable was removed in 1970.

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<sup>2</sup> Cone and Dornbusch, architects, "Renovation of Gym Wing of Winnetka Community House, Winnetka, Illinois," April 24, 1970. Job #6907, Sheet A5. (Located in Village of Winnetka, IL, Department of Community Development)

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The Winnetka Community Nursery School addition, constructed in 1972, is the westernmost section of the Community House complex and is also the lowest in height. Slightly recessed behind the front façade of the Smith Memorial Gym and attached to its west wall, this virtually unchanged addition is a one-story somewhat irregularly-shaped rectangle measuring 60' X 92'. Its perimeter is topped by a low-pitched hip roof, without eaves, that is covered with slate-colored asphalt shingles and is drained by brown aluminum gutters. Behind the hipped perimeter is a flat asphalt roof. The Nursery School's three planar facades are sheathed with taupe brick but are articulated with broad recesses, around which the roof is cleanly sliced back to reveal the recesses' side and back walls, which rise to the roof edge. There is one recess on each of the north (front) and south(rear) facades, and two on the west (side) façade. A limestone watertable bands the building six courses above the concrete foundation. The addition's doors and fixed undivided windows have brown aluminum frames with incorporated transoms. Window and door openings have soldier course lintels matching, and in the same plane, as the façade brick. This detail is repeated at the cornice line.

On the Nursery School's front (north) façade, the main, single-door entry is located at the east end, is flanked by single windows and is fronted by a broad landing with a flight of concrete steps that descend to grade. The adjacent recess, located immediately to the west, has four tall windows. In the basement below there are double steel doors fronted by a triangular concrete pad that is accessed by a steep flight of concrete steps. The first floor end walls on both the front (north) and side (west) facades, at the northwest corner of the building, have paired windows.

Tuning the corner, the Nursery School's side (west) façade is symmetrical. Adjacent to the paired windows on each end is a recess that has four glazed openings matching those in the recess of the front façade, except that the openings at both ends of the west façade recesses are doors. A broad concrete landing, with central stairs, fronts each recess and accesses an irregularly shaped playground. The section of wall between the recesses has three windows at either end.

The rear (south) façade of the Nursery School has an off-center recess with fenestration matching that on the front façade. This recess is flanked at the west end by paired windows and at the east end by a two-door entry with two windows to the west. The west Nursery School façade is perpendicular to the L-shaped west (side) façade of the 2003 addition, and its entry is fronted by a broad concrete terrace filling the "L." This terrace is accessed at the north end by a switchback concrete ramp, and at the south end by concrete stairs. Changes to the building have been few. In 2003 the building's windows were replaced in kind with safety glass to guard against potential injury due to breakage during construction of the new south wing while in 2004 the west addition's flat roof was replaced. The asphalt shingles of the roof perimeter were replaced with asphalt shingles matching those of the new south addition.<sup>3</sup>

Although not visible from the street bordering either primary facade (Lincoln Avenue) or secondary façade (Pine Street) of Community House, the 2003 addition was nonetheless carefully designed to draw from the materials, massing and architectural vocabulary of the historic Tudor Revival portions of the complex. This rectangular addition measures 120' X 25', is 2 stories high, sheathed in red brick trimmed with limestone and is fronted by a steeply pitched gable roof that is covered with slate-colored asphalt shingles and is drained by copper gutters and downspouts. The

<sup>3</sup> Telephone interview with Don Van Arsdale, Winnetka Community House Director, February 7, 2007.

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windows are wood, thermopane, divided light, transomed, fixed casements with substantial muntins, and are grouped in pairs or in ribbons

The linear mass of the 120' long main (south) façade is broken by two identical projecting cross gable entries, one at the east end, and the other toward the west end. The first floor of each cross gable functions as a covered entry, accessed on three sides through pointed arch openings whose splayed walls are trimmed with limestone. There is a pair of pointed arch openings on the front (south) facade of each cross gable. These are highlighted with quoins. On the east and west sides of each cross gable there are axial single openings, and the two cross gables are laterally connected on the first floor by an unstained wood pergola. The entry sheltered under each cross gable is comprised of a pair of natural, varnished wood French doors with a divided transom and sidelights. On the second floor of each cross gables' front façade, centered between the paired first-floor arches, is a balconied window that echoes the one above Community House's main Lincoln Avenue entrance. Centered above this window in the gable end is a tall, rectangular blind lancet with a narrow limestone sill. West of the west cross gable there are six bays of vertically aligned windows. Between the cross gables there are eight bays with windows on the second floor, and on the first floor, under the pergola, there are a mix of windows and transomed double French doors with sidelights

The L-shaped west side of the 2003 addition is attached to the rear (south) façade of the Nursery School addition. It is unusual in that the north and south halves of its recessed west façade are very different in form and materials. The north half (attached to the Nursery School) has no fenestration, is two stories, has a flat roof and is sheathed in cream brick with rusticated limestone corners and a smooth limestone coping. The south half repeats the materials and architectural vocabulary of the 2003 addition's primary (south) façade. There are two bays of vertically aligned windows on the L's projecting face and one bay on its recessed face, the first floor of the latter bay being a single entry whose door, transom and single sidelight is identical to the primary façade entries..

The east façade of the 2003 addition has no windows. Attached to, and recessed behind it, is the south (side) façade of the main building. This two and a half-story façade is sheathed in vibrantly hued tapestry brick, laid in American bond, whose surface is randomly textured by slightly projecting headers and stretchers. The west half of the façade is topped by an east-west gable roof while the projecting east half is topped by a pair of adjacent cross gables. The entire roof is covered with multi-colored slate. Generally the windows are wood transomed casements with true divided lights and limestone sills. The windows are combined in groups and joined by substantial muntins. On the south half of the façade, off center, there are two bays that slightly project. They are delineated by concrete piers and continue past the roofline as low wall dormers with a scalloped copper cornice. The bays contain stacked ribbons of three transomed single hung windows with recessed spandrels of red brick matching the wall. Between the delineated bays and the projecting east half of this façade is a bay of stacked, single double-hung windows. The cross gables at the east end of the façade are identically fenestrated with a stacked pair of two transomed casements, above which in the half story gable, is a single double hung window. This façade has excellent integrity, dating from the 1931 reconstruction.



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Winnetka Community House—Interior

The interior of the Winnetka Community House, encompassing a sprawling 98,000 square feet, is distributed among two upper floors and a basement. Its expansion over time, generally from east to west, with successive additions, is reflected on the interior, which retains much of its historic integrity.

The L-shaped main building on Lincoln Avenue, which was originally constructed in 1911 and rebuilt in 1931, is characterized by a high level of integrity as well as finish, including many historic Tudor and Arts and Crafts details. In general the interior walls are rough painted plaster. Casings, built-ins and trim are caramel-color stained oak, as are the doors, which retain most of their door hardware and are characterized by a recessed lower panel and a glazed or recessed upper panel. The floors of the halls are slate while those in the rooms are linoleum or oak strip, some of latter having been covered with wall-to-wall carpeting.

The first floor contains the main entrance which leads west into a limestone vestibule that opens, in turn, to a large reception hall. Known as "Davies Hall" it measures 63' X 22' and retains a very high degree of integrity. The east (entry) end wall is mostly occupied by a central pair of pointed arch doors with quoined limestone surrounds that mirror the exterior doors of the main entry. The side walls are articulated by chamfered concrete piers that continue as beams across the ceiling. Highlighting the top of each pier is a small rectangle of colorful Arts and Crafts tiles. These side walls have a caramel-color stained oak dado, recessed lighting concealed behind a molded soffit and a foliate plaster cove molding. Between the dado and recessed light mold, the surface of the north (side) wall is covered with a burlap-like material to accommodate the hanging of changing exhibits of framed artwork. The upper half of most of the south wall, however, is open. Topped by a marble counter, it serves as the front of the Community House reception desk space, behind which are two small offices, each with adjacent storage rooms. Flanking the reception space on the west are two office fronts with glazed transoms and upper door panels, the eastern office retaining its original ticket window grill and the western office having glazed upper walls as well. Flanking the reception space on the east is the main staircase, which is constructed of steel with terrazzo treads and is bounded on the east by a steel railing with simple bar balusters. Davies Hall's west end wall is occupied mostly by a broad opening, with piers *in antis*, that leads to the 1924 addition.

In addition to Davies Hall, first-floor circulation is facilitated by an L-shaped corridor accessed at the east end of Davies Hall. The second-floor circulation is facilitated by a Z-shaped corridor whose west end open to the second floor of the 1924 addition. Most of the first and second floors are occupied by generous, well-appointed meeting rooms—four on the first floor and five on the second floor. These rooms retain their original room numbers as well as the names of their 1931 donors. On the first floor, the largest (48' X 35') is the Frederick Tyrrell Assembly Room (Room 101), located immediately north of the entry hall. Its upper interior walls (east, west, and south) are adorned with large plaster medallions featuring the profiles of patriots Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln while its exterior south wall is occupied by three oversized pointed arch windows. Directly across on the south wall is a blind arcade echoing the form and location of these windows.

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Both the Frederick E. Clerk Room (Room 102, located in the northeast corner, measuring 40' X 23') and the William C. Boyden Room (Room 104, located in the southwest corner, measuring 40' X 24') have elegantly restrained Tudor Revival limestone fireplaces whose designs, although different, both have baronial, ogee arch fireplace openings with a chain fire screen suspended from a finialed rod and resting on a limestone hearth. Like most of the other meeting rooms in the main Community House building, the Nathaniel H. Blatchford Room (Room 103, located in the southeast corner, measuring 46' X 23') has built-in oak cabinets; it also has built-in window seating. Noteworthy on the second floor are the Fletcher Ladd McCordic Room (Room 206, located in the southwest corner, measuring 40' X 24') and the North Shore Art League Studio (Room 201, occupying the north end of the floor, and identical in size to the Tyrrell Room below). Both have trussed wood ceilings and large rusticated stone fireplaces with massive timber mantle shelves and masonry overmantles. In addition, the North Shore Art League Studio, which is raised five steps up from the second floor hall, is distinguished by having two entries—the main entry at the east end whose paired doors with their segmental arched transom are contained in a curved alcove, and the rear entry at the west end which is recessed behind an arcade of rustic beams, and whose rustic-beam stairs are bounded by a wrought iron railing whose balusters resemble tendrils. Inside, the studio, with its brick walls, is flooded by light from the large skylight running along the top of the north wall.

This main section of the Community House also contains several minor spaces. In addition to multiple closets there are on the first floor a classroom, toilet room, storage room and coat check below the main staircase, and on the second floor there are two toilet rooms and two offices. The attic is unfinished and the basement, although finished, is primarily an open, multipurpose space with storage areas around the perimeter, an office, an elevator mechanical room and separate lavatories for men and women.

On the whole, the main section of Community House retains a high degree of its 1931 integrity in terms of plan, wall and floor material, trim, doors, hardware, built-ins and significant features including the multiple fireplaces. The majority of changes are relatively minor. The basement has been built out and reconfigured over time; on the second floor, two adjacent original club rooms—one pair in the southeast corner and the other in the west center of the second floor—were later combined into two large rooms; acoustical ceilings were installed in the 1950s, and the coat room space under the main staircase, which retains its original oak coat racks, was originally fronted by a dadoed half wall; however, the wood rolling shutter still remains. Fire safety was improved in 2003 with a detection and suppression system installed in the main building as well as throughout the existing portions of Community House complex. The visibility of the new pipes was mitigated in club rooms and in the main reception hall with drywall enclosures resembling ceiling beams, while in the hallways, pipes were generally painted to match the ceiling color.

The main building accesses the northern half of the central portion of the Community House complex, which was constructed in 1924 and retains much of its historic integrity. Continuing west from the main building's broad reception hall is a slightly narrower central hall, recently rehabilitated with drywall walls and ceiling. In the northeast corner of this hall is the basement staircase. North of the main hall is a utilitarian kitchen (19' X 28'), which was remodeled in 1979. The kitchen has an exterior entrance in the center of the north wall and a pantry off its northeast corner which retains the original stained wood built-in cabinetry. At the kitchen's west end is a generous adjoining butler's pantry (13' X 28') which retains much its 1924 built-in cabinetry. Along the south side of the main hall, from

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east to west is a passenger elevator installed in 1987 in space added earlier to a narrow light court, a men's toilet and a janitor's closet.

The main hall terminates at a wall of fixed and operable French doors, beyond which is the entrance to a 65' x 50' auditorium. Christened "Rudolph Matz Hall" from its inception, the two-story auditorium, with its blue, cream and brown color scheme, is the dominant space of the 1924 addition area. The side (north and south) walls are divided into regular bays by full height fluted pilasters painted cream. The lower half of the auditorium's wall surface is plastered brick painted light blue. On the side walls, the lower wall is separated from the upper by a wide entablature-like band that runs between the pilasters and contains a central row of short, cast iron wall radiators fronted by a decorative wire grill. The rear wall repeats this organization, but has pairs of flush doors between the pilasters. Its upper wall surface is painted concrete block punctuated by openings for movie and performance-related equipment. The upper wall of the side façades have brown velvet curtains between the pilasters. The east wall, painted navy blue, is dominated by the rectangular proscenium, with its simple banding of large stars, set behind a projecting wood stage. The east wall flanking the proscenium continues the basic organization of the auditorium's other walls. The 50' X 28' space behind the proscenium is open to the trussed roof and has red brick lower walls above that are common brick upper walls. The northwest corner of the stage accesses the freight elevator and vestibule that were constructed as part of a small addition to the northwest corner of Matz Hall in 2003. This stage vestibule also opens west to the gymnasium corridor.

In the auditorium, there are three fire exits. The first is in the northwest corner of the auditorium and opens north into the new Matz Hall addition's exterior entry vestibule, located east of the freight elevator. A second fire exit is in the southwest corner and opens south into the main corridor of the 2003 addition. The third fire exit is in the northeast corner and opens north to a painted brick lobby, which leads to the original Pine Street entrance's projecting vestibule. The auditorium ceiling is painted white and is flanked by deep soffits. The floor is concrete and retains the removable seating installed when the auditorium was remodeled, largely to its present appearance, in 1956. Even as remodeled the auditorium and proscenium area retain their original size, and much of the auditorium's wall detail is merely masked. As originally designed in 1924, the lower walls and proscenium, identical to their present dimensions, were exposed brick. The same band of radiators, flanked by brick soldier courses, separated the lower and upper walls and like the present, the upper walls were plastered and divided into bays of identical rhythm, only historically by squat columns which alternated with the existing broad window openings. The ceiling, however, was open, the exposed roof was supported by light steel tusses, and the exposed wall above the proscenium was half-timbered.

Matz Hall is fronted on the east by a north-south hallway with painted brick walls. At the north end of this hallway is a small lobby of painted brick that open north into the projecting Pine Street entry vestibule, while the south end of the hall opens into the 2003 addition's first floor main corridor. Off the east side of this south end is the staircase leading up to the second floor of the 1924 addition and its L-shaped interior corridor. The north-south leg of this second floor "L" leads from the stairs to a 40' X 17' office stretching across most of the north façade. On its east wall is a painted brick fireplace with a soldier course base, a flat arch across the top of the firebox opening and Arts and Crafts tiles in the upper corners. Above its corbelled mantle is a brick overmantle with a central frame of projecting brick and a corbelled cornice. The fireplace is flanked by built in half-height cabinets and bookshelves

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which are also painted. Between this office and the staircase (from south to north) are a toilet, the Matz Hall lighting booth, the staircase to the attic and a closet. The walls of the staircase and second floor are rough painted plaster and the doors are original with flat panels, simple fascia casings and powder coated steel door hardware. The floors are carpeted. The east-west leg of the second floor accesses an office on its south wall, and leads to a perpendicular dog-leg hall containing an elevator, the south end of which opens to the second floor corridor of the 2003 addition.

The attic of the 1924 addition is unfinished. A basement only exists under the stage of Matz Hall and contains an elevator machine room at its north end. Immediately west of the machine room is a hall and staircase leading north to the basement of the 2003 freight elevator addition, whose vestibule west of the elevator accesses the basement of the adjacent gymnasium. Like the main Community House building it was fitted throughout with a modern sprinkling system in 2003. As a whole, the existing section of the 1924 addition retains a high degree of integrity in plan and materials. The 1924 addition was originally constructed with a one story, common brick, rear (south) wing containing five rooms. Its interior was slightly enlarged with an approximately 10' X 20' addition and remodeled for use as a senior center in 1979. It was replaced by the 2003 addition.

