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THE WEST SIDE COMMUNITY CENTER
A STUDY IN COMMUNITY
INTEGRATION

BY
JOHN FRANCIS SINNOTT

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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INTRODUCTION

This study in community integration has for its purpose the discussion, understanding, and evaluation of those processes that have determined the character of the West Side Community Center.* That it was able to become an active force and an integrating influence in the community life of the neighborhood can be understood only when all the factors that went into the essential character of this agency are understood. The influences that determined the life of the West Side Community Center cannot be interpreted without a study of the early history of Chicago and the near west side. Likewise a study of the history and development of the Center is necessary. Going further, the program of the Center in relation to both children and adults must be considered together with an interpretation of the opinions of the people using it. Finally, a summing up and an evaluation of these various factors must be had in order to show how the Center has become a part of the community life and accepted as such.

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORY AND GROWTH OF THE NEAR WEST SIDE

In order to understand how and why such an agency as the West Side Community Center came into existence it is necessary to study the history of Chicago in general and the near west side in particular. There were certain factors in Chicago's early history that determined to a large extent the character of the Near West Side. These determining factors must be considered and understood prior to a discussion of the agency itself, for without them this study would be incomplete.

In the year 1833 Chicago was a small settlement with a population estimated at 100 to 250 inhabitants. By 1837 a city charter was obtained and the population had increased to approximately 4000 people. The city has been described as one of cheap frame buildings on marshy land with scrubby timber on its outskirts.¹

The rapid growth of Chicago in the following decades has been attributed to three factors: (1) The "Indian War" of 1822 which had awakened interest in the western lands

¹ Edith Abbott, The Tenements of Chicago, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1936, p. 1.

through the victory of the army under Winfield Scott.

(2) Attraction of immigrants by a harbors appropriation and the construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal. Canal lots were offered for sale in 1836 for the second time, the first having been in 1830, causing great excitement and bringing people from distant places to invest and to obtain work.

Although the offering of canal lots for sale attracted many people to the new site, it was not until 1860 that Chicago began to grow larger in proportion to other cities of the middle west. In 1850 Chicago ranked twenty-fifth in population among the cities of the United States. From 1890 on Chicago has ranked second only to New York.

In 1840, when the federal census first reported Chicago as an incorporated place, the new city had, in round numbers a population of 5000; while Cincinnati had 46,000; Pittsburgh, 21,000; Louisville, 21,000; and St. Louis, 16,000. Detroit had a population of 9000 at this time, and Cleveland, Columbus, and Dayton--with 6000 each--outranked Chicago. Then at this time New York had a population of 312,000; and Baltimore and New Orleans, 102,000 each; and Boston and Philadelphia, 93,000 each. In 1850 Chicago ranked twenty-fifth in population among cities of the United States; in 1890, and in all succeeding census returns,

as second only to New York. Since 1890 Chicago's rate of population growth has been greater than that of New York.²

Even at the early date of 1843 the influx of immigration was very large. Most of the western travel was induced by immigrants coming to Chicago to make a living and with this ever growing population came all the problems of food, clothing, and shelter which remain unsolved to this day.

The contractors of the Illinois and Michigan Canal begun in 1836 had sent out circulars to all seaports in the United States advertising for laborers on the canal. Land at nominal cost and jobs that were permanent and good paying were offered as inducements. The new Irish immigrants readily responded, and by 1846 the parish of St. Patrick was established on the near West Side at Des Plaines near Washington and Randolph. By 1854 a foundation for a brick church was laid at Des Plaines and Adams which is the present site of this church.

Other nationalities besides the Irish began to move into the near west side. However, previous to 1871, the time of the Great Fire, the change in the inhabitants went on more rapidly. From 1848 to 1857, the west side,

² Abbott, op. cit. pp. 4.

of all sections, grew the fastest. The immigrants brought in by steamship, railroad and wagon rapidly increased the population of the area. Industrial and commercial development went forward quickly and such businesses as wagon factories, iron foundries and planing mills grew up almost overnight. The increased mass of people were the workers in these places who crowded into frame shanties and cottages built along the canal near the factories. One of the plague spots at that time was Maxwell Street near Halsted which later became known as the Russian Jewish Ghetto. It was said that it could be "singled out of a thousand by the peculiar, intensive stench that arises from pools of thick and inky compound which in many cases is several feet deep and occasionally expands to the width of a small lake."³

The situation of the near west side, in respect to sanitation and living conditions offers a good explanation for the growth and maintenance of the great slum areas developed in Chicago from 1840 on. There were hardly any sewers and practically no pavements. The influx of immigrants and increased population on the west side was so

³ Chicago Tribune, June 18, 1873

great that little could be done to better conditions. Vice was rampant as evidenced by the large number of saloons and sailor resorts on Wells Street and the streets west of Wells and south of Washington, eventually extending west of Clinton Street on Madison.

Even after the great fire of October 9, 1871, the character of the west side remained unchanged, in fact conditions became worse. More industry, commerce and communication gave no chance of rebuilding the frame cottages constructed in previous years. Because of their location near means of easy transportation and desirable sites industrial firms increased. Tenement building became profitable and the prevalence of absentee landlords increased. The combination of good industrial sites, profitable tenement building, and large immigration were the major factors which created and maintained the slum areas of the near west side in the early history of Chicago, even to the present time.

During these growing changes and increases in population it was mentioned that the Irish were the first nationality to settle the near west side. They had maintained a "stronghold" in the neighborhood of Bridgeport, and in the intervening years after 1871 had slowly moved

westward. The Germans had come in with the Irish and were followed in turn by the Bohemians, Russian Jews, Italians and Greeks. The old Jewish Ghetto quickly lost its identity when the Poles, Greeks and Italians were crowding it out. Negroes then began to move in and now occupy an extensive area south of Roosevelt Road.

Of all the nationalities concerned in this study, the Italians were the ones to settle, and remain as an integrated group in the neighborhood of the near west side. In the area of this study the nationalities listed at the West Side Community Center are predominately Italian, and have remained so since 1890.⁴ Previous to that time the federal census reported the following.