Immediately west of the 1924 addition is the 1931 gym wing. It is comprised mainly of the 50' X 80' gymnasium with its glazed tan brick lower walls, cream brick upper walls and wood floor. Its two story height is topped by an open wood roof supported by exposed steel trusses. The upper wall on the gym's north side is punctuated at regular intervals by seven windows, while the south upper wall opens to the original, two-tiered spectators gallery. The gym is bordered on the west by a 12' deep space that was reconfigured in 2003 and is comprised (west to east) of the main entry to the gym and a lounge fronting a tandem men's and women's lavatory. It is bordered on the south by a 10' deep space with a central storage area, a new coat closet on the south end, and a staircase and corridor at the north end. This corridor accesses the gym on its west and the Matz Hall stage elevator vestibule on its east. The second floor follows the basic plan of the first floor, except that the north staircase leads to the spectators' gallery, which opens at the south end to a corridor that leads north to the new second floor lounge and west to the second floor corridor of the 2003 addition. The basement, which has a corridor running the length of its east wall, consists of an open exercise area, in the southeast corner of which are the main entry, offices, a laundry, and central staff space with reception counter.

The gym wing retains a high degree of interior integrity in its fundamental plan (i.e. a gymnasium with narrow bordering spaces on the south and west) and the interior of the gymnasium proper. A 1970 rehabilitation of this wing by architects Cone and Dornbusch<sup>4</sup> is evident today in the lighting, fire and life safety systems, which were installed with minimal intrusion in the primary spaces of the gym and spectator's gallery. Also at this time, the 1931 central skylight was removed. The construction of the adjacent south wing in 2003<sup>5</sup> also involved gutting and rebuilding most

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<sup>4</sup> Cone and Dornbusch, architects, "Renovation of Gym Wing of Winnetka Community House, Winnetka, Illinois," April 24, 1970. Job #6907, Sheets A1-6, M1-3, E1-3, P1-3, F1. (Located in Village of Winnetka, IL, Department of Community Development).

<sup>5</sup> Mekus Studios. "Renovation and Expansion of the Winnetka Community House," January 17, 2003. Project #20130. Sheets A0.0-13.2, S1.0-3.1, H1-9, V1-5, P1-12, FP1-7, E1-19. Located in the archives of the Winnetka Community House.

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of the south and west spaces bordering the gym. This included replacing the gymnasium wing's original southeast staircase (which access to the gym's main entrance on the second floor) with the current closet and reconfiguring the 12' deep space along the south end of the gym to provide a handicapped accessible main gym entrance. Also as part of this project, the interior of the gymnasium proper was minimally altered by replacing the wood floor installed in 1970, installing new backboards and scoreboards, and replacing the windows of the west (side) façade clerestory whose original pivoting wood windows had been replaced in 1970 with virtually identical aluminum sash. The HVAC system was changed from hot water to forced air, which involved removal of the gym's original wall radiators between the first and second floors. The basement has been reconfigured several times, most notably from the original scout rooms to a bowling alley in the 1930s, and to a fitness center beginning in the 1980s.

Directly west of the gymnasium is the 1971 west addition (30' X 45'), whose first floor plan is mainly comprised of four large classrooms along the west wall, with a corridor to the east. At the north end of the corridor is the main entry, vestibule, office space and a classroom. A door at the south end of the corridor leads to the west terrace. The first floor does not internally access any other part of the Community House. The basement is a single exercise space that connects with the gymnasium exercise space through a staircase passage at the south end of the east wall, and to the elevator vestibule through a hall in the southeast corner.

The 2003 addition extends along the south walls of the gymnasium wing and 1924 addition. The first floor is organized off a long, U-shaped corridor whose flanking arms lead south to respective exterior entrances. The greatest area on this floor is devoted to the large banquet room which fills the interior of the "U" and runs along much of the addition's south wall. West of the "U" is a central, east-west corridor, north of which is an elevator and staircases accessing the basement and the second floor gym lobby, and south of which is a large exercise room. East of the "U" are adjacent men's and women's lavatories and a switchback staircase accessing the basement and second floors. The second floor generally mirrors the organization of the first floor, but the space along the south wall is subdivided into multiple rooms. The U-shaped organization of the first floor is also generally followed in the basement. On the east end of the basement are tandem men's and women's locker rooms, on the west end is storage, and in the center are three large, adjacent rooms.

Harkness Hall—Interior

Harkness Hall, the 1954 Winnetka Congregational Church Sunday School, is attached to the northeast corner of the Winnetka Community House. As its plan demonstrates however, Harkness House has always been as functionally separate from Community House as it has been separate in ownership. Its interior has excellent integrity.

The first floor of Harkness Hall is organized around a U-shaped corridor. The east (north-south) leg of the "U" is accessed from the main Lincoln Avenue entrance, through a terrazzo-floored, limestone vestibule and up the main staircase. Immediately past the main staircase is north leg of the "U", east of which is a large 21' X 42' meeting room on whose south wall is a restrained fireplace comprised of large pieces of cut limestone with a simple wood mantle stained to match the consistent carmel color of the building's trim. The north leg of the "U" continues north to the bell tower vestibule of the Children's Chapel.

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The north leg of the "U" is intersected at the main staircase by the east-west corridor of the "U." The west end of this corridor terminates at the Pine Street entry vestibule it shares with Community House and is the only interior access point between the two buildings. Along the south side of the east-west corridor are four classrooms and the basement entry, while along its north side is office space, a lavatory, and the west leg of the "U." The west (north-south) leg of the "U" corridor leads past the lavatory and classrooms and terminates at a door opening to the southwest corner of the Children's Chapel assembly space. There is an open light court of approximately 20' X 20' in the northeast corner of the space bounded by the U-shaped corridors. The light court separates this interior area of Harkness Hall from the exterior southeast corner of the church behind the tower. The court is interesting in that the first floor of its west wall is a two-bay remnant of the church's original annex wing, although like the Harkness Hall's west wall remnant, it contains windows installed during the 1954 construction.

The second floor is accessed from both the main and rear staircases, both of which open north into a central, east-west corridor that has a short, dead end spur near its west end. At the east end of the central corridor is a large meet room similar in dimension to that directly below. The corridors access classrooms and a lavatory arranged in a similar manner to the rooms below. The light court continues through this floor. The attic is unfinished and the basement mirrors the circulation and room arrangement of the first floor. The large meeting room at the east end of the basement, originally designed as a youth room with wood paneling on three walls and a wood floor stenciled for shuffleboard,<sup>6</sup> retains its distinctive "contemporary Gothic" semicircular fireplace in the center of the original tan brick east wall. Its conical copper hood, with vertical strapwork detail extends to the ceiling. From the base of the hood hangs a chain fire screen that reaches down to the top of the semicircular slate hearth, which is raised from the floor on a soldier course of brick.

The interior of Harkness Hall has a very high degree of original integrity, as well as consistency, in plan, materials, and features. The walls throughout the building are painted concrete block, except for the large meeting room on the first floor and basement, which have plastered surfaces. Wood trim and doors throughout the building are stained a carmel color. Trim, including door casings crown and base, is further unified by simple profiles with gentle curves typical of the period of construction. The steel windows throughout the building have no casings, however and typical of the period, doors are pierced by a vertical row of wire glass panels that allow visibility between rooms and corridors. The floors generally retain their linoleum tile, although some are carpeted. The staircases are steel. Simple built-in wood storage cabinets, stained a caramel color, are found in most of the classrooms.

Children's Chapel—Interior

Directly north of Harkness Hall is the "Children's Chapel, whose main entry vestibule is the 14' square tower room located in the southeast corner of the structure and whose side entry vestibule (6' X 10') is located in the

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<sup>6</sup> Travalletti and Suter Architects, Chicago. "Church School Addition, Winnetka Congregational Church, 630 Lincoln Avenue, Winnetka," Job #259, November 2, 1953, Sheet number 2. (Located in Village of Winnetka, IL, Department of Community Development, building permit files).

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northeast corner. Both vestibules have wood recessed-panel interior doors topped by a divided transom. The center of their west interior walls are pierced by two leaded-glass lancet windows. These vestibules respectively open north and south into the main assembly space, which measures 62' X 37'. At the west end of the chapel is the raised choir area

The main assembly space is covered with a brown and tan linoleum tile floor. The walls are painted brick, articulated at regular intervals by brick pilasters. A corbelled entablature bands the whole of the interior at roof level, above which, on the gable ends, the wall surface is plaster. There are light green Tiffany stained glass windows with a trailing lilies motif alternating between the piers of the north (side) wall as well as between those of the two easternmost bays of the south (side) wall. Set in a horizontal rectangular opening, these windows are comprised of a ribbon of three ogee arches with pivot windows below the spring point and fixed sash above. The gable-end east wall is dominated by a tall ogee arched Tiffany stained glass window that continues the lily motif. It is dedicated to Frederick Burlingham Boyden, and its inscription is the inspiration for the building's name, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not for of such is the kingdom of heaven." In the gable peak above this window are a pair of lancet stained glass windows. The assembly space is topped by an elaborately trussed, stained timber roof. Each of the six massive king post trusses that support the roof have metal strapwork on the central cross beams. The roof's exposed purlins and roof sheathing are stained to match the trusses.. Suspended by chains from the four center trusses are eight historic light fixtures. Norman in style, these cylindrical bronze lantern fixtures have electrified candles that spiral up the fixtures' curved side braces.

At the west end of the assembly space is the raised choir area, which is laid with oak strip flooring. It is accessed from the assembly space by two central steps, north of which is the cantilevered octagonal wood pulpit. Its central apse (19' X 12') is recessed. The apse floor has four tiers and its back wall is lighted by an ogee-arched stained glass window that depicts biblical scenes and angels. The apse is flanked by small organ pipe enclosures, and has a gabled ceiling that rises to just below the level of the trusses and mirrors its angle.

The basement of the Children's Chapel is accessed from Harkness Hall, near the center of the common basement wall. The basement has brick and stone walls, is unfinished and divided into storage areas and a boiler room.

The Children's Chapel *per se* retains a remarkably high degree of integrity. The blind bays on the south wall opened to the church's original perpendicular annex wing, and the room flanking the north end of the apse was originally a rear entry vestibule which, like the existing side entry vestibule had a pair of lancet windows facing the assembly room

The Winnetka Community House property also includes two free-standing buildings—Champion House and a former electric railroad substation.

Champion House

Located directly south of Community House, at 614 Lincoln Avenue, is a Colonial Revival residence long known as "Champion House," which is owned by Community House and is at present used as office space. Deeply set back like the main Community House building, Champion House straddles two lots. It is generally rectangular, with a

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stone foundation and a slightly irregular footprint measuring approximately 36' X 44'. The two and a half-story structure is painted cream with brown wood trim. It is surfaced with rough-textured stucco on the first floor, above which the wall surface flares slightly outward, is sheathed with shingles and is topped by a gable roof with deep wood eaves and side returns. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles, has two dormers (one gable and one shed) on the rear façade, and is pierced by two red brick chimneys—a wall chimney topped with paired chimney pots on the south (side) façade and a chimney projecting from the roof on the west (rear) façade.

The main (east) façade is symmetrically organized around a paneled center entry door flanked by sidelights and surmounted by a simple pediment that breaks through the second story. This entry, which is fronted by a broad concrete staircase flanked by lannon stone walls with wrought iron railings, is flanked by identical 6/6 double-hung windows. These windows repeat the vocabulary and height of the front entrance, being flanked by sidelights above a paneled dado. On the second floor, the three-bay organization is continued with three identical 6/6 windows, flanked by shutters and positioned directly below the eaves, which are centered above the first floor door and fenestration.

The side and rear facades are asymmetrically organized, and display a variety of window types—including double-hung windows generally with divided upper sash, grouped casements with lozenge muntins, Palladian windows with a combination of divided and undivided lights, Bull's eye windows and awning basement windows. The overall block massing of the building is broken on the south (side) façade by a two-story bay at the west end, and on the rear (west) façade by a two-story gabled projection on the north end as well as on the first floor by a central L-shaped projection. The latter contains the rear entry, which is entered through a non-historic metal fire door and is approached from grade by a wood, switchback ramp. The side entry is centrally located on the north façade. It is sheltered under a deep, bracketed wood canopy with hipped roof and has a metal fire door contained within the historic molded surround.

The house largely retains its original exterior appearance except for the front façade, which was remodeled to its 1957 appearance by the architectural firm of Maher and McGrew. At that time three gabled dormers (similar to that on the rear façade were removed, as was all the fenestration, as well as the broad stucco porch across the first floor.<sup>7</sup>

On the interior, the first floor is organized around a large central hall (29' X 10') with an entry vestibule at the east end and the main staircase at the west end. On the north side of the hall, from east to west are a 13' X 16 room that has been subdivided into a reception and office area, an arched display niche with Classical moldings, and a vestibule. The vestibule accesses, on the east, the rear stair hall (which contains the north exterior entrance), on the north a powder room, and on the west a kitchen (15' X 13"). The kitchen, in turn, opens into an office off its west wall and off its south wall, leads to a long vestibule which accesses the dining room in its southeast corner and the rear entrance in its southwest corner. On the south side of the hall is a dining room on the west and a parlor on the east. On the south wall of the latter is a painted fireplace faced with narrow, rusticated tiles and pilasters supporting a red marble shelf.

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<sup>7</sup> 1947 real estate listing for 614 Lincoln Avenue, with photo, located at Winnetka Historical Society; Village of Winnetka Building Permit #6901 for 614 Lincoln Avenue, October 30, 1957.



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The second floor is accessed by the broad, switchback main staircase with its Classical balusters, wood hand rail with a voluted newel post and a landing with a window seated topped by an oversized Palladian window. Like the first floor, the second floor is organized around a central hall (15' X 10'), at the east end of which is an office behind a glazed wall. Along the north side of the hall, from east to west are an office (16' X 13') and an arched alcove. The latter accesses the rear stairs and bathroom off its north wall and a kitchen (11' X 10') off its west wall. Along the south side of the central hall are large offices in the southeast (16' X 13') and southwest (17' X 16') corners; they flank a built-in storage cabinet. A green and white glazed brick fireplace with stamped metal firebox door displaying Classical motifs is located on the south wall of the southeast office. The third floor contains a large finished room with smaller storage rooms flanking the entry from the rear staircase on the north wall. The basement is unfinished.

The interior is known to have been remodeled in 1948, 1957 and most recently in 1992, according to Village of Winnetka building files. Notwithstanding, the interior retains most of its historic floor plan, its horizontal recessed panel wood doors, its molded door and window casings, its wood floors, its base molding and its plaster walls.

Substation

Located immediately southwest of the Winnetka Community house is a beautifully detailed one story, Arts and Crafts-influenced Tudor Revival Style structure, originally constructed in 1927 as an automatic sub-station for the Chicago North Shore and Milwaukee Railroad Company. Comprised of a machine house (15' X 18') and an attached walled courtyard (46' X 28'), the former is at present used by the Winnetka Community House for storage while the later was landscaped in 2003 as a garden. Both original drawings and original construction photographs in the Winnetka Historical Society collection confirm that the building and courtyard walls retain a remarkably high degree of integrity.

The walls of the rectangular machine house are constructed of common brick. The brick is laid in American bond and the texture of the wall surface is enriched by areas of weeping mortar, stretchers occasionally set at an angle and by a subtle striated pattern achieved through the projection of some of the American bond headers. The walls are topped by a low-pitched, front-facing gable roof with deep eaves. The roof, originally covered with cement tiles, is presently covered with asphalt shingles. Its structure is clearly expressed by the exposed rafters and purlins, as well as by the decorative ridge beam and front and rear plates which project beyond the wide vergeboard at both gable ends. Half-timbering fills the gable ends between the roof and the wide, slightly-peaked horizontal member across the top of the wall that projects and is supported by short brackets. There is a large, rectangular vent centered along the bottom of the rear gable end.

The three primary facades have broad corner piers topped by large, square, half-timbered capitals with a central lozenge. The rear façade has identical capitals but no piers. The front (west) and side facades are each dominated by a broad central segmental arch reaching almost the full height of the wall. The arch of the main façade is filled with the original pair of monumental, full height, decoratively paneled wood doors. Like the rest of the building's doors and trim, they are painted brown. The arches of the side façades are blind, being filled with a slightly recessed wall surface matching that of the surrounding wall, except that on the south façade there is a central, arched,

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standard height flush metal door. On the rear (east) façade, there is a rectangular, standard height metal door at the south end. A tall concrete base bands the building at grade.

The building was tuckpointed as needed, its trim was repaired or replaced in kind, the roof was ventilated, eaves were repaired or replaced in kind and the existing asphalt roof was replaced with new decking and shingles in 1979 as part of the Community House Senior Center rehabilitation and expansion project.<sup>8</sup>

The walled courtyard continues the wall material and arch motif of the substation. In addition, the walled courtyard has exterior brick buttresses with cast stone caps between the arches, a cast stone coping atop the wall, and a continuation of the sub-station's concrete base at grade. The west façade of the courtyard, which continues the plane of the machine house's rear wall, has one arch north of the machine house and two south of it. Both side walls have three arches on axis, and the east courtyard wall has five arches. The walls of the courtyard were tuckpointed as needed and their copings reset or repaired in kind as part of the 1979 project. The interior of the courtyard has perimeter landscaping but is primarily paved with bluestone that is bounded and divided into a grid by brick pavers that have a concrete lozenge set at the intersection of each of the grid's horizontal and vertical lines. This landscaping replace one funded in 1979 by Rotary International, which removed the interior wire fencing that enclosed the unimproved courtyard.

The interior of the substation is virtually unchanged. It consists of a single open space whose brick walls are covered in areas with the deteriorated remains of the acoustical tiles approximately 6" square. The space is open to the exposed roof structure. Suspended from the center of this exposed structure is the original industrial, oval, sheet metal ventilation duct which occupies the full length and ¾ the width of the gable. The building has a concrete crawl space and partial basement.

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<sup>8</sup> Weber and Weber Architects. "Alteration/Renovation and Addition to North Shore Senior Center. Community House Expansion for Senior Services." July 6, 1979. Job#7902. Sheets A1 and A4 9. (Located in the archives of the Winnetka Community House).

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**WINNETKA COMMUNITY HOUSE—STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**SUMMARY**

The Winnetka Community House (WCH), in Winnetka, Illinois, has local significance and meets Criterion A for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. It is a complex of buildings that has served as the community's center for educational, cultural, social, and recreational activity since its inception, and as such, has made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Winnetka's history. Founded in 1911, Community House is important for its ability to perform this function for successive generations by meeting the changing needs and tastes of residents. During the period of significance--1911 to 1956--it served large numbers of individual residents and groups representing a broad spectrum of ages, interests and social classes. The variety and quality of programs it offered to meet the changing needs of residents over the period earned the Winnetka Community House a regional and even national reputation.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Although conceived, constructed and initially nurtured by the Winnetka Congregational Church, the Winnetka Community House, in practice, was accurately characterized by a Chicago Sunday Tribune article from 1911, the year it opened, as "utterly free and unsectarian in spirit" The article extolled that "Out in Winnetka, they have gained a march on the rest of the suburbs which deserves comment and imitation." and continued, describing the WCH as

a sort of sublimated, all-embracing village club and settlement house. It is described in their [Congregational Church] prospectus as "a neighborhood center for wholesome recreation and the development of character." The demure little Congregational Church, which nestles close to Community House and from which liberal spirit it originally sprang now stands carefully aside and says,"No, this is not Congregational, not denominational at all. Nor does it belong to us. It belongs to the village, to all of you young and old and of every walk of life. Come in and be at home."<sup>1</sup>

1911 Community House: Building, Organization and Programming

The Community House building, as it was originally conceived, was dedicated on November 17, 1911.<sup>2</sup> It was situated immediately south of the 1906 Winnetka Congregational Church, the rusticated limestone, Norman Revival

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<sup>1</sup> George Brodsky, This House is Ours: The Story of the Winnetka Community House, (Winnetka, Illinois: The Winnetka Community House, 1993), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11

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Style structure located at the southwest corner of Lincoln Avenue and Pine Street. Like the church, Community House faced Lincoln Avenue and was designed by Chicago architect Arthur Coffin. Coffin sensitively designed Community House to be compatible with the church in its materials but deferential in siting and scale. Thus the new building was set back, and Coffin cleverly blended the Tudor Revival with the popular Prairie Style to keep the building not only low in profile but signal its thoroughly modern purpose. Forty-nine thousand dollars had been raised for the building,<sup>3</sup> which took six months to complete.

The complexly massed, L-shaped, two-and-one-half-story Community House was topped by a low-pitched roof with intersecting gables and broad overhangs. The upper floor was half-timbered, while the tall first floor was faced with rusticated, random-laid limestone ashlars on the three primary facades. The rear façade, however, was faced with brick, and the windows throughout were wood, the majority with multi-paned sash.

Entry to Community House was through an off-center, sheltered entrance located on the recessed plane of the Lincoln Avenue façade. From the entry vestibule, a short hall led west to a large central hall which contained the main staircase. Off this center hall<sup>4</sup> were accessed a large room that came to be known as the Assembly Room, and a multipurpose, two-story gymnasium, that had a stage equipped with a motion picture curtain, border footlights and flanking dressing rooms. To maximize creativity, the gymnasium was modestly equipped; to maximize flexibility however, its wood floor was laid out for use as a baseball diamond as well as for basketball and tennis courts, and chairs were available for 600 people.<sup>5</sup> Along a hall connecting the center hall to the church annex was another large club room, two offices, a toilet room and a secondary staircase, while the rear of the first floor contained a billiard room and small kitchen. The second floor consisted of ten smaller club rooms, an assistant director's office, toilet rooms and the gymnasium spectator's gallery. The spectator's gallery served also as additional space for group meetings, as well as for Sunday School class use.<sup>6</sup> In the basement were shower rooms and a common heating plant warmed both Community House and the Church. Providing a homey atmosphere to a pair of rooms on each floor were tandem fireplaces, stacked one above the other, on the first and second floors.

The purpose, policies, administration and organization of Community House were as clearly thought-out and as ready to serve the community as the building. Its purpose, which became a de facto motto, was earnestly penned by the dynamic new director, the Reverend James William Frederick Davies, who also served as the associate pastor of the Winnetka Congregational Church,

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 12

<sup>4</sup> "Community House, Winnetka, Illinois, 1912-1913" Program booklet with floor plan (Located in the Winnetka Community House archives.

<sup>5</sup> George Brodsky, Remember, Rejoice, Renew. The Winnetka Congregational Church, 1874 to 1974, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1975), p.80.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

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Community House is dedicated to this community as a center for wholesome recreation, for the development of strong bodies and alert minds, for social opportunity, for the inspiration of moral integrity and the promotion of all that makes for noble character and Christian citizenship.<sup>7</sup>

A visionary and supportive four-member Board of Governors, appointed by the Church Council and which included Mr. Davies, was responsible for the policies and finances of Community House, while hands-on organization was the purview of the sixteen-member House Committee, whose responsibilities were described in the 1912-13 Community House brochure as "plan[ing] and arrang[ing]for contests, drills, entertainments, etc, in Community House, provid[ing] leaders for clubs, heads for various activities, help[ing] increase the membership, arrange the schedule for the year, and help[ing] to make the plant of real service to the community."<sup>8</sup>

Equally disciplined but generous policies followed from the facility's purpose and organization. Although the property was held by the trustees of the Church, from the outset of the venture it was resolved by the Church Council that the "Policy of the Congregational Church of Winnetka in regard to the use of the Gymnasium and Club Rooms is that the Gymnasium and Club Rooms shall be open to all people of Winnetka who desire such privileges."<sup>9</sup> Community House was not to be used for commercial purposes, however. It was open every day and evening in the week (8 am to 11 p.m) and also on Saturdays, for groups and classes in the gym and club rooms, per a schedule adopted by the House Committee. Most extraordinary, the Church pledged it would insure that Community House would close each year free of debt.<sup>10</sup> The House Rules, underscored by the maxim that "Every member of Community House should be a protector of this house and its property," prohibited smoking in the gym or hall, gambling, boys under eighteen in the Men's Billiard or Reading Rooms, any other than tennis shoes on the gym floor, and whistling or yelling in the building. Any property of the House destroyed by an individual was to be replaced by that individual, and anyone breaking the rules was liable to suspension.<sup>11</sup>

Community House was an instant success, the remarkable variety and scope of the earliest programs being a portent for the future. Just two weeks after the dedication of Community House, the November 25, 1911, issue of The Messenger (the village newspaper which was published from 1904 until 1921 as a community service by the Winnetka Congregational Church) recorded four different clubs for boys aged nine to eighteen years, in addition to "gymnasium classes, Scouts, basketball, orchestra, photography, and billiards (over 14 only)."<sup>12</sup> Four different clubs for girls from fourth grade through senior high school were offered, in addition to "gymnasium classes, dancing

<sup>7</sup> Brodsky, This House is Ours, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> "Community House, Winnetka, Illinois, 1912-1913" Program booklet with floor plan (Located in the Winnetka Community House archives, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Brodsky, Remember, Rejoice, Renew, p. 76.

<sup>10</sup> Brodsky, This House is Ours, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> "Community House, Winnetka, Illinois, 1912-1913", p. 5

<sup>12</sup> Brodsky, This House is Ours, p. 18.

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classes, Camp Fire Girls, photography, chorus, orchestra and tennis."<sup>13</sup> Activities for women included gym classes, dancing, tennis, chorus, dramatics, orchestra, a wide variety of clubs and lecture groups —and billiards. Men's activities included Thursday night gym classes (noted as "a great opportunity for men whose work is largely in an office"<sup>14</sup>), indoor baseball, billiards, chorus work, dramatics, lectures and a variety of clubs. By December, fifty-one different groups were using the house each week.<sup>15</sup> Community House would continue to diversify and grow during the period of significance, offering a meeting place for groups with a wide array of interests--social, philanthropic, business, recreational, religious or educational-- as well as providing activities and programs for a broad age range, for both sexes. It would stay relevant and useful to the community by meeting its ever changing needs.

#### ORIGINS

Not surprisingly, the origins of such a large, generous and complex enterprise are also large, generous and complex. The three most important contributing factors, however, were the Winnetka Congregational Church, the settlement house movement, and the man who was the founding director of the Community House and served in that capacity for twenty years thereafter, James William Frederick "Chief" Davies.

#### Roots in the Winnetka Congregational Church

The inspiration, concept, funding, construction, organizational structure and administration for the new Community House originated with the Winnetka Congregational Church. The impetus for this support traced its roots to traditional Congregational principles and practices, as well the energy and vision of a succession of remarkable local ministers.

Formed in 1874 and formally incorporated in 1883,<sup>16</sup> the membership of the Winnetka Congregational Church was historically small in number but nonetheless made early and important civic contributions to Winnetka. This fact was underscored by Winnetka historian Carrie Burr Prouty who stated, "I cannot tell you the story of our Church even in the beginning without telling of its Village interests."<sup>17</sup> As early as 1878 the congregation's first church was raised up on a basement to provide social and meeting rooms for both the Church's members and for civic functions. Here, for example, is traced the genesis of the Winnetka Public Library, which grew--with the participation and encouragement of the Church's scholarly second pastor Rev. Mr. Samuel Kidder--out of the weekly meetings of the Winnetka Reading and Social Club and its expanding book collection. The club's activities, which included musicales,

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. 16.

<sup>16</sup> Brodsky, Remember, Rejoice, Renew, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p. 22

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lectures and readings,<sup>18</sup> soon led to the formal organization of the Winnetka Public Library in 1883, three of first six trustees being members of the Winnetka Congregational Church.

Mr. Kidder's successor, the dynamic Quincy Lamartine Dowd, would both enlarge and further mesh the roles of pastor and civic leader during his years in Winnetka (1885-1901). Dowd and his activities respectively foreshadowed both J.W.F. Davies and the Winnetka Community House in many important ways. Dowd energetically "...embark[ed] on a remarkable succession of projects...many [of which] were destined to shape the future of both the church and the village, which were inseparable throughout his pastorate."<sup>19</sup> He reached out to all people of the village, "...[n]o matter what their belief, nationality or social standing"<sup>20</sup> and teamed with his equally capable wife, gained village-wide acceptance, respect and affection, particularly among the youth. Finally, firm in the conviction that, "Change and improvement do not just happen . . . [they] are the products of creative, cooperative personalities, concerted counsels and endeavors."<sup>21</sup> Dowd "sought out and attracted the best creative talents in the community without regard to church affiliation."<sup>22</sup>

From this combination of vision, collaboration and drive, civic and church successes quickly followed. Under Dowd's catalytic leadership, the sixty-two-member congregation's second church, which informally doubled as a civic center, was constructed in 1886. With a sanctuary at the east end and an assembly room at the west end, the services offered at the new church blurred the distinction between congregation and community. "He put the Church in the background and service in the foreground,"<sup>23</sup> proudly affirmed Carrie Burr Prouty, historian and prominent village and church member. Yet, another contemporary explained, "In no sense did the unity he was able to create in the village exist under the creed or control of the Congregational Church."<sup>24</sup>

Through his youth ministry activities, for example, Dowd organized character and leadership training groups such as the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, which encouraged youth-organized services, cultural programs and entertainments, and the Young Man's Congress, a kind of debating society that Dowd described as "training each one to think and talk on his feet."<sup>25</sup> Both programs would, in turn, profoundly influence the quality of future village leaders. This nurturing of the character of the village's youth would be one of the fundamental goals of the future Community House. At the same time, the new Congregational Church served ever-expanding community activities, including town meetings, entertainments, social and cultural events, lecture series, distinguished speakers and various ladies' societies. Like the Davies of the future, Dowd played a key role in both organizing and setting a

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Brodsky, *This House is Ours*, p. 44.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Brodsky, *Remember, Rejoice, Renew*, p.27.

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high standard of quality for many of the major activities, such as initiating a series of "Extension Lecture Courses" featuring faculty from the University of Chicago and Northwestern University.<sup>26</sup> Like the future Community House, the Winnetka Congregational Church also served as a forum for civic education and discussion, much of which was organized by Dowd, sometimes in cooperation with his close friend and kindred spirit reformer, the nationally significant journalist and fellow Winnetkan, Henry Demarest Lloyd. Out of this collaboration sprang the acclaimed civic issues forum and hallowed community tradition of the Winnetka Town Meeting, which were held fortnightly in the Congregational Church basement from its inception in 1890 until 1901. Prophetic for the future Winnetka Community House,

the Town Meetings...were moved to the Academy building (then the Village Hall) at the instigation of Mr. Dowd who felt the institution had matured to the point where it belonged in the hands of the community and not the Congregational Church. From the beginning this fundamental philosophy has characterized the relationship of the church with its village—community-involving institutions and services initiated by the church, once firmly established, have invariably been relinquished and the responsibility for sustaining them has been vested in the community.<sup>27</sup>

Gregarious, as well as intellectual and spiritual, the indefatigable Dowd also organized fun, outdoor and fellowship clubs for boys and girls, which employed "pioneering philosophies and techniques which were adopted and widely used by youth clubs all over the country."<sup>28</sup> For adults and the larger community he organized tours to area sights, as well as the first Winnetka Fourth of July Celebration in 1887—a village tradition ever since. Like the Town Meeting, responsibility for the management of the Fourth of July celebration would eventually pass from the Winnetka Congregational Church to the community.

Dowd left the pastorate of the Winnetka Congregation in 1901 to study abroad, and it would be under his successor, Benjamin Severance Winchester, that Community House would be actually conceived and constructed.

The Influence of American Congregationalism

The Dowd pastorate set the stage for many of the conditions that fostered formation of Community House and for attributes that would early define Community House as an institution, including

- dynamic, outreaching leadership
- value on education and dissemination of knowledge
- strong sense of community service as an extension of pastoral service

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26-27, p. 36-37

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33-4

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23



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- hosting community events in church-owned buildings
  - church organization, fundraising, and management of projects benefiting the community, but free of denominational rhetoric
  - emphasis on character development of, and activities for, youth
  - forum for civic education and democratic debate
  - education, fellowship and entertainment opportunities for adults
  - turning over church-initiated activities to the community

The roots of many of these attributes are found in traditional Congregational principles and practices as well as contemporary currents in the Congregational denomination. These principles and currents significantly influenced the actions of not only Dowd and his congregation, but also inspired their successors who would conceive and initially nurture Community House as an institution.

A strong emphasis on education and intellectual integrity<sup>29</sup> was one key Congregational principle. An outgrowth of Puritanism, Congregationalism's commitment to education was one of the most enduring characteristics the American Congregational Church sustained from its Puritan roots, the Puritans having founded some of our nation's oldest and most prestigious schools---including Harvard (1636) and Yale (1701). Congregationalists subsequently would be instrumental in nurturing many colleges across the nation including Oberlin, Grinnell and Carleton.<sup>30</sup> Significant also for the future Community House was the Congregational education model. Colleges were not run as sectarian institutions, but rather, enjoyed the freedom of internal self determination, such self determination also being viewed as a fundamental right of each autonomous congregation. In both arenas, education quality and intellectual independence were strong values.