The federal census reported only 552 Italians in Chicago in 1870; 1,357 in 1880; 5,685 in 1890; 16,008 in 1900; 45,169 in 1910; 59,215 in 1920; and 73,960 in 1930. These figures give a very good picture of the great foreign colonies of this nationality in Chicago.⁵

It is not known just when the Italians settled in the area but a glance at the above census table gives a good picture of the concentration of Italians after 1900.

⁴ See Table I.

⁵ Abbott, op. cit., pp. 94.

It is interesting to note the transition that took place in the character and inhabitants of the neighborhood after the Great Fire of 1871. Previous to the Great Fire, the population of the near west side was made up primarily of native born Americans. After the Great Fire the Americans gradually gave place to the Irish and German immigrants, next came the Russian Jews and the Italians, who then gave way to the Greeks and Bulgarians and finally the Mexicans and Negroes. In the area of influence⁶ covered by the West Side Community Center the increase in the Negro population is not so great.⁷ This has been due to the fact that the Italians have settled down in the neighborhood and consider it as their permanent abiding place. In 1926, when a canvass was made of the near west side it was found that the Italian colony extended from the "Chicago River west to Paulina Street and from Van Buren Street south almost a mile to Roosevelt Road."⁸ This colony contained about half the total Italian population drawing its numbers from all provinces of Italy especially,

⁶ See Table II.

⁷ See Figure A.

⁸ Abbott, op. cit., pp. 96.

Apulia, Basilicata, Campania, Abruzzia, Tuscany, Lombardy, Rome, Venice and Naples. The colony draws its largest number from the first named provinces but there were many spots throughout the district that had strong though small concentrations of the last named groups; for instance, the area between Halsted Street and Des Plaines Avenue was distinctly Neapolitan. Throughout this neighborhood there was a distinct Italian influence. The two popular Italian newspapers, "L'Italia" and "Il Progresso," were offered for sale.

Though the colony by 1890 was a crowded slum area, it was not until later, 1899, that a church was established. Guardian Angel Church was founded in the district formerly occupied by the Irish immigrants who had belonged to the Holy Family Church at May Street and Roosevelt Road. The Italian colony wedged in by the Irish on the West and the Slavs on the South had used either Holy Family or St. Wenceslaus when they could not attend the Italian Church of the Assumption.

One year after Guardian Angel was founded in 1899 the great Italian immigration began. In the period from 1900 to 1910 the population increased so rapidly that it overflowed the old colony near the Hull House and east of

Halsted Street. Moving west the new immigrants occupied the territory between Halsted Street and Racine Street. Thus the old Guardian Angel parish became divided and the district west of Morgan Street was made into a new parish, "Our Lady of Pompeii." This church was dedicated in 1911 and was a combined church and school. The present church was built in 1924 on Lexington Avenue near Racine Avenue. The neighborhood was somewhat better than in other parts east of Van Buren Street. Several Irish families had lingered until the Italians had definitely established themselves in the neighborhood by 1924 and then these families generally moved further west. In discussing the large growth of Italian population in this area which caused the founding of Guardian Angel and Our Lady of Pompei Churches two main reasons are given.

(1) Rents were low and (2) countrymen from their own districts were already living there. These immigrants were almost entirely South Italians and unskilled workers. They have been employed as laborers, although in the "old country" the men were often farmers, masons, bricklayers, or followed some other skilled occupation. Here they have lived cheaply and tried to save, and they have been ambitious chiefly for their children and have wanted them to be educated.

When they have saved enough money, they move out farther west and purchase small houses and bungalows.⁹

The influence of these churches has been very extensive, for even as the Irish in earlier days in this neighborhood demanded their own parish church, so the Italians likewise demanded and centered their spiritual and social activities around the parish church.

From the time when contractors offered good paying jobs on the Illinois and Michigan Canal, and tenement housing was profitable and a growing business investment, the area of the near west side has been a constant and ever growing problem in the city of Chicago. Sanitation, housing, vice and racial discrimination were among four of the most serious problems faced by the people of this community. From August 5, 1833, when Chicago was incorporated as a town, efforts were made to keep the city clean. Ordinances were passed at various times in respect to these conditions.¹⁰

Outbreaks of cholera, typhus, scarlet fever, diphtheria in the early years from 1849 to 1855 led to more strenuous efforts to supply the city completely and adequately

⁹ Ibid., pp. 95.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 38-39.

with lake water and a proper drainage system. The Tenement and Workshop Act was passed in 1880 which required employers to provide places of work that were not too crowded, had adequate ventilation and proper toilet facilities. Different reforms were carried out during the following years and much progress was made. Due to the rapidly increasing population the reforms could not keep up with the pace set by immigration and has left a heritage of slum areas, vice conditions, overcrowding and a chaotic housing situation.

In the geographical area of this study racial discrimination has not presented a serious problem. Recently there has been a gradual influx of Mexicans into the neighborhood. Since the area is already settled by the Italians no great difficulty in this instance is expected for the future. The Negro problem does not exist here, due to the natural boundary of Roosevelt Road where the Negro keeps to the South and the Italian to the North. However in the early days around the turn of the century there was considerable prejudice against new immigrants. In 1890 when the Italian colony was wedged in between the Irish and the Slavs, stoning brigades would advance across Twelfth Street now Roosevelt Road, and drive the

Italians back to Taylor Street. The Italian boys would retaliate by forming in gangs and attacking any who tried to play in Vernon Park. In recent years within the past two decades there was considerable gang fighting between the Italian and the Jewish boys on Maxwell Street. Since then this type of prejudice has for the most part disappeared, but there is still considerable evidence of discrimination against the Negro by those living on borderline areas along Roosevelt Road. Through education and participation in the various social activities at the different agencies in the area this prejudice is being slowly overcome.