This commitment to education combined with the revivalist zeal unleashed by the Great Awakening of the late eighteenth century (Congregational minister Cotton Mather being a central figure), to spawn the Home Missionary Movement, which began in the early nineteenth century and sought to evangelize the nation as it expanded westward. A vital force in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Home Missionary Movement not only brought Congregationalism to Winnetka, but its strong tradition of missionary work at home was seminal for the Winnetka Community House, as it provided further inspiration for the concept of church-supported service within a community. Thus, in 1829 the "Yale Band," a pioneering group of Yale Divinity School missionaries came to Illinois, founding numerous Congregational and Presbyterian churches as well as a seminary of learning.<sup>31</sup> It was in the same missionary spirit that in 1885 Mr. Dowd, who was educated at Oberlin College and Yale Divinity School, found himself as the

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<sup>29</sup> Gaius Glenn Atkins and Frederick L Fagley, History of American Congregationalism, (Boston and Chicago: The Pilgrim Press, 1942), p.177.

<sup>30</sup> Atkins and Fagley, History of American Congregationalism, p. 238.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* p. 153.

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only pastor, of any denomination, in the community.<sup>32</sup> J.W.F. Davies, the son of a Congregational Home Mission preacher, and experienced as a young preacher in the remote reaches of the newly-admitted state of South Dakota, was instilled like his predecessor Dowd with the Congregational value of education and a missionary desire to serve the local community at large. Community House, Davies' and the Congregation Church's gift to Winnetka, would provide an ongoing vehicle not only for quality life-long education but for serving the ongoing needs of the community.

Other notable inheritances were Congregationalism's long experience with both self government and a structured approach to projects. The former, coupled with Congregationalism's conviction that quality education was imperative to responsible self-government,<sup>33</sup> very likely influenced Community House assuming one of its earliest and most enduring historic roles, i.e. as facilitator of the democratic process by providing a forum for civic education and debate. The earliest roots of American democracy itself are traced by some to the Puritan's Mayflower Compact, which served as a basis for the government of the Plymouth Colony but whose form, including the "Town Meeting" style of participatory democracy, was drawn up based on the ordering of Puritan church congregations. The denomination also had long experience with structured government and project administration, which proved a valuable carry over for the effective organization and administration of Community House. The structure of Congregationalism made it necessary to create separate corporations for specific missionary, educational, or philanthropic purposes, areas of interest in which Congregationalism became increasingly involved through the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. Not only was each managed by elected boards of directors, there would be a president, treasurer and salaried secretaries whose purpose was to promote their particular organizations and secure needed financial support.<sup>34</sup>

Two major contemporary currents of thought in American Protestantism in general and Congregationalism in particular, also provided intellectual underpinnings for Community House. These were the nurture of youth and the rise of the social gospel. Nurture of youth has been not only one of the most important continuous functions of Community House, but it was the immediate reason Community House was founded, as attested by this well-known account authored by Davies.

It was during the late summer of 1909 that I found boys loafing in the depot and hanging around the drug store corner... There was a general sentiment there was nothing to do in the village. . . I wandered over to the boys and after a bit said, "How would you like to have a club?"<sup>35</sup>

Indeed one of the reasons Davies was hired was because of his extraordinary ability to relate to young people.

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<sup>32</sup> Brodsky, Remember, Rejoice, Renew, pl 26.

<sup>33</sup> Atkins, p. 229.

<sup>34</sup> Atkins, p. 150

<sup>35</sup> Brodsky, This House is Ours, p. 6.

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This intense interest in youth and the corresponding enthusiasm of the Winnetka Congregational Church for funding and administering Community House for the first twenty years of its existence, stems in large measure from a dramatic mid-nineteenth century shift in Congregational emphasis from damnation and adult repentance to belief in man's fundamental goodness, and that nurture—through education and character formation—could shape whether children become good or evil. One of the most notable sources of this shift were the writings of the prolific Congregational minister of Hartford, Connecticut, Horace Bushnell (1802-1876), in particular his epochal book Christian Nurture (1847). This philosophical shift, in turn, fed the dynamic growth of the Sunday School movement pursuant to which the Congregationalists as a denomination invested significantly in setting up education boards, and local congregations set up Sunday schools and youth groups. It would be for his outstanding work as the superintendent of a large Chicago Sunday school that the Reverend J.W.F. Davies would catch the eye of Winnetka Congregational Church pastor Benjamin Winchester, a national leader in the Sunday school movement. .

The second important contemporary intellectual current was the rise of the social gospel. In the later nineteenth century leaders in some of the older Protestant sects, awakening to a sense of responsibility for the world around them, began applying the ethical content of Christian teachings to changing social conditions caused by the industrial revolution and urbanization. This prompted them to advocat justice for all classes through social reforms aimed at alleviating societal ills.

At the forefront of the movement were the Congregationalists, including Horace Bushnell. The denomination's value on education, inquiry and intellectual freedom opened it to the acceptance of this progressive religious outlook, and several nationally recognized Chicago leaders such as Graham Taylor (professor of applied Christianity at the Chicago Theological Seminary) and F.W. Gunsaulus (pastor of the prominent Plymouth Congregational Church), would have ties to the progressive ministers of the Winnetka Congregational Church from Dowd through Davies. The movement, which reached its peak just about the same time as the opening of Community House, and in fact coincided with the "golden age of Congregationalism,"<sup>36</sup> inspired the "more liberal theological schools [to] responded by introducing courses in economics and sociology, and even in some cases, as at ...the Chicago Theological Seminary, under Graham Taylor, ... encourage students to get practical experience in social work."<sup>37</sup> J.W.F. Davies was one of these students. Davies attended the Chicago Theological Seminary and studied under Taylor, receiving a Bachelor of Divinity in 1907. He returned there, earning a Doctor of Divinity in 1920<sup>38</sup> and maintained both a lasting friendship with the Taylor family and an active involvement in their social gospel-inspired projects. The social gospel

<sup>36</sup> Atkins, p. 181.

<sup>37</sup> Arthur M. Schlisinger, Sr., "A Critical Period in American Religion, 1875-1900" p. 310. From John M. Mulder and John F. Wilxon, Religion in American History, Interpretive Essays, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentis-Hall, Inc., 1987).

<sup>38</sup> Albert Nelson Marquis, comp. and ed., Who's Who in Chicago and Vicinity; The Book of Chicagoans: A Biographical Dictionary of Leading Living Men and Women of the City of Chicago and Environs, 1931, (Chicago: The A. N. Marquis Co, 1931), p. 239.

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is also important because of its close ties to the Settlement House movement, which provided physical, programmatic and intellectual inspiration to Community House.

The Settlement House Movement

The settlement house movement, which also peaked about the time that Community House was established, was a reform movement that started in the same period as the social gospel and was inspired by the same concerns that spawned it. Chicago's Hull House, begun in 1889 by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr, was one of the earliest, and certainly the best known settlement house in America. Congregationalists were very active in the settlement house movement, establishing Andover House in Boston in 1892. Two years later Dr. Graham Taylor, actualized his teachings of "education through social service" by establishing Chicago Commons, a settlement house in Chicago that was modeled after Hull House. J.W.F. Davies, the future Winnetka Congregational Church Pastor for Education through Social Service, would serve as a resident there in the year 1905.

Well before J.W.F. Davies, however, Graham Taylor the man, his ideas and his work were well-known to the Winnetka Congregational Church. One of the people from whom Taylor sought counsel during the establishment of Chicago Commons was Dowd (a vigorous proponent of the social gospel),<sup>39</sup> and Taylor presented the dedication address at the 1906 dedication ceremony for the church. Chicago Commons would also maintain a long relationship with Community House during and after the directorship of Taylor's student, J.W.F. Davies, as it became customary in the summer months for Community House to coordinate a day trip to Winnetka for mothers and children, first from Chicago Commons and then from other settlement houses as well. Jane Addams and other Hull House residents would also be speakers at Community House. By 1900 there were more than 100 settlement houses across the nation (a number that would eventually rise to 400) and fifteen in Chicago,<sup>40</sup> including the Northwestern Settlement House established in 1891 and the University of Chicago settlement house near the stock yards.

In general, settlement houses were large buildings located in crowded, poverty-ridden urban immigrant neighborhoods, in which settlement workers (usually educated middle- and upper-class men and women) provided services, brought culture and sought to relieve the poverty of their neighbors. The majority of settlement houses were nonsectarian. Typical offerings included kindergartens, clubs, English classes, groups interested in arts, crafts and music, meetings for civic groups, and less often country summer camps—all of which would be repeated at Community House. Within the structures were typically gymnasiums, auditoriums, classrooms, and meeting room as well as living and dining facilities for resident settlement house workers. All of these facilities, except the residence rooms, would eventually come to be incorporated in Community House.

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<sup>39</sup> Brodsky, Remember, Rejoice, Renew, p. 38.

<sup>40</sup> Louise Carroll Wade, "Settlement Houses," p. from James R. Grossman, Ann Durkin Keating, and Janice L Reiff (ed.). The Encyclopedia of Chicago. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 2004).

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Small wonder that J.W.F. Davies, who had hands-on experience as a resident in Chicago Commons' new five-story building on Grand Avenue, with its gymnasium, auditorium, and activities rooms would emphatically nix the Winnetka Congregational Church Council's earliest suggestion that Community House be a shed, and the subsequent proposal that it be a small addition behind the church. Instead, he lobbied for an architectural program that was inspired by the settlement houses of his prior experience.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE 1908 CHURCH AND THE INCEPTION OF COMMUNITY HOUSE

The pastorate of Quincy Lamartine Dowd (1885-1901) represented the forefront of progressive Congregational thinking. More important for the future of Community House, he also was representative of his progressive Winnetka congregation, which was relieved to accept, less than a year later, the resignation of Dowd's successor, "...who was described by a contemporary member of the church as a preacher who "did not fit into the modern view of the congregation, having the narrower, traditional view of religion and society and not the type of minister to hold the interest of this group who had been led into a larger vision." <sup>41</sup>

The village was growing rapidly and in order to expand its educational and social programs to meet the needs of this influx of new families, the congregation, numbering about 100,<sup>42</sup> needed a larger church. Development in Winnetka was expanding northward and so a site was selected north of the old church's location on Elm Street, just east of the railroad tracks. With the financial assistance of congregation members Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Smith, the first three lots of the present Community House complex were purchased for the purpose of constructing the congregation's second church—the present Children's Chapel. It was completed in 1906 for a cost of \$43,000<sup>43</sup> and true to the congregation's tradition, was dedicated debt-free. The church's architect, congregation member Arthur S. Coffin (1857-1938), was an eighteen-year member of the partnership Reader, Coffin and Crocker, which designed many distinguished residences in Evanston. A native of New Bedford, Massachusetts, and a member of the American Institute of Architects, Coffin specialized in planning manufacturing and hydraulic plants. Although without the benefit of formal education, Coffin also designed the acclaimed Century Theatre and Office Building in St. Louis and handsome residences in his home community of Winnetka, as well as the nearby Skokie Country Club in Glencoe, the suburb just north of the village.<sup>44</sup>

The new church building was L-shaped, the main body of the "L" being the 300-seat sanctuary, choir and organ space, lit by Tiffany windows, and survives today with a high degree of integrity. The perpendicular south wing, which continued the materials and details of the church, was also one story with a tall gable roof that matched

<sup>41</sup> Brodsky, Remember, Rejoice, Renew, p. 45.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p. 52.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>44</sup> "Arthur Sisson, Coffin, 1857-1938" [Obituary], Illinois Society of Architects Bulletin 23:8, 0-N 1938. (Microfilm, located in Ryerson and Burnham Library, Art Institute of Chicago).

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the main church. The south wing was entered at the south end of the Lincoln Avenue (east) façade through a gable-roofed open porch, and contained "a lecture room, a parlor and a 'commodious kitchen'."<sup>45</sup>

Dr. Graham Taylor's speech at the church's dedication, exhorting the need for greater activity in Christian education<sup>46</sup> was wholeheartedly received by the new pastor, Benjamin Severance Winchester (1904-09), who would become nationally known as a result of exceptional religious educational programs, methods and materials he would develop in Winnetka.<sup>47</sup> Having been educated at Williams College, the Chicago Theological Seminary and the University of Halle, Germany, Winchester also paralleled the progressive outlook of his congregation in his vision of "a church with no narrow sectarian limits, but existing for the community with no disputes over creed, but giving service to the whole."<sup>48</sup> Under Winchester, who became acutely aware of space limitations, the Winnetka Congregational Church continued to serve as civic and cultural forum for the village,<sup>49</sup> as well as engagin in the type of church-initiated community activities that were so much in evidence during the Dowd period.

According to Dr. Winchester, the vision for Community House grew from a conversation in the year following the opening of the new church when

One day, Mrs. Douglas Smith, Mrs. Winchester and I stood chatting in front of our new church. Our imagination began to work, each stimulated by the other. We seemed to see not just this building hardly completed, but another built alongside upon the vacant lot adjoining, equipped with more classrooms, a gymnasium, a stage, club rooms and other facilities for community service.<sup>50</sup>

Shortly thereafter, Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Smith purchased two vacant lots immediately south of the church on Lincoln Avenue, and the man who would make Mrs. Smith's and the Winchesters' visionary conversation a reality on those lots, the thirty-one-year old Reverend J.W.F. Davies, would soon be invited to Winnetka to interview for the post of associate pastor of the Winnetka Congregational Church.

JAMES WILLIAM FREDERICK DAVIES AND THE FOUNDING OF COMMUNITY HOUSE

Despite a small congregation of 125 members,<sup>51</sup> Winchester believed the church's education program, and the need to expand it, had developed to the point that an additional minister was needed to oversee it. Thus, J.W.F.

<sup>45</sup> Brodsky, Remember, Rejoice, Renew, p. 52.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60, 65.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

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Davies, the outstanding superintendent of the large Sunday School at the Armour Mission in Chicago<sup>52</sup> came to be known to Dr. Winchester, probably through Winchester's association with Dr. Frank Wakeley Gunsaulus (1856-1921), Davies' "boss" and one of the city's most prominent Congregationalist pastors. Gunsaulus had delivered the address at the laying of the cornerstone ceremony for the new Winnetka Congregational Church in 1905<sup>53</sup>.

Like his experience with Graham Taylor at the Chicago Theological Seminary and Chicago Commons, Davies' experience with another distinguished mentor, Dr. Gunsaulus, at an institution the stature of Armour Mission, would provide invaluable lessons for directing the future Community House. Gunsaulus, a prominent leader in the social gospel movement, was a charismatic, capable man and an eloquent speaker. And he headed a congregation similar to that of Winnetka in that it possessed leaders of vision, good will, action and means. Plymouth Congregational Church, the wealthy, activist parent congregation of Armour Mission which Gunsaulus headed, included among its members meatpacker Phillip Danforth Armour and his brother Joseph. A famous social gospel sermon preached by Gunsaulus in the early 1890s inspired Phillip Armour to provide the funding for the Armour Institute, which he and Gunsaulus created as a premier technical school to help young people who wanted to help themselves. Armour Institute would ultimately develop into the present day Illinois Institute of Technology. Phillip Armour's acumen, combined with his confidence in Gunsaulus leadership and integrity, made the gift contingent on Gunsaulus heading the institution for its formative first five year.

Armour Mission, founded a decade before Armour Institute, was also the result of the successful formula of vision, means and organization inspired in the context of Congregational concern for the social gospel and the nurture of youth. The project was initiated with a bequest of \$100,000 from Joseph F. Armour, who was a generous supporter of the Sunday school program of the church's Plymouth Mission, the latter having been founded shortly after the disastrous Chicago Fire of 1871. Phillip, who had been instructed by his brother to construct a Sunday school for the community with the bequest, matched it with an additional \$100,000 of his own money and the large, red brick Armour Mission building opened in 1886. "[B]road and wholly non-sectarian, free and open to all to the full extent of its capacity, without any restrictions whosoever as to race, creed or class,"<sup>54</sup> the Armour Mission was an instant success with 700 children showing up the first Sunday. Thereafter this experiment in "practical Christian democracy"<sup>55</sup> expanded to offer educational and vocational classes, as well as prominent speakers with diverse points of view.