For years the question of improving Chicago's slum areas has been a major problem for the city. Many suggestions, plans and ideas have been offered for the solution of this condition. Some good work has been done and in recent years municipal, state and federal housing reforms have brought about an improvement. The Jane Addams Housing Project along Racine Avenue near Vernon Park has done much to alleviate the housing conditions, but there are still a large number of old frame cottages and buildings in the neighborhood.

New life has been given the community by the building of the Congress Street Highway. With this as an impetus the West Side Community Council has recently begun work on the redevelopment of the near west side. They have sent letters throughout the neighborhood to the people, to the business houses, and to all who they believe would be vitally interested in improving the appearance and living conditions of the neighborhood. For their argument they say that with the new highway an awakened community spirit will develop and the near west side will become a more desirable place to live.¹¹

11 Eri Hulbert, executive secretary, Temporary Organizing Committee. For Redevelopment of the Near West Side. Letter to committee members. November 1, 1948.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY, FORMATION, AND DESCRIPTION OF THE WEST SIDE COMMUNITY CENTER

The period from 1900 to 1930 was one of great expansion in the Italian population of the near west side of Chicago. Although this area had seen many nationality changes since the time of the construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal in 1836, it finally became the largest Italian colony in the city.

In the geographical field of influence covered by the West Side Community Center the population has been predominately Italian in nationality and Roman Catholic in religion since 1890. By 1930 the need for housing, sanitation, vice control and community organization had far outstripped the attempts to alleviate these conditions. Juvenile delinquency was on the increase and the near west side became one of the blackest spots on the maps of sociologists.¹ There were little if any recreational facilities² and gangs of young hoodlums ran freely through

¹ Clifford Shaw, Delinquency Areas, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1936.

² Chicago Recreation Commission, Recreation and Delinquency, Chicago Research Commission, 1942.

the neighborhood. The people were disorganized because they held to the traditions of the provinces from which they had come in the old country.³

The community situation that greeted the West Side Community Center was appalling. The inheritance from the past was ingrained deeply in the character of the neighborhood. Out of the chaotic need of the people for better housing, sanitation, vice control and community organization, had to come some movement that would endeavor to awaken the people and educate them in the necessity for organizing their community actively.

On October 30, 1930, the Catholic Youth Organization previously conceived of and organized by Bishop Sheil of the Archdiocese of Chicago was founded. It quickly lived up to its program of religion--education--recreation and social service inspired by the late Cardinal Mundelein's exhortation "Make the Catholic Youth Organization program so very interesting and attractive that youth will have a desire to participate in none other."⁴

The ideal of the Catholic Youth Organization is contained in the objectives of the organization which are:

³ West Side Community Center, Minutes of Meeting, February 2, 1939.

⁴ The New Generation, News of the Near West Side, April 1939

1. To instill in the American youth a love of God and respect for country. This was to be accomplished through a comprehensive program of religious, educational, recreational and social service activities.
2. The immediate aim of the Catholic Youth Organization is to keep young people learning, working and playing within the influence of the parish priests with the idea and hope that this association would give the boys and girls in their formative years a true concept of Christian and Democratic life.
3. To make religion a basic force in community welfare emphasize moral virtue and Christian principles with the final objective the salvation of souls.
4. To make the program flexible enough so that non-Catholic boys and girls may likewise participate in the Catholic Youth Organization's activities.⁵

As the pastors and the people of Chicago became interested, the Catholic Youth Organization grew until at the present time it has many ramifications. There is the Mission of Our Lady of Mercy, a home for dependent boys, a boys' camp, a girls' camp, the Lewis College of Science and Technology, the West Side Community Center,

⁵ Catholic Youth Organization, Brochure, 1946, pp. 5.

and various vocation schools for needy children. The growth of these schools has been tremendous. At the present time there are 56 Catholic Youth Organization Vocational Schools in Chicago, Joliet, and Posen, Illinois with a summer registration of over 21,000 children. These schools offer craft, athletics, dramatics, music, field trips, swimming and free milk to all who come. Besides these institutions and agencies there is an extensive Boy Scout Program, Medical and Dental Clinics and the Social Service Department.

The Social Service Department was formed on August 1, 1938, and the West Side Community Center was placed under its jurisdiction. The Social Service Department has for its purpose the offering of case work services to the other departments of the Catholic Youth Organization. Its program is pointed toward one goal, the prevention of personal and social problems which might lead to serious maladjustments.

Before coming to be a part of the Catholic Youth Organization the West Side Community Center had a very interesting history. In order to combat the existing conditions in the near west side of Chicago various programs were sponsored by the West Side Community Council

prior to 1937. Financing of these projects was done primarily by the Chicago Area Project. At this time the construction work on the building of the future West Side Community Center was nearing completion. The West Side Community Council set in motion a program that it was hoped would obtain for it almost complete control of the general program in the area. A proposal was made that the new building nearing completion should be turned over to the Union Boys Club Foundation, then functioning in the neighborhood. This proposal was received favorably by the Board of Directors for the Chicago Area Project. On receipt of this news the West Side Community Council decided to abandon its plans for the area. However, after considerable discussion between the West Side Community Council and the Chicago Area Project it was determined that the best plan would be to transfer the newly built plant to the Catholic Youth Organization. It was determined that since the population of the neighborhood was predominately Roman Catholic the program for the community could function best under the auspices of the Catholic Youth Organization. When this was accomplished the West Side Community Council agreed to disband its program for the community so that it would

not be a hindrance to a new council to be established by Bishop Sheil. Among the agencies in the neighborhood which cooperated in the advancing of common good was the West Side Coordinating Committee. It was composed of the heads of all the agencies in the community. They met at least once a month to discuss the problems facing them. Another agency was the West Side Civic Organization which was composed of a group of young men not associated with any particular agency, but who were interested in improving the conditions in the community. Such professional men as doctors, lawyers and other civic minded individuals succeeded with the cooperation of the West Side Community Center in getting action on garbage disposal. These agencies also cooperated in starting a campaign of "Clean Teeth for Health."⁶

By February of 1938 the newly constructed and renovated building at 1145 South Vernon Park Place was ready for occupancy. Bishop Sheil's representative was sent into the area and complete responsibility was turned over to him. The West Side Community Center is administered through its director appointed by and -----

⁶ West Side Community Center, Minutes of Meetings, January 3, 1939.

responsible to Bishop Sheil and the executive director of the Catholic Youth Organization. The Director is assisted by six full time, two part time and five volunteer workers. There is also a maintenance man. The Board of Directors consists of local residents whose primary purpose is to further the objectives of the Center. The Board members are made up of people in the neighborhood such as doctors, housewives, lawyers, laborers, professional and business men who, recognizing the necessity of community organization, have banded together in a spirit of neighborhood cooperation for the betterment of the community. It is their task to:

1. Formulate policies
2. Assist the operations of the various programs
3. Sustain the interest and support of the community residents
4. Assume responsibility of securing funds for the program.⁷

The Director has the responsibility of executing the program of the West Side Community Center through the members of the staff. One of his primary duties is the coordination of the activities at the Center with those of the community. He holds staff meetings every week and instructs the various members in such things as the

⁷ Catholic Youth Organization, op. cit., pp. 20.

proper presentation of their material, techniques in gaining the confidence of juvenile delinquents and the ways and means of arousing the interest and active participation of the adults in the program. A very important duty of the Director is the personal interview with juvenile delinquents. The Center will often take difficult juvenile delinquency cases and endeavor to assimilate these cases in the activities that are offered. One of the most popular features is the Scouting Program. In the early days of the Center this activity was considered "sissy stuff" by the younger element of the neighborhood. However, the program prospered through the recruiting and training of the leaders of various gangs. Following the example of their leaders the other members of the gangs soon joined in and today some of the outstanding scouts are older boys and young men who a few years ago were juvenile delinquents or potential delinquents. It has been through the personal interview of these difficult cases that the program has succeeded.

Earliest records of the West Side Community Center show that the Staff started out with one professional man, the Director, and twelve assistants.⁸ At the present

⁸ West Side Community Center, Minutes of Meeting, January 3, 1939.

time the Staff consists of fifteen members. Although there has been only an increase of three members since 1939, a comparison of the Staff then and now shows that, whereas in 1939 there was only one professional man, the Director, today there is a total of eight professional members. This policy is in line with the administrative program of the organization which is to provide the best staffed members that can be obtained. As far as possible the Staff members are chosen from the community with the purpose of making the Center as desirable and as much a part of the lives of the people as possible. The inhabitants of the community, especially the children, are well acquainted with the members of the Staff, since they live within the boundaries of the Center's area of influence. The Director, in coordinating the activities of the Center with those of the community, contacts other agencies for the purpose of Community Organization. An excellent example of community participation is portrayed in the following:

POMPEII CARNIVAL

During this month Our Lady of Pompeii Church commenced to make plans for their second annual Carnival which was to be held in June. We cooperated with the Church by

assisting in making plans for the Carnival in several ways. Mr. Inorio was appointed by Father Pigato as Chairman of the Carnival Committee of about 80 persons. We also cooperated by making signs and posters.

Our effort and participation in this venture were instrumental in bringing about a stronger tie-up between the local Church and our organization. Of even more significance were the relationships and friendships and various contacts which Mr. Inorio made by serving the capacity of Chairman of the Carnival Committee.⁹

The physical plant of the West Side Community Center is adequate for the needs of both the juvenile and adult members. It consists of the four story building 107 feet long and 72 feet wide. The front half of the building is a remodeled and rebuilt stable, while the rear half is of recent construction within the last decade. The first floor consists of the auditorium seating 300 people for banquets and wedding receptions and 350 people for motion pictures. Besides being used for various functions such as dramatic presentations and parties, it is also used by the people of the neighborhood for community meetings in discussing community projects. The first

⁹ Anthony Inorio, director, West Side community Center, Yearly report. Chicago, Illinois. April 1939. pp. 20.

floor contains the kitchen equipped with all utensils used in banquets, showers etc., a camera room, a maintenance shop, a boiler room and rest rooms for men and women. The second floor is used principally by the children and the adolescent group. On this floor are 11 rooms divided in the following manner:

- (1) Office of the Director
- (2) Office of the Secretary
- (3) The Scout Room
- (4) The General Craft Room for Boys Only
- (5) The Plaster Craft Room
- (6) The Girls Craft Room
- (7) The Girls Game Room
- (8) The Office of the Girl Director
- (9) The Boys Game Room
- (10) The Jack and Jill Club Room
- (11) The Drum and Bugle Corps Room

The Scout Room is of special merit. It is panelled in knotty pine wood with various hobbies exemplified in glass cases throughout the room. There is a very interesting collection of mounted butterflies that have been gathered from various sections of the mid-west. It has a distinct outdoor atmosphere that enhances the

interest for such things in the minds of the boys who never before had the opportunity to study wild life.

The war put a temporary halt to the Scout program because of the fact that the Scout Masters and Directors and older boys were called into the service. Plans for the resumption of the Scout program have been made and because this activity had been so popular in the past there will be a large extension of it in the future starting in 1949.

The general craft room for boys only is equipped with power tools, vises and other workshop implements. In this room such crafts as woodworking, leather tooling, ceramics and paper work are learned. Another interesting subject is plaster craft. In this room the emphasis is placed on plastic work.

The girls' craft room also contains the women's sewing room and adequately takes care of the needs of both girls and older women. In it such subjects as leather work, sewing, drawing, painting and papier mache work are taught. The older women use this room in the evenings, two or three times a week, for sewing.

The second floor also contains the games which are located in various rooms. The boys' game room, which is in reality a large hall, contains four ping-pong tables, a miniature bowling alley, checker and dominoe games and a small horse-shoe plot. Besides having the

above small games, the girls' game room contains two ping-pong tables. The office of the Girls' Director is just off the girls' game room. Two more rooms on this floor contain the Jack and Jill Club and the Drum and Bugle Corps.