James William Frederick Davies, Armour Mission's successful superintendent from 1906 to 1909, was-born in 1878 in the town of Acton in the Canadian province of Ontario and was brought to the United States as an infant. He graduated in 1903 from the Congregational-founded Yankton College in Yankton, South Dakota, before attending the

<sup>52</sup> Who's Who, 1931, p. 239.

<sup>53</sup> "The Corner Stone", The Messenger: Published by the Congregational Church of Winnetka, Ill., in the Interest of the Community Life, Vol 2, No. 3, January, 1905, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> "Armour Institute", <http://archives.iit.edu/history/armour/index.html>

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

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Chicago Theological Seminary and becoming employed at Armour Mission.<sup>56</sup> Winchester recommended that a position of educational pastor be created for this dynamic, idealistic young leader and Mr. Davies was soon invited to Winnetka to meet with church leaders at the home of Rudolph Matz, who, in the future, would play a major role in Community House. "[Davies] was a large man physically—dark, masculine, athletic, robust; endowed with a strong ego, he was a no-nonsense man with a booming voice, self-confident and accustomed to command."<sup>57</sup> According to Dr. Winchester, at the interview he "thrilled us all as he spoke of the possibilities of service for a church in Winnetka."<sup>58</sup> Matz championed the hiring of a second minister before the Church Council and congregation, and finally won the day by offering to pay the controversial salary of a second minister for the first year<sup>59</sup>.

And so, J.W.F. Davies and his wife of three years, the equally magnetic and capable Cora Gould, arrived in Winnetka in May, 1909. Much like the Dowds, they "plunged into planning and development of a lively program of activities for young people, which included not only religious education but social and athletic guidance as well" and "[from the beginning, the Davies] made no distinction between church and village, spreading their efforts with universal concern and effect."<sup>60</sup>

It did not take J.W.F. Davies long to realize that the single annex room of the new church, which was in use every night, was insufficient to meet the demands for its use as an ever-expanding social center for the entire village, and certainly not for organized youth sports. The village had quickly grown to 3,000 residents, nearly half of whom were children, yet there was no gymnasium, not even at the high school, nor any other facilities for organized recreation. A search for auxiliary space proved futile, and so Davies, aided in the winter of 1910 at a Men's Club dinner<sup>61</sup> by testimony from the boys of the village of "nothing to do for youth," built the case for a holistic architectural program of gymnasium-cum-theatre, meeting rooms, kitchen and offices separate from the church. Again, Rudolph Matz rose as champion amidst discussion of the magnitude of the proposal and its high costs.<sup>62</sup> In January, 1911, the congregation approved the receipt of subscriptions, acquisition of land and equipment, and construction of additional buildings up to \$40,000, resolving that "additional buildings and equipment are greatly needed for the development of the organizations connected with this church, and for the broadening of the scope of its work in the village."<sup>63</sup> Remarkably, but not surprising given its history, the congregation also resolved that the building would not be used for itself, but for the whole village, and furthermore that the church would hold the property and ensure that the new enterprise closed each year free of debt.

<sup>56</sup> Who's Who, 1931, p. 239.

<sup>57</sup> Brodsky, *This House is Ours*, p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> Brodsky, *Remember, Rejoice, Renew*, p. 63.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, p. 63.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, pl 65.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p. 72.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p. 73.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p. 74.



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Although the drive to raise money for the project was initiated and spearheaded by the Winnetka Congregational Church, eventually all of the village was involved in the subscription campaign, including contributions from 500 children.<sup>64</sup> The new building, christened "Community House", was designed by the architect of the Lincoln Avenue church, Arthur Coffin. It opened in November, 1911, with J.W.F. Davies (by now universally known as "Chief") appointed director and also serving as one of four Governors, with three of the church members most active in Community House's realization—Rudolph Matz, Frederick. S. Tyrrell, and William C. Boyden.

#### COMMUNITY HOUSE IN THE 1910s

The appearance of a Community House to serve the entire village could not have been better timed. The decade from 1910 to 1920 would see the greatest growth in population in the village's history--113.3%--taking the village from 3,168 people in 1910 to 6,694 people in 1920.<sup>65</sup> Through the remainder of this decade Community House experienced phenomenal use and growth and established its place as "the heart of Winnetka"—fulfilling its founding mission of service "as center for wholesome recreation, for the development of strong bodies and alert minds, for social opportunity, for the inspiration of moral integrity and the promotion of all that makes for noble character and Christian citizenship."<sup>66</sup>

"Chief" Davies would remain as director for the next twenty years. During his tenure Davies would play the pivotal role defining the institution programmatically, operationally and physically. In the process he became "the most universally revered individual of the community, and in a real sense, one of the most powerful influences on its life for years to come."<sup>67</sup> Characteristically, in keeping with Community House's mission to foster good character, one of Chief's first official acts was to form the Sir Galahad Club to clean up the language of young visitors by assessing a fine of one cent each for the use of a word considered by Chief to be profane.<sup>68</sup>

Activity at Community House was well organized and supervised, and was basically divided between the gymnasium and club rooms. The gymnasium, accurately described in a 1920 article in the national magazine Women's Weekly as the "hub of Winnetka's recreational life,"<sup>69</sup> was in near continual demand for sports, movies and large events.

Sports-related activities held at the gymnasium included baseball, tennis, volleyball, fencing and basketball, as well as general exercise and various types of dance. Later in the decade, exercise opportunities for men were expanded to include gymnastics and athletic dancing. Weekday afternoons and evenings were generally scheduled for

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<sup>64</sup> Brodsky, This House is Ours, p. 79.

<sup>65</sup> "Pass 10,000 mark: Official U.S. Census figures indicate Phenomenal Population Growth of New Trier Villages," Winnetka Talk Vol XIX, No. 45, Jan 16, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> Brodsky, This House is Ours, p.13.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* p. 28.

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organized sports, subdivided by age group and sex, with younger children's events meeting earlier and older children and adult activities meeting later. Weekday mornings were generally scheduled for organized women's sports and exercise, while Saturdays were open to more informal activities. Although gym activity was suspended during the summer months, the shower rooms were open all year, day and evening.

Activity for many Winnetka youths shifted north during the summer months to primitive Indian Hill Camp on beautiful Lake Hamlin near Ludington, Michigan. It had been established by Chief Davies in the summer of 1910, and stays of various duration were offered through Community House at a very reasonable cost. A dedicated outdoorsman, Davies was also the author of the 1926 book Out of Doors With Youth, and his leadership abilities, combined with his innate love of nature and easy rapport with young people, made the camp a cherished summer destination. Following Chief's departure, Indian Hill Camp would evolve into Camp Douglas Smith, which would be owned and operated by Community House into the early 1980s and which, to the joy of one early observer, continued "the splendid training in fair play, self-reliance and character building enjoyed by so many young folks in earlier years by Dr. Davies at this camp site."<sup>70</sup>

The multi-purpose gymnasium also served as an assembly hall, exhibition hall and venue for dances, banquets, and village parties. The tradition of the annual village-wide Halloween Party begun here in 1915, in an effort to keep children safe on the holiday and discourage the widespread property destruction that often accompanied the day. It was enormously successful on both accounts, bringing hundreds of people of all ages in costumes to enjoy performers, games, fortune tellers, and a haunted house. By 1920 it had become a major enterprise, with an estimated annual attendance of 1500 people.<sup>71</sup> To the present, its popularity has never waned.

The public desire for the exploding popular culture phenomenon of movies was immediately met by Community House, where the gymnasium, with its 600 chairs, served on weekends as Winnetka's sole movie house. "A moving picture machine was presented by Edward J. Schaad, with the comment he had never had very much fun in his childhood and he wanted to see youngsters enjoy themselves."<sup>72</sup> Several of the village's leading citizens served on the committee that selected, obtained and showed piano-accompanied silent films at first and then talkies. Community House would not only continue to serve as Winnetka's sole movie house until 1987, it would carry through its commitment to provide wholesome cinematic entertainment offered at a minimal price.

The building's ten meeting rooms were in high demand by an ever increasing number of clubs that, through the decade of the 1910s, reflected a broad spectrum of community interests, ages and social classes. Chief Davies, throughout his tenure as director, played a major role in organizing and nurturing community events and activities, especially for youth.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p. 77.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, p. 26

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15

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Many of the early clubs of this decade were youth focused and revolved around sports (such as the Midget Athletic Club) or the outdoors (such as the Boy Scouts). Scouting, with its emphasis on character development, leadership, service and outdoor activity, was a major interest of J.W.F. Davies, who was an early executive of the Boy Scouts of America. Davies served as the Winnetka scoutmaster and built a strong local program, centered at Community House, that attracted large numbers of boys. The Boy Scouts would be one of the largest and most active groups at Community House. Two analogous organizations for girls---the Girl Scouts and Camp Fire Girls---also met at Community House from its beginning, the local chapter of the latter organization being started by Chief Davies.<sup>73</sup>

Other offerings changed over time. Early in this decade performing arts opportunities were available to children through the choir, band, and orchestra. The Camera Club Room, which was open to adults and children, was thoroughly equipped with cameras, developing and printing equipment, and private storage drawers. Even pool tables were available, in separate rooms, for younger and older boys.<sup>74</sup>

Although the initial inspiration for Community House was to keep children busy, adults also availed themselves of the facilities and resources which were offered for educational, social, civic and recreational activities. Again, J.W.F. Davies played an active role. In 1912, the Winnetka Congregational Church organized the Public Discussion Club at Community House. Non-partisan and non-sectarian, the weekly meetings offered lectures and discussion on community matters, such as "Is Law and Order Enforced in Winnetka, and If Not, Why Not?"<sup>75</sup> It would be the beginning of one of Community House's most enduring functions---to serve as a forum for civic education and debate.

With each succeeding month and year Community House served an ever broadening---and changing---spectrum of community interests and needs. Just four years after its founding in 1911, Community House statistics showed that in 1915 alone, seventy-five organizations used the facility and 50,000 people had passed through its doors.<sup>76</sup> Clubs of this decade included the Neighborhood Club (headed by Mrs. Davies), Mother's Club, New Trier Horticultural Society and the Hiker's Club. Two clubs are especially noteworthy for their vitality and longevity---The Friendship Circle and The British American Club.

The Friendship Circle, which existed from the opening of Community House until 1986,<sup>77</sup> was founded by a group of Winnetka women who recognized the need to provide social opportunities for domestic help who came from abroad to work for Winnetka residents. The club, which reached a peak membership of 100,<sup>78</sup> was well organized and very active, meeting several times a months and offering a variety of activities, including dancing, picnic outings, plays, concerts, exercise, and bridge. The British American Society would meet at Community House for fifty-eight

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>74</sup> "Community House, Winnetka, Illinois, 1912-1913"

<sup>75</sup> Brodsky, This House is Ours, p. 21.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18,

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

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years, engaging in activities such as lectures, readings, music, folk dance, and card parties.<sup>79</sup> Its most spectacular annual events were a gala New Year's Eve dance and the birthday celebration of the Scottish poet Robert Burns, the latter being accompanied by a considerable amount of ceremony. For a time, the group even managed to field its own soccer team.

In addition to the Friendship Circle, immigrants' needs were addressed by Community House, beginning in this period, with two important programs derived from the settlement house movement, a visiting nurse and classes in English, the latter being augmented later with citizenship classes as well. Classes in English were offered at Community House for several decades first by volunteers and then by teachers provided in cooperation with the Winnetka public schools. A 1926 Community House newsletter article entitled "Teaching English to Foreigners" noted the "nationalities [that] have come from every country in Europe except Spain, and the fact that the foreign population in Winnetka is so large and is constantly growing gives the work a very necessary aspect."<sup>80</sup> The community's larger health needs were addressed by a visiting nurse (later to develop into the Visiting Nurses Association) which was headquartered at Community House from its inception through the 1940s.

Certainly the most defining national event at the end of the decade was World War I, and Community House became the village's center of activities connected with the war effort. Here met the local reserve militia company, the village-wide "War Emergency Union" and volunteers preparing bandages and knitting woolen goods. Here troops from Great Lakes Naval Station and Fort Sheridan were entertained, rallies were staged and Liberty Bond drives were held. And here, the war's end was celebrated in November, 1918, and Winnetka servicemen both living and dead were honored in 1919. With the close of the world war and the end of the decade, Americans looked forward to a bright and prosperous future. The succeeding decade would be just that for both the nation and Community House.

#### COMMUNITY HOUSE IN THE 1920s

The prosperity of the 1920s resulted in another influx of new families to Winnetka, the population in this decade increasing 81.7%, from 6,694 in 1920 to 12,166 in 1930.<sup>81</sup> Community House responded to the community's increasing needs of the period with an expansion of its programs as well its physical plant.

One of the largest areas of program growth at Community House in this decade was the arts, which was reflected in the founding of two significant organizations--the Winnetka Community Drama Club and the North Shore Art League. The former was begun in 1920 by nine women with a common desire to understand and experience drama, as well as to enrich the social and cultural life of the village.<sup>82</sup> The group is significant as pioneers in the "Little Theater" or community theater movement which sought to improve the caliber and availability of theatre. The movement began in America between 1906 and 1910 with the establishment of three groups in Chicago and one in

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>80</sup> "Community House, 15 Years Young". 1926 pamphlet located in the archives of the Winnetka Community House.

<sup>81</sup> "Pass 10,000 mark: Official U.S. Census figures indicate Phenomenal Population Growth of New Trier Villages"

<sup>82</sup> Brodsky, This House is Ours, p. 29.

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New York City, the most enduring and successful of the three being the Hull House Players, headquartered at the Hull House settlement, under the direction of Laura Dainty Pelham. A North Shore group, the Evanston, Illinois Drama League, founded in 1911, also by a group largely composed of women, was very influential in stimulating important American playwriting and is considered of great importance in the early development of community theatre.<sup>83</sup> The Winnetka Community Drama Club staged and performed several performances each year and was recognized for excellence as early as 1928 by Chicago's renowned Goodman Theatre, which awarded the Winnetka group second place in its amateur drama competition. In 1930, with eighty-six three-act plays, twenty one-act plays, three pageants, as well as special Christmas and Easter presentations to its credit, the group enlarged to include men and changed its name to the Winnetka Drama Club. It maintained its high standards for the remaining twenty-five years of its existence. The club's reputation attracted young Northwestern University drama student Charleton Heston, who performed in several Winnetka Drama Club productions at the Community House in the mid-1940s and earned a glowing review for a performance opposite his future wife, who opined that

several of the actors gave performances better than professional in quality...as to the two young people who sustained the romantic interest, Charlton Heston and Lydia Clarke, here were two really exceptional performances. Both these youngsters possess outstanding talent.<sup>84</sup>

In 1951, the Winnetka Drama Club's outstanding reputation would earn it the privilege of being the first little theatre organization in the United States granted the right to stage the play "Come Back Little Sheba,"<sup>85</sup> a recent hit on Broadway. Although the group shortly thereafter left Community House and disbanded, live theatre would continue at Community House to the present, with the exception of a hiatus in the 1960s.

The other significant arts organization of the period was the North Shore Art League (NSAL), founded in 1924 at the Winnetka Community House where its headquarters still remains. Once again, the Davies' played an important role. J.W.F. Davies was an accomplished woodcarver, and his wife Cora, who would become the long-serving secretary of the organization, was a portraitist and landscape painter who had studied at the prestigious Art Student's League in New York before their marriage. The NSAL grew out of a November, 1924, meeting at Community House organized by Mr. Davies and Mrs. Vennema, (a resident of the neighboring village of Kenilworth and the wife of the Chicago Consul General of the Netherlands) who "invited a few friends of Art"<sup>86</sup> to meet them around the fireplace of the Community House's Camp Fire Room.

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<sup>83</sup> Robert E. Gard, "Little Theater". *Encyclopedia Americana*. Grolier Online <http://ea.grolier.com/cgibin/article?assetid=0248900-00> (accessed March 9, 2007).

<sup>84</sup> Brodsky, *This House is Ours*, p. 101.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

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The group's mission was defined in its articles of incorporation: "to cultivate a higher appreciation of Art, by means of Exhibits, Lectures, and Social Activities within the North Shore towns."<sup>87</sup> Indicative of its success during the period of significance, by 1930 the organization had grown to 300 members from the communities of Evanston at the south end of the North Shore to Lake Bluff at the north end. Outdoor sketching and painting classes availed participants of some of the most scenic spots of this sylvan, lakefront area of Chicago with its varied terrain. Classes for children were begun in 1928<sup>88</sup> The group conducted its activities in existing meeting rooms, but after a 1930 fire, it raised \$10,000 to enable construction of its present studio space, which continues to be well-suited to the purposes of the League.