The Gymnasium on the third floor is a large room 90 feet by 40 feet. The main activity, of course, is basketball and the Center has sponsored many tournaments. Outside agencies often use the Gymnasium for their activities. Besides basketball such games as Volleyball and Badminton are played. At the present time there is a successful drive to have the young and older men of the neighborhood use the gymnasium for these latter two games. The Director of the West Side Community Center and his Staff believe that greater stress should be placed on those physical activities which are not so strenuous. Their idea is that when the boys grow older they will be able to participate in less active sports such as Volleyball, Ping-Pong, and Badminton and thereby not lose touch with the Center. The gymnasium is also equipped with mats, parallel bars and other gymnasium paraphernalia. Behind the gymnasium there is now being constructed a boxing and wrestling room which will be ready early in 1949. Besides these two large rooms the third floor also contains the girls'

shower rooms and the Chicago Area Project uses the remaining two rooms for its own purposes.

On the fourth floor there are six rooms. Four of these are unfinished and not in use except as store rooms and possible future Scout rooms. Of the two rooms that are used one is a boys' shower and the other contains the Sea Scout Ship, the S. S. Bishop Sheil. It is equipped with masts, compass and other nautical gear and was used by the U. S. Navy during World War II for training purposes.

During the course of the years there have been several agencies working towards the betterment of the near west side. The churches have played a very definite part in the life of the community and in the cooperation with the activities of the West Side Community Center. Among those which have cooperated closely with the Center are the following: Our Lady of Pompeii, St. Callista, Holy Family and Guardian Angel. From the minutes of meetings of the Center are the following excerpts.

The Pompeii Social Club held their dance at our Auditorium [Sic] during this week. About one hundred boys and girls participated.

GUARDIAN ANGEL OPERETTA

One of our leaders and our
C. Y. O. West Side Community Orchestra

cooperated with the Guardian Angel Church in staging an operetta.

We feel that our Center should lend whatever assistance we can to other agencies in the community and thus develop better relationships and understanding.¹⁰

Other agencies which have cooperated with the Center are the West Side Community Council, Hull House, Sheridan Park, Off-The-Street Club, Duncan Y. M. C. A. and Catholic Youth Nisei Center. The last named was helped by the West Side Community Center when it was first organized shortly after the war began. At that time many Japanese-Americans faced a serious problem in relocation due to the strong anti-Nisei sentiment on the west coast. The Center's role was one of helpful suggestions and active guidance in the formation of the Catholic Youth Organization Nisei Center. Of these lay agencies the West Side Community Council is the most important. The Director of the Center is closely connected with all the ideas and plans for the community which originate in the council.

The program of the Center, which will be discussed in the next chapter, will show how the various neighborhood agencies cooperate together to further community integration

¹⁰ Ibid., April and May, 1939. pp. 20-24.

CHAPTER III

THE PROGRAM OF THE WEST SIDE COMMUNITY CENTER

The people of Italian parentage residing in the area of the near west side, in the past two decades, have become more community conscious. Their parents were of pioneer stock, ambitious, and had great hopes for a better life in the new country. Hindered at first in their ambitions by the necessity of making a living and by internal dissension, they presented a disorganized group. Thus the process of becoming a unified community was a slow one and many agencies were involved in this movement.

In the earliest reports on the area covered by the West Side Community Center the problem of "different customs from different provinces" was evident. The people clung to the old world ideas and at first resisted efforts to educate and organize them. This was one of the big problems confronting the Center when it began operations in February of 1938.¹

¹ Catholic Youth Organization, Brochure, 1946, pp. 17.

The program was made up with the idea that not only the children, but also the adults should be considered, and that it should be a community project. A comparison of the earliest programs with today's program shows that there has not been any great change in the basic structure of the activities. However, it is significant that there has been a definite trend toward more community participation. The expansion of the program to take care of the various neighborhood and community needs, has steadily increased and this has been wisely done by centering the emphasis on the young people's needs.

In order to obtain a clear idea of the Center's operations the members of the staff were contacted, and time was spent with each as he or she went through the regular procedure during the week. Thus a day by day picture of the activities was obtained.

At 7:30 in the morning the maintenance man arrives and begins his duties. For the most part they consist of getting the building warm for the day and attending to the general care of the boiler and maintenance rooms. At 10 o'clock the janitor arrives and starts his work which centers around the upkeep and cleanliness of the building. The staff comes in at 2:30 P.M. and usually has a meeting

before the children arrive at 3:00 P. M. During holidays and Saturdays the building is opened at 9:00 A. M. to accomodate the members of the community. Also at this time outside organizations make use of the facilities at the Center throughout the day. However, their activity is confined primarily to the use of the gymnasium. Here they are scheduled in certain classes at different times than the regular members of the Center.

Although the staff members are not scheduled to arrive until 2:00 P. M., the hours between 10:00 A. M. and 2:30 P. M. are frequently used for special work. Such things as planning for particular events like the Christmas party take considerable time. The Director also utilizes this time for various committee meetings with outside agencies. On some days he has personal interviews with children who are special problem cases and cannot be handled at any other time. He also writes reports, holds more extended staff meetings or inspects the physical equipment of the building.

At the present time no printed schedule has been published, but breaking down the various features the following program is shown.

APPENDIX

PROGRAM OF THE WEST SIDE COMMUNITY CENTER WITH AN ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF ACTIVITIES

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>DAYS</u>	<u>GROUP</u>	<u>AGE</u>
Athletics	3:30 - 5:30 P. M.	M.,W.,F.,S.	Boys	Grade School
	7:00 -10:00 P. M.	M.,W.,F.,S.	Boys	Over 14 years
	9:00 - 3:30 P. M.	Sat.	Boys	All ages
	3:30 - 5:30 P. M.	Tue. & Thu.	Girls	Grade School
	7:00 -10:00 P. M.	Tue.	Girls	Over 14 years
Crafts	4:00 - 5:30 P. M.	Mon. & Tue.	Boys	8 to 10 years
	4:00 - 5:30 P. M.	Tue. & Thu.	Boys	11 to 14 years
	7:00 - 9:30 P. M.	Wed.	Boys	11 to 14 years
	4:00 - 5:30 P. M.	Wed.	Co educational	
	4:00 - 5:30 P. M.	Mon. & Wed.	Girls	7 to 10 years
	4:00 - 5:30 P. M.	Fri.	Girls	11 to 14 years
	7:00 - 9:30 P. M.	Wed.	Girls	11 to 14 years
	7:00 - 9:30 P. M.	Fri.	Women's Sew Group	
Dancing	3:30 - 4:30 P. M.	M.,W.,F.	Girls	Grade School
	7:00 -10:00 P. M.	Wed.	Boys & Girls	Teen age
Dramatics	3:30 - 5:00 P. M.	Mon. thru Fri.	Boys & Girls	Grade School
Game Rooms	3:00 - 5:30 P. M.	Mon. thru Fri.	Boys & Girls	All ages
	7:00 -10:00 P. M.	Mon. thru Fri.	Boys & Girls	All ages
Movies	7:00 - 8:45 P. M.	Mon.	Boys & Girls	All ages
Music	7:00 - 8:00 P. M.	Tue. & Thu.	Boys & Girls	8 to 15 years
	9:00 - 2:30 P. M.	Sat.	Boys & Girls	8 to 12 years
Roller Skating	7:15 - 9:00 P. M.	Fri.	Boys & Girls	Grade School
Scouting	7:00 - 9:30 P. M.	Thu.	Boys	12 years & over
	7:00 - 9:30 P. M.	Tue.	Scout Leaders	

Before the staff arrives certain necessary preparations must be made in the maintenance of the building. In order that these things be done properly a maintenance man and a janitor were hired to take care of these details. The work of the maintenance man consists in the care of heating the building in winter and making the necessary repairs to the general equipment in the boiler room. The janitor has the responsibility for the cleanliness of the building consisting of the usual duties of sweeping, cleanliness and preparations of the rooms for the days activities. These various duties and the time they are performed are shown more clearly in the following chart.

7:30 A. M. -- Maintenance man arrives

1. Heats the building
2. Does maintenance work
in the boiler room

10:00 A. M. -- Janitor arrives

1. Sweeps, cleans etc.
2. Prepares rooms for
activities

2:30 P. M. -- Staff arrives

1. Holds a meeting and
discusses problems
2. Prepares for classes

The objectives of the West Side Community Center have been set forth in Chapter II. The duties of the Director, therefore, are centered around the administrative performance of these objectives. He must see that the functions of the Center work towards the accomplishment of the objectives. To do this, he sets the immediate policy of the organization. The staff is trained by him in a series of discussions and private interviews. From his professional experience he instructs each member in the techniques to be used when conducting classes. A special emphasis is placed on the understanding of, and proper treatment of the children, with the view that this will lead the child to become a better social being.

Certain children using the facilities of the Center present behavior problems. In order to handle these cases properly the Director must hold personal interviews with them and integrate them with the program. At staff meetings these difficult cases are discussed and a careful check is kept by the Director through the reports of the members. Besides the Juvenile Counselling, the Director also interviews other boys and girls four or five times during the day, thereby keeping in personal contact with the children and their problems.

Although the Center's activities are concerned primarily with the younger element of the community, the Director's daily schedule includes another very important phase of promoting the Center's objectives. This is public relations. One of the most important agencies in this respect is the West Side Community Council. A close relationship exists between the Director and the Council. It is through it that most of the community projects are conceived and carried out, for it is a reflection of the community's trends and desires. Facilities at the Center are always at the disposal of any community activity sponsored by the Council. Meetings are often held in the Center's staff room and the Director acts in the capacity of an advisor and interpreter of the Community's needs.

II. EXPANSION OR RETRENCHMENT OF PROGRAM:

- A. The Staff has worked jointly with the West Side Community Committee on various community problems.
 - 1. Appearing with [Sic] representative of the Committee at Juvenile Court on behalf of delinquent boys from our community.
 - 2. Co-ordinating the follow-up work by visiting the boys' parents and providing a wholesome recreational program at the Center.

3. The Staff is conducting part of its summer program out [Sic] at "Our Lady of Pompeii Camp."²

Another example of the Director's public relations work is the Christmas party given at the Center in 1948 for the whole community. Each year a different agency on the near west side sponsors the party. Several hundred gifts are donated by various business houses throughout the neighborhood. Meetings are held at the Center to organize and work out the details of the party and the publicity program is handled by the "Community News," a paper published for the people of the near west side by community members. For weeks in advance of the party the Director contacts various groups, agencies and people in an effort to make this event a true expression of neighborhood cooperation.

Of all the activities at the Center, the athletic program is the largest in respect to those participating. Because of the large number, gym classes must be restricted to one hour each per class. Classes for boys are held on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, from 3:30 to 5:30 and 7:00 to 10:00 P. M. in the evening. On Saturday classes

² Anthony Inerio, director, West Side Community Center, Yearly Report. Chicago, Illinois. August 1, 1947 to July 31, 1948, pp. 3.

are held from 9:00 A. M. to 3:30 P. M. Girls' classes are restricted also to one hour. They are held Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30 to 5:30 P. M. for girls up to 14 years, and 7:00 to 10:00 P. M. for girls 15 years and older. Outside groups are also provided for and the schedule is made up to take care of them. One such group is the Chicago Resettler's Committee, made up of Japanese-Americans who came from the West Coast during the war. They have a regular gym period on Monday from 8 to 9:30 P. M. and last year (1947) a large mixed group attended. Until they obtain their own gymnasium they are free to use the facilities at the Center.

The Director is a graduate of the University of Illinois Physical Education School. He takes a very active interest in the athletic program although there is regularly assigned, one gymnasium instructor.