The 1920s produced many art societies outside Chicago and around the state. The NSAL however, was one of the best and most sophisticated, with programs by distinguished lecturers, classes by distinguished faculty (many associated with the Art Institute of Chicago (AIC) or Chicago Academy of Fine Arts), and a regular schedule of members' exhibitions. Members of the League included some of Chicago's best known artists and architects (several of whom were also AIC regular or adjunct faculty members) including architects Alfred S. Alschuler, and Lawrence Buck, prairie landscape master Jens Jensen, artists Rudolph Ingerle, Allen Philbrick and Frank Payraud, AIC lecturer Dudley Crafts Watson and later, artists Ivan Albright, George Buehr, Rudolph Penn, and even maverick Rudolph Weisenberg. In July, 1935, the Glencoe News would report that,

the North Shore Art League is now listed among the twenty art bodies mentioned in the "Best Prints of the Year 1934," an annual published in London depicting the selected prints and listing the artists who have produced work worthy of mention in England and America. Among the twenty are such societies as the Royal Academy of London, the National Academy of Design in New York, the Chicago Society of Etchers and the North Shore Art League.<sup>89</sup>

The organization had a lively schedule of social events and programs, as well as annual exhibitions held at the Winnetka Community House. Off-site exhibitions also were held in conjunction with well-known organizations including the University Guild, Evanston Art Commission, and the Woman's Club of Chicago. The League artists exhibited at respected venues as well, including the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition, and Mandel Brothers Department Store Galleries.

Community House, too was gaining a regional and even a national reputation for its physical design and the magnitude and variety of its programs. As attested by letters of inquiry from various parts of the country surviving in

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<sup>87</sup> George Brodsky, This House is Ours, p.35.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>89</sup> North Shore Art League, clipping scrapbook archives, untitled article, July 26, 1935. (Located in the NSAL headquarters at the Winnetka Community House).

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the house archives, and confirmed in a letter there from Chief Davies, Community House was "studied by sociologists, recreation leaders and city planners." It was featured in national magazines such as Women's Weekly (1920), which proclaimed that "Winnetka Community House...has the distinction of being the first center established in the United States solely for community purposes,"<sup>90</sup> The American Magazine (1922), and the American City Magazine (1924), the latter a journal for professionals engaged in providing municipal services and improving the quality of urban life. It was the subject of a 1925 study by Northwestern University sociologist Professor William Bailey<sup>91</sup> as well as of articles in prominent newspapers including the Chicago Tribune, St. Louis Dispatch and Christian Science Monitor.

As in the preceding decade, activity revolved around the gymnasium and club rooms. Volleyball and gymnastics became popular sporting pastimes among adult males, with boxing and wrestling being popular among boys. Classes for high school girls and boys were dropped, however, because the township high school constructed a gymnasium of its own, and in 1926, for the first time, an outdoor day camp was begun for young children, a popular activity that survives to this day.<sup>92</sup> The gymnasium continued to be heavily used for concerts, special village events, drama, movies and lectures, with distinguished speakers ranging from world-famous medical missionary Dr. Wilfred T. Grenfell speaking on his work in Labrador, to an "Old Fashioned Political Discussion" featuring, among other speakers, prominent Winnetka lawyer Harold G. Ickes, who a decade later would serve as President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Secretary of the Interior.

By 1923 Community House was bursting at the seams. In that year alone it was being used by ninety-three different organizations and logged 85,000 people passing through its doors.<sup>93</sup> New clubs of this decade included the Swedish Girl's Club, Vagabond Orchestra and the long-lived Panther Club for boys, famous for its winning basketball team. Reminiscences of the latter's star athlete, Harold Runnfeldt, gives insight into how Community House fulfilled its mission of youth character development:

We weren't just a bunch of kids playing ball. We had good speakers every week. We learned how the Village was governed. We helped needy families with food at Thanksgiving. We ran errands for Community House. We took good care of the room in which we met and we remodeled it ourselves in 1930. In that same year when the House needed money desperately, we brought the Yankton College Men's Choir to Winnetka from South Dakota and we raised \$1000—a lot of money during the Depression—no other group raised more. We sponsored the Skokie Valley C.C.C. [Civilian Conservation Corps] Camp Boxing Championship when those boys were

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<sup>90</sup> Brodsky, This House is Ours, p. 28.

<sup>91</sup> William L. Bailey, "A Suburb Sets the Pace". Reprint from the American City Magazine, 1924, located in the archives of the Winnetka Community House.

<sup>92</sup> Brodsky, This House is Ours, p. 43.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

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constructing the Skokie lagoons. But like everyone, we got older and our interests changed, although we still kept up our close friendship.<sup>94</sup>

Overcrowding was relieved in 1924 when a large addition was built immediately west of Community House, on the two lots donated previously for the purpose to the Winnetka Congregational Church by Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Smith. The project was made possible by a fundraising campaign spearheaded and organized by the church, but to which the whole village contributed, and by the church deferring its own plans for a larger worship space. Plans were again drawn up by architect Arthur Coffin and the addition was opened on January 9, 1924, with a gala celebration.

A rectangle with an irregular footprint, the new addition measured approximately 148 feet long (east-west) by 114 feet deep (north-south) and was two and a half stories tall with a one-story rear (south) wing. The addition was connected to the original Community House's west (rear) façade by only a narrow one story link, this arrangement providing both a firebreak and maximizing light and air between the buildings.<sup>95</sup> The brick and half-timbered primary (north) façade was much the same as seen today. The side facades and single story rear façade, however, were much more simple, their first floors sheathed with common brick and their only detail being face brick sills, lintels, and chimneys.

On the interior, connection between the new and existing building was established by eliminating the kitchen of the original Community House and using this space to extend the main hall west. At the addition, a slightly narrower hall provided the link between the two buildings. The northern two-thirds of the 1924 addition's first floor remains essentially the same as originally planned---north of the main hall it was comprised of a kitchen and adjoining butler's pantry, while south of the main hall was a wardrobe room, a women's toilet and the stairs to the second floor. At the west end of the main hall was the Matz Hall auditorium which was fronted by the existing north-south hallway and Pine Street entry lobby.

A corridor along the south wall of Matz Hall bordered a U-shaped, one-story wing which comprised the south one-third of the addition and contained a store room, kitchenette and five meeting rooms. From east to west these meeting rooms were the American Legion Room (42' X 24) which accessed three small rooms (a coat room, office and toilet), the Triangle Room (approximately 25' X 30'), the Camp Fire Room (22' X 36', which included an exterior exit), the International Room (22" X 20') and the Scout Room (20" X 34'). All but the International Room had a fireplace.<sup>96</sup> The second floor of the building remains essentially as originally planned, however the original use of the spaces were a director's study across the north wall, a general purpose clubroom along the east wall and a movie projection room and film office along the west wall.

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>95</sup> A. S., Coffin, architect, "Plans of Addition to Community House at Winnetka, Illinois", March, 1923. Index #1075. Sheets 1-5, S1-2. (Located in Village of Winnetka, IL Department of Planning and Development)

<sup>96</sup> Coffin, 1923 plans.



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The new addition not only doubled Community House space, it doubled its use. House statistics from 1926 reveal that 130,000 visitors passed through the doors that years and the house was used by 131 different groups.<sup>97</sup> It is therefore small wonder that the decade closed with provision being made for still additional expansion of Community House. Two lots west of Community House were purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Smith in 1925 and the last remaining west lot on Pine Street was purchased by the Winnetka Congregational Church in 1928. Furthermore, in order to provide for potential expansion south of the original Community House building on Lincoln Avenue, the adjoining Champion property (consisting of a residence straddling two lots) was purchased by the Winnetka Congregational Church in 1928.

#### COMMUNITY HOUSE IN THE 1930s.

The 1930s would prove a tumultuous decade for the nation and for Community House. For the latter, there would be momentous changes in leadership, the physical plant and in relation to its founding organization.

The decade started out well enough, however, with Mrs. Rudolph Matz and her daughter Ruther providing the funds to transform the original Arts and Crafts interior of Matz Hall to its present Classicized appearance, which was described in the October issue of the house newsletter, the Community House Comment, "A sound absorbing ceiling has been built, the brick walls have been plastered and tinted a lovely soft grey, [and] columns rise from the floor to the ceiling giving the appearance of height and graceful form."<sup>98</sup> Enthusiastically welcomed comforts incorporated in the rehabilitation project included improved acoustics "that will be a great help for dramatics, lectures and talking pictures," augmented lighting and artistic lighting effects that "will provide splendid illumination for art exhibitions, receptions and dances," upholstered seats with springs, "golden draperies hanging from the windows and stage," carpeted aisles, and "one of the finest" ventilation systems.<sup>99</sup> The rehabilitation architect, Mr. Revilo Fuller, was "highly complimented" for producing a "comfortable hall for the great variety of purposes which it must fill."<sup>100</sup>

Disaster struck at the end of the year, however, when on bitterly cold December 23, 1930 a catastrophic fire destroyed most of the original Community House main building. The Depression notwithstanding, a village-wide subscription campaign,<sup>101</sup> several major gifts from individual donors, and a low-interest loan from the Winnetka Congregational Church to cover the shortfall, enabled reconstruction and expansion to be completed in a little over a year. The new construction would be fireproof, re-use as much building material as could be salvaged, and continue

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<sup>97</sup> Brodsky, This House is Ours, p. 43.

<sup>98</sup> "The Re-Modeled Matz Hall," Community House Comment, Vol. 1, No. 6, Winnetka, Il, October, 1930. Located in the archives of Winnetka Community House

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Brodsky, This House is Ours, pp. 48-49

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the Gothic character of the original building. The architectural program, which would be planned to accommodate the expanded activities of Community House and continue their organization around meeting rooms and the gymnasium, resulted in the re-design of the original building's interior almost entirely for meeting rooms of various sizes and the construction of a major addition to house a new gymnasium.<sup>102</sup> When completed, the total project cost would amount to \$168,000.<sup>103</sup>

The June, 1931, plans for reconstruction of the original Community House building show that the building basically retained its original "L" configuration. The footprint, while generally unchanged in area, was modified to the slightly less-regular shape it is today, and the angled, projecting vestibule was added at the Pine Street (northwest) entry. The existing foundation floor was reused and patched as needed where new columns were introduced.

The architects chosen for the project were the respected Chicago firm of Hamilton, Fellows and Nedved (HFN). Principle John Leonard Hamilton (1878-1955), a Winnetka resident and member of the Winnetka Congregational Church,<sup>104</sup> served as project architect. These architects were the successors to the firm previously known as Perkins and Hamilton and later as Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton, both of which were especially known for their school designs. Because of their work, Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton already had a fine reputation in Winnetka for having recently completed a large project on Skokie School. Hamilton was personally well known for his design of the Lion House in Lincoln Park Zoo (1912), for which he won a gold medal from the Illinois Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.<sup>105</sup>

The exterior of the rebuilt main building, which today is virtually unchanged from its 1932 appearance, was constructed incorporating the areas of the building that remained standing. Material quality and workmanship were specified to be of the finest. Construction employed both reused and new facing materials per the architects' specifications, which included the following:

Face brick, common brick, cut stone and limestone rubble removed from the old building...have been cleaned and piled on the site. This material shall b3 re-used ... as hereinafter specified....Face brick on the east and south walls of the east section shall be faced with the best of the old red face brick taken from the old building. Any of these brick that are not suitable may be used as common brick....[R]ubble stone taken from the old building shall be re-used where suitable in the buttresses of the exterior walls of assembly hall and at the north entrance and corner blocks. Any remaining material shall be used in the wall surfaces mixed with new stone

<sup>102</sup> Hamilton, Fellows and Nedved Architects, Chicago. "Additions and Alterations to Winnetka Community House, Winnetka, Illinois, June 15, 1931." Job #405. Sheet nos. 1-26.(Located in Village of Winnetka, IL, Department of Community Development)

<sup>103</sup> "Winnetka Adds \$168,000 Unit to village Center". Chicago Daily Tribune. January 31, 1932, p. e-4.

<sup>104</sup> Who's Who, 1936, p.

<sup>105</sup> "J.L. Hamilton Dies, Retired Architect," Chicago Daily News, Thursday, December 29, 1955.

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herinafter specified. All new face rubble stone work as shown shall be of Wisconsin Lannon building rubble, selected grade.<sup>106</sup>

Frugal recycling was also undertaken with regard to the heating system. Although a new steam heating system was installed in the original building, undamaged elements of the original building's pre-fire heating system were installed in the gymnasium addition.<sup>107</sup>

The interior of the main building was essentially constructed anew, although structurally undamaged columns and beams were recycled for construction of its attic and portions of the gymnasium.<sup>108</sup> While reflecting the needs of Community House at this point in time, the new first floor plan was nonetheless reminiscent of its predecessor in the size and placement of the large main hall and the positioning of a large club room immediately north. Overall, the 1932 plan of the main building survives virtually intact to the present.

The simultaneous construction of the new gymnasium wing was made possible by a gift of \$40,000 from Kenneth Smith in response to a plea from Chief Davies. Mr. Smith would eventually donate an additional \$23,500 to make up the shortfall when the original sum proved insufficient, and to build out the basement. The gymnasium wing was named the "Douglas Smith Memorial Gymnasium" in honor of Kenneth's father Douglas, the generous early Community House benefactor. Its main façade was little different from that which survives today. This façade sensitively continued the Gothic and Tudor Styles of the existing complex and continued the adjacent 1924 addition's primary material of matt grey face brick. The side and rear facades, which were subsequently obscured by later additions, were respectively constructed in matching face brick with Gothic detailing and with common brick. The building's windows were primarily wood double hungs with true divided upper and lower sash.

On the interior, the gymnasium's first floor, like the present, was bordered on the south by a twelve-foot-deep space. This was originally divided from west to east into a store room, instructor's office with closet and dressing room, and a women's toilet room. Also like the present, the gym was bordered on the east by a ten-foot-deep space. This originally had a staircase at each end flanking a forty-eight-foot-long dressing area. With the additional financial contribution of Mr. Smith, the basement was built out with five scout meeting rooms, a manual arts room, a scenic studio, a boiler room, and a boy's locker room with shower and toilet rooms. The second floor followed the basic plan of the first floor, with the open space of the gym bordered on the south by the men's locker room with toilet and shower rooms and on the east by a long, center gallery flanked by staircases.

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<sup>106</sup> Hamilton, Fellows and Nedved Architects. "Specifications for General Construction, Additions and Alterations to Community House, Lincoln Avenue and Pine Street, Winnetka, Illinois". June 15, 1931, pp. 1-55. (Located in Winnetka Community House archives)

<sup>107</sup> Hamilton, Fellows and Nedved Architects, Chicago. "Additions and Alterations to Winnetka Community House, Winnetka, Illinois, Sheet 13.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, Sheet 11.

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The new gymnasium and main building, which were dedicated in January and March of 1932,<sup>109</sup> respectively, turned disaster into triumph by effectively increasing the size and efficiency of Community House. They also affirmed and strengthened the architectural precedents set to date—that is, that Community House was a physical work in progress and that periodic expansions would not only meet the needs of their time, but would be expressed in the architectural vocabulary of their time and in a manner sympathetic to the overall design of the existing complex. As in the wake of the 1924 construction, future expansion was on the minds of the post-fire planners. Alluded to in both the press and correspondence of the time, these thoughts are most directly expressed in an April 15, 1931, site plan prepared by the architects.<sup>110</sup> This plan outlines two additions—one that would expand eastward the existing Lincoln Avenue projection, and another that would be located south of the Smith Gymnasium.

In the midst of construction, discord between Chief Davies and the new pastor of the Winnetka Congregational Church, Samuel Harkness, who had arrived in October, 1930, resulted in Davies' resignation and departure by the summer of 1931. J.W.F. Davies' significance was affectionately summarized at one of the many testimonial dinners held in his honor:

Today, Community House, rising again from the ashes of a disastrous fire, stands as an eloquent testimonial to the indomitable spirit, vigorous enterprise, and broad vision of this man, intensely concerned with the welfare of his community.<sup>111</sup>

The Community House fire and Chief's resignation, in turn, prompted the leadership of the Winnetka Community Church to seriously reexamine the relationship between Community House and the church. Up to this time, as Community House matured as an institution, the church had taken small steps reflecting its desire to gradually relinquish control to the village at large, such action being consistent with precedent for civic projects the church had conceived and generously nurtured in the past. Thus, beginning as early as 1915, as the Board of Governors grew in size; the number of board members who were not members of the Winnetka Congregation Church increased. In 1919, separate treasurers were appointed, each responsible for paying the bills of his organization, and the process of disentangling the complicated financial relationship between the two organizations was begun. In 1932, however, the church's post-fire introspection resulted in the congregation voting to separate the two organizations, in concurrence with the following recommendation of a subcommittee formed to look into the matter:

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<sup>109</sup> "Winnetka Adds \$168,000 Unit to village Center".