It is in these athletic classes that there is one of the best opportunities for directing the participants in a program that will contribute to a better, fuller and more efficient social living. Beside this general philosophical objective there are several specific objectives to be obtained.

1. All inclusive objectives

- a. The principal objective of the curriculum stated in terms of the learner's conduct is:
Participating in a variety of

sports according to social and hygienic standards.

2. Conduct objective

- a. The conduct objectives listed in the outline are items of conduct (activities) which it is expected the students will engage in, in the future.

3. Control objective

- a. The control objectives listed are controls of conduct (skills, knowledge, dispositions and conditions) which the students are expected to acquire to the end of attaining the conduct objective. These are immediate objectives.³

To obtain these objectives, classes are taught in an informal manner, the principal idea being; that, the student assumes responsibility for his own learning, and the instructor serves as a guide, counselor and examiner. However, they do not use the gymnasium as place where they may do as they please. There is a definite educational psychology in the training process.

³ Ernest Giovangelo, unpublished paper, Physical Education University of Illinois, 1947, pp. 4.

The idea behind present day athletic programs goes much deeper than the mere building of healthy bodies. Physical education at one time was taught with this end in view. When athletic programs began to emphasize organized games, more and more students took part. This often resulted in the disappearance and rejection of activities necessitating the use of gymnasium apparatus. Finally the degeneration of athletic programs resulted in the theory that just "throwing out a ball" was sufficient for the needs of the participants.

From the former idea of the development of strong bodies only, to the next step of emphasizing game participation, a new philosophy of physical education has emerged. Today athletic programs are being designed and carried out with definite educational objectives.

1. The purpose of the school and social agencies is to provide for boys and girls experiences by which they can grow physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally, and by which, they can adapt themselves to changing conditions of living. Physical education has a large place in this modern scheme of living.
2. With the above thoughts and purposes in mind, this curriculum in Physical Education for boys and girls was constructed specifically for the Center.⁴

⁴ Ibid., pp. 1-2.

Consequently there is a definite system in conducting the program. Each participant is requested to bring a t-shirt, soap and towel, sweat socks, trunks and gym shoes. Ten minutes are allowed for dressing before classes begin and after classes showers with soap are compulsory. The classes are very well organized and the students are kept busy during the whole period. Classified under the schedule of activities are the following, for boys up to 14 years:

- I. Five Soccer Relay Games
 1. Soccer dodge ball
 2. Soccer keep away
 3. Long ball soccer
 4. Dribbling
 5. Heading
- II. Ten Relay Races
 1. Ball passing relay
 2. Goal shooting relay
 3. Leap frog race
 4. Circle relay
 5. Human hurdle relay
 6. Crab walk
 7. Dizzy izzy relay
 8. Fireman's carry
 9. Down and up
- III. Ten Individual Athletic Events
 1. Standing broad jumps (performer's height plus 2 feet)
 2. High jump (height of performer's chest)
 3. Bar vault (height of performer's mouth)
 4. Floor dips (20 times)
 5. Running high kick (height of performer's reach)
 6. Pull-ups (12 times)

7. Rope skips (100 times in 1 minute)
8. Rope climb (20 feet in 10 seconds)
9. Bar snap (performer's height)
10. Running springboard high jump (performer's height)

IV. Ten Semi-Organized Games

1. Captain ball
2. Six court basketball
3. Corner ball
4. Circle soccer
5. Field ball
6. Corner kick ball
7. Fungo
8. Long ball
9. Rotation
10. Tug of war

V. Ten Individual Tumbling Stunts

1. Forward roll
2. Cartwheel
3. Squat balance (10 seconds)
4. Knee shoulder balance (10 seconds)
5. Head balance (10 seconds)
6. Running board dive (2 times performer's height)
7. Hand balance and forward roll
8. Sitting backward roll (continuous roll to a stand)
9. Chest roll from head balance
10. Fish flop

The wrestling and boxing program will get under way in 1949. The room behind the gymnasium is being renovated to accomodate these sports and an extensive program is anticipated.

The game room is one of the most popular activities. It is the hub of the Center for here the children are free to express themselves. The supervisor acts as a sort of ambassador and is the recipient of the opinions and criticisms of the children. He has his finger on the pulse of the Center and is able to diagnose the feelings and thus make the proper recommendations for improvement or change. It is equipped with 4 ping pong tables, a miniature bowling alley 8 feet long by 1 1/2 feet wide, checkers, dominoes, miniature pool tables, electric football and basketball games, chairside horseshoe and table games. It is open every day from 2:00 to 5:30 P. M. and from 7:00 to 10:00 P. M.

The philosophy guiding the teaching of the craft program is to broaden and increase the social experience of the individual. By accomplishing this a service will be done for the child that will enable him to live a more complete and socially balanced life. To attain this objective the "whole" person must be considered and certain norms should be set up such as:

1. All craft objectives must satisfy the individuals' psychological, physiological, sociological and emotional needs. These vary with each individual.

2. Criticism should be tactfully given according to the personality of the child.
3. The socio-economic background of the pupil must be kept in mind as this helps to determine the type of interest the pupil will develop.
4. Children should be grouped in classes according to their age and intelligence.
5. The individual differences of the child must be recognized. This is one of the most important of all rules for good craft instruction.

There are other norms to be considered also, which run parallel with good teaching habits. However, the emphasis at the Center is placed on the social experience of the individual rather than on the making of skilled craftsmen.