<sup>110</sup> Hamilton, Fellows and Nedved Architects. "Additions and Alterations to Community House, Winnetka." First floor plan, April 15, 1931 (Located in Winnetka Community House archives).

<sup>111</sup> Brodsky, This House is Ours, p. 51.

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[There] has been a growing belief on the part of many who are earnestly interested in both institutions that Community House has grown so strong and become such an integral part of our village life that the Church may and should release all direct control over it, and that the operations of the two institutions shall be separated.<sup>112</sup>

Thereafter, Community House was reorganized as a nonprofit organization, Winnetka Community House, Incorporated, to which the church unequivocally transferred ownership, operation and control of Community House.

In 1936 the Winnetka Congregational Church took yet another momentous step that affected the larger Community House complex. In that year it moved the focus of its operation out of its 1906 church attached to the northeast corner of the renamed Winnetka Community House and into its new church building, located across the intersection of Pine Street and Prospect Avenue. By referendum of the church school's children, the 1906 church building was christened "Children's Chapel" and rededicated as such in 1938.<sup>113</sup> Children's Chapel continued to be owned and used by the congregation through the period of significance, but was sold in 2003 to a nonprofit corporation, Harkness Outreach Center.

AFTER CHIEF

Remarkably, J.W.F. Davies had built such a solid organization that there was no perceptible diminution in programs or activity at the Winnetka Community House after his departure. Miss Mary Williams, Chief's assistant since 1912 (and who would remain on staff until 1960) ably administered house activities until the hiring of a new director, Dr. George Getgood (1931-1940). Getgood, a native of Ireland, was a personable but commanding civil engineer with a wealth of experience in the YMCA movement and boy scouts, as well as an interest in physical education and drama. Like Davies, Getgood would inspire respect and affection. So widespread was this affection for Getgood, nicknamed "Skipper", and Winnetkans' ties to the Community House, that when his new wife was tragically killed in 1937 on the night of the Community House's village Halloween Party by an unlighted train at the building's Pine Street crossing, it ignited the community to undertake the largest earthmoving projects in Winnetka's history, the grade separation of its railroad track along the entire length of the village.

The economic depression of the 1930s kept the house's operating budget at a plateau of \$30,000 throughout the decade.<sup>114</sup> Nonetheless, the Winnetka Community House continued to provide the community with a wide array of activities. It not only survived the Depression, but proved a beacon of light during this dark time, serving as a recreational and cultural center for the idle and discouraged of the village as well the hub of assistance to people beyond its borders. When an Emergency Relief Committee was formed to help needy families in the city, for example, Winnetka Community House was its headquarters. In 1934 it hosted some of the 2,800 young men of the Civilian

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, p. 53.

<sup>113</sup> "Children's Chapel 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Open House, Sunday, February 12, 2006." Information sheet located in files of Harkness Outreach Center, Winnetka, IL.

<sup>114</sup> Brodsky, This House is Ours, p. 20.

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Conservation Corps who were encamped in barracks west of village and while creating the beautiful Skokie lagoons, one of the defining natural areas of Winnetka, out of the area's existing swamps and bogs.<sup>115</sup> During this decade the summertime visits of mothers and children from various settlement houses in Chicago to Winnetka were also continued. This activity, which began in the 1920s with the Chicago Commons settlement house and continued for several decades, was coordinated by Community House and generally consisted of a lunch there, followed by an afternoon at a local beach hosted by one of the house clubs or village neighborhood groups. In July of 1939, for example, groups from twenty-five to fifty people were entertained from several of Chicago's settlement neighborhoods.<sup>116</sup>

The new Douglas Smith Memorial Gymnasium was a magnet for recreational activities, with the newly-popular sports of ping-pong, badminton, and bowling being incorporated into the house program during this period. Badminton, incorporated in the early part of the decade, quickly grew so popular that by 1935 the Community House was hosting exhibition matches in the gym featuring national and international champions.<sup>117</sup> Public interest in the equally popular sport of bowling and a village referendum, lead to the construction, in 1936, of four bowling lanes in the basement of the gymnasium, the project being spearheaded by the Winter Club, a long-lived club founded in 1920 by men interested in winter sports.<sup>118</sup> The facility was an instant success, with leagues formed for various age groups. Despite the minimal fees charged to children, bowling remained so popular the facility was financially self-supporting during the period of significance. The bowling facility was refurbished several times but a decline in interest in the sport resulted in its closure and its replacement in the early 1990s with an enlargement of the popular adjacent fitness center.

Movies, held on Friday nights and Saturday, continued to be a tremendously popular pastime in the 1930s, the enjoyment of which was further enhanced by the upgrading of Matz Hall in the second half of the decade with air conditioning and improved stage lighting and sound equipment. As in the 1920s, the performing arts again proved a growth area, this time focused particularly on children. A significant new dramatic tradition started in 1935 with the organization of the Children's Theater of Winnetka under the direction of Edith de Nancrede, director of the renowned Hull House theatre and dance school. Ms. de Nancrede, a close colleague of Jane Addams, and a fellow resident of Hull House who played an important role in shaping that institution, came to Winnetka by train for many years to coach and direct the group.<sup>119</sup> The Children's Theatre would continue to be a viable, vigorous organization based at Community House not only through the period of significance, but up to the present day.

The Children's Hour was another active, long-lived juvenile performing arts program. Begun in 1931 by the Junior Auxiliary of the Winnetka Women's Club, its varied offerings, including plays, marionettes, painting

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p.91,

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

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demonstrations, magicians and dance performers, moved from the Women's Club to the Community House the following year in order to accommodate its large audiences. Performing arts opportunities for adults were also notably enhanced with the creation of the Winnetka Choral Society an active group that was founded and nurtured by George Getgood during his tenure as Community House director.

Through the turbulent national and international years of this decade the Community House continued its historic role as a forum for lectures and educational programs, presenting a broad range of topics and opinions, and featuring distinguished speakers from Pierre De Laneaux, the director of the Paris office of the League of Nations who spoke on "France and the World Situation" to Chauncy McCormick of Chicago, a vigorous foe of the New Deal, whose lecture was entitled "We Must Remain Americans."<sup>120</sup> The Winnetka chapter of the League of Women Voters, founded in 1922 and headquartered at the Community House, was particularly active in this area during the period of significance. During the 1930s the group sponsored a plethora of top-flight speakers including United States Secretary of Labor Francis Perkins, and even held the organization's statewide convention here in 1936.

As in the past, this decade spawned new groups, events and traditions. The Community House became home to several service organizations including one of the earliest Rotary Clubs, the Lions Club and also the American Legion. The Business and Professional Women's Club, founded in this decade, exerted for forty years "a salutary influence on the life of the village through its stimulating talks, philanthropies and participation in community social, political and educational activities."<sup>121</sup> In 1937 the Community House became the incubator for the renowned Hadley School for the Blind, which would soon develop into "the only home study school for the blind in the western hemisphere."<sup>122</sup> By 1950 the school offered seventy courses to more than 675 blind students enrolled in every state of the U.S. as well as Canada and overseas.<sup>123</sup> The school was founded by Winnetkan William A. Hadley, who explained, "I founded Hadley in 1920, a few years after I lost my vision. After learning braille, I had a strong desire to offer free education to other blind and visually impaired people no matter where they lived."<sup>124</sup> The Hadley School for the Blind would be headquartered at the Community House until 1957, when the school moved into its own building.

The post-fire expansion made the Community House an attractive venue for large specialty events in the 1930's, including a "Great Trade Festival" held in 1932 and 1933, which showcased consumer goods ranging from automobiles to washing machines, displayed by over 100 exhibitors. The 1933 event alone drew an audience of 10,000 and raised \$6,000 for the maintenance of WCH.<sup>125</sup> Auto shows and a giant auction were similar successful events.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>124</sup> Hadley School for the Blind website, [http://www.hadley-school.org/Web\\_Site/Hadley-School.asp](http://www.hadley-school.org/Web_Site/Hadley-School.asp)

<sup>125</sup> Brodsky, *This House is Ours*, p. 57.

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A number of significant new traditions were begun in the 1930s. Winnetka on Parade, the well attended, long standing annual tradition of informing newcomers of the village's multitude of organizations and services was begun in 1931 with a one-day display at the Community House by virtually every community institution and organization. A 1932 flower show sponsored by the Winnetka Garden Club, led to more than a decade of spectacular dahlia shows at WCH arranged by the American Gardeners Association. This annual event attracted thousands of visitors from all across Chicagoland.<sup>126</sup> The following year, 1933, the women of the Congregational Church held a white elephant charity sale at the Community House that began the church's annual rummage sale extravaganza. This event, which quickly grew to large proportions and even today fills every inch of the building, earned a 1986 place in the Guinness Book of World's Records as the largest and most profitable rummage sale in the world.<sup>127</sup> And, as previously alluded, Chief Davies' Indian Hill Camp was purchased by Kenneth Smith in 1936 and donated to Community House. Improved and renamed Camp Douglas Smith, it would provide, at a very low cost, an unforgettable experience for thousands of Winnetka boys and girls for another forty-seven summers.

Winnetka Community House celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1936. Although George Getgood was referring to that milestone in the local newspaper, the Winnetka Talk, when he described how WCH continued to fulfill its original mission of service to the community, his words equally well describe the role of the Community House in this decade:

Community House is a friendly place to which come the discouraged, the disgruntled, the unemployed—all these find a helping hand and friendly sympathy...Here, also, we find boys and girls bringing their problems for guidance. Here is the home of the arts, the drama, music, athletics and the social life of the Village.<sup>128</sup>

#### THE WAR YEARS: 1940-1945

In the early 1940s, directorship of the Winnetka Community House changed from George Getgood to Dr. Howard W. Copp. Copp, who came to the Community House after a decade of association with the athletic staff and the School of Education at the University of Michigan, also brought extensive Boy Scout and YMCA camping experience to his post.<sup>129</sup> He would oversee operations at WCH from 1942 through 1945, a time when a considerable amount of the Winnetka Community House's facilities and energies would be focused on the community's war effort.

In many ways, the two years of this period leading up to America's involvement in World War II were business as usual for the Community House. The new sports of twilight softball and archery were integrated into the recreation program, new classes in tap and modern dance were offered, and Chicago Cubs baseball hero "Gabby"

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.



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Harnett spoke to an audience of 500 at a Father and Son Dinner in 1940.<sup>130</sup> In other ways they were years of foreboding, with well-respected speakers voicing the pros and cons of joining the widening global war, meetings held on the problem of civil defense and the making of bandages by the British American Society for shipment to England.

When World War II began, at the end of 1941, the Community House became the center of Winnetka's war effort. Servicemen from the nearby military facilities of Great Lakes Naval Station, Glenview Naval Air Station and Fort Sheridan were availed of the house recreational facilities and were entertained here at events sponsored by the Winnetka Committee for Servicemen, which was headquartered at the Community House, as well as by various house clubs, particularly the Friendship Circle. For the civilian population, Red Cross classes in food, health and coping with wartime conditions were offered at the Community House, as well as special gym classes to get men and women in shape, and blood drives. The Community House served as the collection center for scrap paper, bottles, phonograph records and other items necessary for the war effort. Induction services for men entering the Winnetka Citizens Defense Corp as air raid wardens were held in Matz Hall. The Community House also organized a Children's Victory Garden program that engaged hundreds of children in the cultivation of a total of 2,0074 separate gardens on an estimated total of 100 acres. The gardens' bountiful yields led to the establishment of the Winnetka Community Canning center at the Community House. The center's products were distributed to the inner city and servicemen's families.<sup>131</sup>

Winnetka Community House's reputation for excellence and service not only made it a beloved institution in its own community, it continued as a subject of admiration and study by other communities. In December, 1944, for example, visitors from Scarsdale, New York, and Riverside and Wilmette, Illinois toured the Community House complex with an eye to its possibilities as a model for a community center in their towns. In 1946 one service man from Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, that it touched wrote that

during the war I was on the staff at the Naval Hospital at Great Lakes. Several times I drove patients down to Winnetka to spend the day at your Community house. . . . Since coming home, the different organizations and clubs have combined under a Civic Club and are considering such a building for our town. I was very much impressed with yours and would like to know how you financed it and also how the organization is set up for operating it.<sup>132</sup>

During the war years, pre-school child care was a community need informally met at the Winnetka Community House while women gave their time to the war effort. In 1944, this need was more formally addressed with the founding of one of the community's, and the Community House's, most significant new nonprofit

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<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* p. 104.

<sup>132</sup> Letter from C.R. Snitger to President, Chamber of Commerce, Winnetka, Il, October 23, 1946. (Located in the archives of the Winnetka Community House).

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organizations, the Winnetka Community Nursery School (WCNS). After the war, the community's need for child care would continue to grow and WCNS would expand within the Community House until it became necessary in 1972 to construct a new west wing addition to house its specialized needs. The Winnetka Community School Nursery continues to operate there today. The school was lead by a succession of able directors during the period of significance, who established a sophisticated program of recognized excellence.<sup>133</sup> The school's quest for financial support spawned yet another cherished and ongoing Winnetka tradition, the annual Children's Fair. Begun in 1945, the event was hosted for its first three years in the back yards of private local estates. Since then, it has been held for two days each spring on the Winnetka Village Green, delighting thousands of children with "a major dramatic performance, rides, contests, and dozens of attractions and activities."<sup>134</sup>

The end of the war years also saw the beginning of the memorable teen social spot, the "No Name Inn." In response to the village's long concern about wholesome after-school activity for high-school-age students, this canteen with a night club feeling was opened in 1944 in the basement of the Community House.<sup>135</sup> The interior was designed by Winnetka architect Otto Van Weyk, with all the furniture constructed by students. On Friday and Saturday nights it was packed with teens eating food and listening to live or recorded music. Although it was called by various names over the years, "No Name Inn" proved the most enduring. Dave Garroway, the future first host of television's "Today" show, then an NBC disc jockey, spun records at the "No Name Inn" on several occasions. It was expanded shortly after the war with an adjoining kitchen and game room,<sup>136</sup> and in 1948 was completely remodeled in a circus theme and renamed "Big Top," which drew substantial crowds.

THE POST-WAR DECADE: 1946-1956

The decade following the close of World War II brought welcome tranquility and prosperity not only to a nation weary from war and economic depression, but to Winnetka and the Community House as well. Wartime activities and groups largely ceased. A War Service Committee<sup>137</sup> was established in October, 1945, at the Community House to help returning servicemen, but by 1947 the closing of the Veterans Advisory Center at Community House indicated that by this time the need for such services had largely disappeared. Post-war prosperity was reflected in the rapid growth of the budget as services and activities also expanded. From its plateau of \$30,000 in the 1930s the Community House budget had grown by 1958 to \$125,000. Overseeing operations until the end of the period of significance were Ed Slezak, who served as director from 1945 to 1949, and his successor, George Miner, who would remain in the position until 1970.

<sup>133</sup> Brodsky, This House is Ours, p. 113.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

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Movies, sports, and recreation programs remained popular, with 1955 hitting new records of over 42,000 people attending movies, 45,000 lines being bowled and over 1,000 young people participating in supervised gym programs.<sup>138</sup> The quality of performing arts was well exemplified by the appearance at the Children's Hour of the remarkable puppet show, "Kukla and the Dragon," which was destined for future stardom in early television as the program "Kukla, Fran and Ollie". This show, watched by millions for many years, won critical acclaim for both its entertainment quality and substance.<sup>139</sup> Club and event statistics of the period were equally impressive, as represented by these statistics for 1953:

154 different organizations made use of the facilities. There were eight regular tenants. Ten political groups and 14 religious groups made use of the House. Approximately 30 civic, educational, professional and charitable groups are represented. There were six physical fitness, rhythm and dance groups, 47 parties for recreational and private groups, ten resident scout troops and 12 miscellaneous groups.<sup>140</sup>

As always, the Community House served as a forum for lectures and discussion on local, national and international topics of interest, topics that covered a wide range of subjects and viewpoints, and that were presented by highly credentialed speakers. Topics of general interest were covered by speakers including eminent physiologist and University of Chicago faculty member Dr. Anton J. Carlson<sup>141</sup> and the Roman Catholic Cardinal of Chicago, Samuel Stritch.<sup>142</sup> Residents interested in international topics of the day were drawn to hear Nobelist Dr. Harold C. Urey, a renowned nuclear physicist speak on "Arm, Atoms and Answers,"<sup>143</sup> while concerns about Communism were addressed by a number of speakers. In an effort to bring the community a fuller understanding of the latter issue, a Ford Foundation-funded three part seminar was held at the Community House on the topic of world politics.<sup>144</sup> All village adults were invited. The World Politics Program seminar continued annually through the period of significance.

Local issues received a lot of attention during this decade. Race relations and housing, topics that would be a focus of community attention in the succeeding decade and would culminate with Dr. Martin Luther King speaking at the Winnetka Village Green in 1964, began to be addressed at this time by speakers including James Downs<sup>145</sup>, housing coordinator for the City of Chicago. The problems of educating, caring for and treating emotionally disturbed children were the subject of a day-long meeting hosted at the Community House in 1955, sponsored by the New Trier

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<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

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Public Welfare Advisory Committee. The meeting was attended by more than a dozen experts, representing virtually all of the school, health and welfare services on the North Shore.<sup>146</sup> Of intense controversy at the end of this decade was the issue of whether the Village should sell its municipally-owned power plant to the Commonwealth Edison Company. Independent ownership had long been a source of community pride, and whether to turn the plant over was the subject of many community meetings at WCH in 1956.<sup>147</sup> The village eventually decided not to sell.

Identifying the needs of older adults was an important development in this decade. Post-war improvements in medicine lengthened life span, and by the early 1950's there was a population of at least 1700 in Winnetka over the age of sixty.<sup>148</sup> The earliest recorded effort to organize this group was the "Welcome Club," formed at WCH in 1947. A series of conferences and meetings held at the Community House in the early 1950s led to the formation in 1954 of the North Shore Committee on the Older Adult. This group incorporated in 1956 and the following year created the North Shore Senior Center, headquartered at Winnetka Community House.<sup>149</sup> This activity is significant as a prelude to the phenomenal physical growth thereafter of the North Shore Senior Center within the Community House and the wide range of programs and services it provided to men and women over the age of sixty in twenty-three communities. The organization would remain at the Winnetka Community House until 1991.

Expansion, rehabilitation, and planning for expansion were important during this period. In 1947 the Community House purchased, from the Winnetka Congregational Church, the Champion House and its two lots that were located immediately south of the Community House on Lincoln Avenue. The property was acquired for potential future expansion. The Champion House space was used during this decade for Community House-related purposes. Shortly after acquisition, for example, overcrowded conditions at the Community House were relieved by relocating the Family Service office and the Thrift Shop to the first floor of Champion House,<sup>150</sup> and in 1949 long-time Community House tenant the North Shore Visiting Nurse Association began renting the kitchen and pantry.<sup>151</sup> The second floor of Champion House was used as an apartment for both directors Ed Slezak and George Miner.<sup>152</sup> The front façade was the subject of a major remodeling in 1957. However, the remainder of the building retains a high degree of integrity and is currently occupied by a major tenant and offices for the Community House executive staff.

Harkness Hall, named for Winnetka Congregational Church pastor Dr Samuel Harkness (1930-1955) and located between the 1906 church and the main section of Community House, was constructed in 1954 to

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>148</sup> Caroline Thomas Harnsberger, *Winnetka: The Biography of A Village*. (Evanston, Il: The Schori Press, 1977). p. 305.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>150</sup> Letter from Edward J. Slezak, Director of Community House to Mrs Edward S. Price, President, Family Service of Winnetka; July 30, 1947. (Located in the archives of the Winnetka Community House).

<sup>151</sup> Letter to Mr. Scott W. Hovey, Vice Chairman, Winnetka Community House from Katherine R. Garner, President N. Shore Visiting Nurse Association, Jan 31, 1949. (Located in the archives of the Winnetka Community House).

<sup>152</sup> WCH board of Governor's Minutes, June 10, 1957, p. 2.

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accommodate the Winnetka Congregational Church's pressing need for Sunday School classroom space. Both Harkness Hall and the Children's Chapel were purchased from the Winnetka Congregational Church in 2003 by a nonprofit charitable organization.

In 1955 the electric train line bordering the western edge of the Winnetka Community House property was discontinued. Its substation building and attached walled courtyard, located immediately southwest of the Community House, were acquired by the Community House in 1960. Thereafter the substation, which was restored in 1979, was used for storage. Its attached courtyard has been landscaped twice, in 1979 and 2003 respectively, as a garden. Historically, the substation, which faced the electric railroad company's premier Shore Line tracks west of the Community House, was one of a series of stations distributing power along the line. A superb commercial example of the Tudor Revival style popularized in Winnetka and other commercial districts on the North Shore by architect Howard Van Doren Shaw's 1916 design for Market Square in Lake Forest, the station was in keeping with then-company-owner and utilities magnate Samuel Insull's insistence on quality. It was designed and constructed by the electric railroad in 1927<sup>153</sup> as part of a major investment in upgrading and modernizing the line during Insull's tenure.<sup>154</sup> Post World War II advances in transportation, however, rendered electric interurban railroads financially unprofitable, and in 1955, the Interstate Commerce Commission approved abandonment of the Shore Line operation.

During 1956, Matz Hall was modernized with a "Cinemascope" screen and projection equipment, much of the rest of the Community House was redecorated with new fixtures and draperies, and acoustical tile was installed in many rooms. This year marks the end of nearly a half-century period of significance, during which was created and matured of one of the most consistently productive and positive organizations in Winnetka's history, the Winnetka Community House

#### EPILOGUE

Although Community House would joyfully celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 1961, the 1960s and early 1970s would be difficult years financially, despite the fact that activity was great as ever. Heroic efforts, creativity and sound fiscal planning, however, eventually secured a stable financial base for the continued operation and future of the Community House. Today, the Winnetka Community House annually serves the contemporary needs of thousands of people pursuant to a contemporary version of its historic mission: "[T]o enrich the lives of North Shore residents, their families, and friends by providing diverse educational, cultural, social, and recreational opportunities for people of all ages."<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> "Chicago North Shore and Milwaukee R.R. Co. Automatic Sub-Station At Winnetka Illinois" (Plans). Chief Architect's Office, November 29, 1926. (6 unnumbered sheets. Copy located at Winnetka Historical Society, Winnetka, IL).

<sup>154</sup> William D. Middleton, North Shore: America's Fastest Interurban, (San Marino, CA: Golden West Books, 1964), p. 31..

<sup>155</sup> "Winnetka Community House: Where Community Happens", Spring/Summer 2006 Program Guide, p. 4.

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That the Winnetka Community House is "associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history," particularly that of Winnetka, Illinois, is unquestionable. It is right and fitting that it be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Winnetka Community House Complex Buildings and Additions Chronology

<u>Structure</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Architect (original)</u>
Winnetka Congregational Church	1906	Arthur Coffin
Community House (original)	1911	Arthur Coffin
1924 Addition	1924	Arthur Coffin
Community House (rebuilt)	1932	Hamilton, Fellows, Nedved
Smith Memorial Gymnasium addition	1932	Hamilton Fellows, Nedved
Harkness Hall addition	1954	Travelletti and Suter
Winnetka Community Nursery School	1972	Cone and Dornbusch
Addition		
South Addition	2004	Mekus Studios
Champion House (acquired 1947)	c. 1890	unknown
Chicago North Shore and Milwaukee R.R. Co. Automatic Substation (acquired 1960)	1927	CNSMRR Chief Architect's Office

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

PARCEL 1

LOT 1 OF COMMUNITY HOUSE CONSOLIDATION, A SUBDIVISION IN THE NE ¼ OF THE NE ¼ OF SECTION 20 AND THE SE ¼ OF THE SE ¼ OF SECTION 17, TOWNSHIP 42 NORTH, RANGE 13 EAST OF THE 3<sup>RD</sup> PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, IN THE VILLAGE OF WINNETKA, COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

PARCEL 2

LOTS 7, 8, 9 IN BLOCK 13 OF WINNETKA PARK BLUFFS, A SUBDIVISION OF BLOCKS 1, 2, 3, 4 (EXCEPT LOTS 4, 5 AND 6 IN BLOCK 4), BLOCKS 5 AND 6, LOTS 7, 8, 9, 11 AND 12 IN BLOCK 7, LOTS 3, 6 AND 7 IN BLOCK 9, LOTS 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 AND 7 IN BLOCK 12 AND THE NORTH 75 FEET IN BLOCK 11, PARK ADDITION, IN THE NE ¼ OF THE NE ¼ OF SECTION 20 AND THE SE ¼ OF THE SE ¼ OF SECTION 17, TOWNSHIP 42 NORTH, RANGE 13 EAST OF THE 3<sup>RD</sup> PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, IN THE VILLAGE OF WINNETKA, COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

PARCEL 3

LOTS 12 AND 13 IN BLOCK 13 OF WINNETKA PARK BLUFFS, A SUBDIVISION OF BLOCKS 1, 2, 3, 4 (EXCEPT LOTS 4, 5 AND 6 IN BLOCK 4), BLOCKS 5 AND 6, LOTS 7, 8, 9, 11 AND 12 IN BLOCK 7, LOTS 3, 6 AND 7 IN BLOCK 9, LOTS 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 AND 7 IN BLOCK 12 AND THE NORTH 75 FEET IN BLOCK 11, PARK ADDITION, IN THE NE ¼ OF THE NE ¼ OF SECTION 20 AND THE SE ¼ OF THE SE ¼ OF SECTION 17, TOWNSHIP 42 NORTH, RANGE 13 EAST OF THE 3<sup>RD</sup> PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, IN THE VILLAGE OF WINNETKA, COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

**Boundary Justification**

This is the legal description of the land of Winnetka Community House as aggregated between 1911 and the present.

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**Winnetka Community House**  
**Cook County, IL**

**Property owners**

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**Owner 1:**

Winnetka Community House  
c/o Donald P. Van Arsdale  
620 Lincoln Avenue  
Winnetka, Illinois 60093

Owner of Champion House (614 Lincoln Avenue), the former North Shore Electric Railroad substation and all of the Winnetka Community House building (620 Lincoln Avenue).

**Owner 2:**

Harkness Outreach Center  
c/o William S. McKay, Jr.  
630 Lincoln Avenue  
POB 214  
Winnetka, Illinois 60093

Owner of Harkness Hall (630 Lincoln Avenue) and the Children's Chapel (southwest corner of Pine Street and Lincoln Avenue).



LINCOLN AVE

PINE STREET

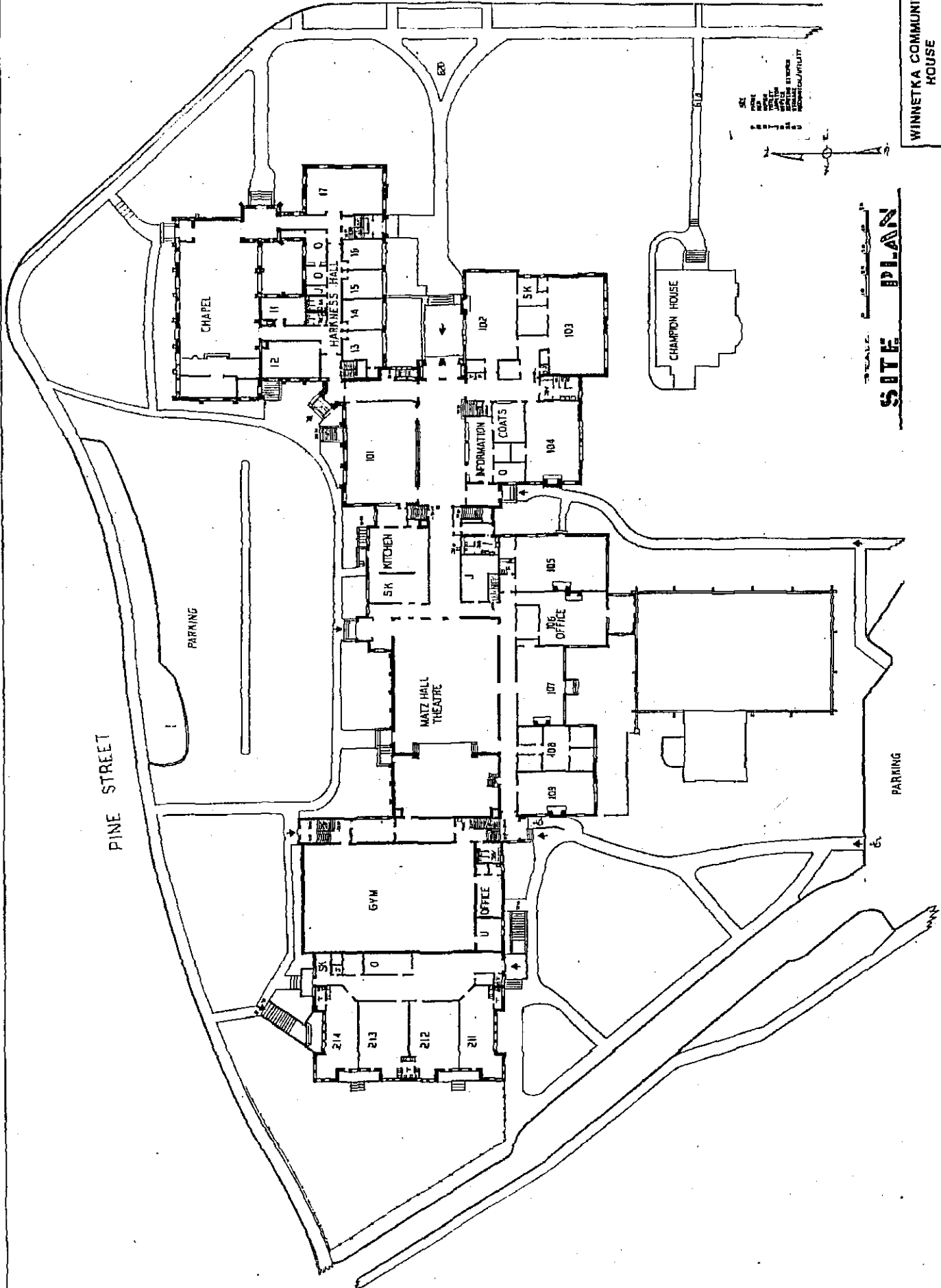
WINNETKA COMMUNITY HOUSE

1

WINNETKA COMMUNITY HOUSE  
100 N. PINE STREET  
WINNETKA, ILL. 60093

SCALE 1" = 10' - 0"

SITE PLAN



1980

Ruddell Mill Site,  
Address Restricted,  
Batesville vicinity, 07000434,  
LISTED, 8/28/07

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,  
Community House,  
620 Lincoln Ave.,  
Winnetka, 07000854,  
LISTED, 8/30/07

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,  
Palmer Park,  
201 E. 111th St.,  
Chicago, 07000855,  
LISTED, 8/30/07  
(Chicago Park District MPS)

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,  
Vial, Robert, House,  
7425 S. Wolf Rd.,  
Burr Ridge, 07000853,  
LISTED, 8/31/07

ILLINOIS, ROCK ISLAND COUNTY,  
Moline Downtown Commercial Historic District, Roughly bounded by 12th St. to 18th St., 4th Ave. to  
7th Ave., Moline, 07000856, LISTED, 8/30/07

IOWA, WOODBURY COUNTY,  
Williges Building,  
613-615 Pierce St.,  
Siouz City, 07000850,  
LISTED, 8/31/07

LOUISIANA, ORLEANS PARISH,  
Buildings at 445-447-449 South Rampart,  
445-447-449 S. Rampart,  
New Orleans, 07000857,  
LISTED, 8/30/07

MARYLAND, BALTIMORE COUNTY,  
Goucher College,  
1021 Dulaney Valley Rd.,  
Towson, 07000885,  
LISTED, 8/28/07

MARYLAND, FREDERICK COUNTY,  
St. John's Church at Creagerstown Historic District,  
8619 Blacks Mill Rd.,  
Thurmont vicinity, 07000862,  
LISTED, 8/28/07

MARYLAND, HARFORD COUNTY,  
Graystone Lodge,  
1118 Bel Air Rd.,