The type of problems presented to the boys and girls classes depend on the age group, and they work at and endeavor to accomplish the following:

Boys 8 to 10 Year Olds

1. Anchor tie racks
2. Napkin holders
3. Braided key rings with identification tags
4. Pencil holders
5. Coin purses
6. Monogrammed handkerchiefs
7. Felt book covers and book marks
8. Cigar treasure boxes

9. Brick book-ends with paper covering
10. Monogrammed tooth brush holders
11. Jar vases
12. Animals for gardens and house numbers
13. Hot pad holders

Boys 11 to 14 Years

The above items plus:

1. Pencil holders
2. Braided chains
3. Pounded metal placques
4. Pounded metal dishes
5. Plaster lamp bases
6. Book-ends
7. Bird houses
8. Tooled book marks
9. Felt book covers and book marks
10. Book marks designed and monogrammed
11. Enameled and monogrammed loose leaf binders for school

Girls 7 to 10 Years

1. Leather belts
2. Coin purses
3. Wallets
4. Knitting bags
5. Papier mache work
6. Plaster lapel pins

Girls 11 to 14 Years and Women

1. How to read and assemble a dress pattern
2. How to cut material correctly
3. Various stitches needed
4. Color harmony

The Director of the West Side Community Center on March 15, 1948, employed a dancing instructor. The purpose of teaching the children the different types of dancing

was to increase their aesthetic experience and to broaden their cultural background. These classes are held regularly on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 3:30 to 4:30 P. M. for the girls of grammar school age. Since this program was inaugurated there has been great interest shown, not only by the children, but also by their mothers who often come to the Center to watch the progress of their children. Besides the regular dancing classes there is a "teen age" dance given every Wednesday evening from 7:00 to 10:00 P. M. It was necessary to use this time because of the conflict with programs already scheduled for the weekend. However, before coming to the dance the boys and girls must have their school work finished and their parents' consent. Under this arrangement the parents are satisfied because of the supervised recreation at the Center and the knowledge of their children's whereabouts.

With the increasing desire for cultural experience expressed by both parents and children, a new impetus has been given to the dramatics class. Under a professional actor, born and raised in the neighborhood a new program was begun on October 15, 1948. Classes are held regularly from Monday to Friday from 3:30 to 5:00 P. M. for both

boys and girls of grammar school age. Such has been the interest in this activity that more than two hundred children will be in the Christmas play of 1948. At the dress rehearsal on December 7, 1948, a reception was held for the mothers of the members of the cast and refreshments were served. From this successful expression of community interest it is planned to increase and augment these cultural activities.

Another popular feature of the Center is the movie program. It is primarily for the boys and girls and takes place from 7:00 to 8:45 P. M. on Monday evenings. An effort is made not only to entertain but to educate the children as well. This feature is always attended and has become a standard procedure.

The music program is beginning to become more popular. Attendance at classes fell off during the past months because many of the instruments were worn out and had not been replaced or repaired since the war. A new impetus has been given this activity due to the Director's desire to give more aesthetic training to the students. New instruments are being obtained and old ones repaired. Finally, students majoring in music at De Paul University are teaching the boys and girls at the Center. Classes are held on Tuesday and Thursday from 7:00 to 8:00 P. M. for

the 8 to 15 year age group and on Saturday from 9:00 A. M. to 2:30 P. M. for the 8 to 12 year age group. A special room is provided for the class and instruments are kept in the room. Since the Drum and Bugle Corps has always been so popular with everyone in the community a special instructor has been obtained to build up this organization, and keep it on a high level.

One of the reasons for not changing the teen age dance from Wednesday to Friday is the roller skating program. On Friday evenings the grade school children use the auditorium for skating from 7:15 to 9:00 P. M. and since the children have become accustomed to this time, it was felt that a change in schedule would result in too much dissatisfaction.

Of all the activities at the Center the Scouting program is considered one of the most important. Because of the recent war, however, this feature had to be curtailed because scoutmasters, directors and leaders were called into service. After the war the program was slow in getting started again because of the more immediate needs of the community and also because of the change in directors.

On October 15, 1948, this program was given a new life when a committee of adults was formed to reorganize

and reactivate the boy scout movement at the Center. There are eight adults on this committee which is composed of the following; a chaplain from Our Lady of Pompeii, a pathologist from Cook County Hospital, a laboratory technician, an accountant, the manager of the West Side Community Council and the fathers of three of the boys using the Center. All committee members are residents of the neighborhood. There are 55 boys now engaged in the scouting program and they have their own meeting room on the fourth floor.

Plans have been made to convert the meeting room into a log cabin to be built by the boys. Regular troop meetings are held on Thursday evenings from 7:00 to 9:30 P. M.; and on Tuesday evenings from 7:00 to 9:30 P. M. the scout leaders of which there are nine, meet to discuss their problems and learn techniques in leadership. These boys range in age from 16 to 19 years. Since the boy scout movement is fundamental, it is planned to train these leaders carefully as a foundation for greater expansion in the future. Also in the near future the sea scouts will again be activated and there will be, for the first time, an organization for girl scouts.

It is believed that through the scout movement primarily and the rest of the program secondarily, those

principles of good citizenship, and a full life can be best fulfilled. The particular characteristics of the neighborhood must be considered; and for the Center to become an integral part of the community, the program must be one that helps to bind all the members of the community more closely together.

CHAPTER IV
THE PROCESS OF INTEGRATION
IN RELATION TO THE PROGRAM

A study of the process of integration of the West Side Community Center involves more than just a study of the program itself; although it was through the program that community service was to be effected. Some understanding of what is meant by the term integration and process is needed. First of all these terms must be limited to the study of a particular agency. What they mean in relation to the West Side Community Center is then the understanding of the degree to which the agency has or has not become an integral part of the community. The process was the evolution of the movement toward this goal of community service.

The factors that went to make up the character of the near west side of a necessity determined the character of the West Side Community Center. Such things as; the motivating forces that drew the huge mass of population to Chicago, the forces that determined the flow of immigrants to the near west side, and the settling of the

Italian colony in this area, became deep social influences that determined the very life, habits and thoughts of the inhabitants of the community.

The process of this determination began in the very nature of conditions as they existed in the earliest days of Chicago. The small village of 1833 suddenly became a hub of activity, since it was already the geographical center for trade routes East and West. This very location was a definite cause of the city's rapid growth when the immigrants poured in to the new metropolis. As they came in ever increasing numbers proper housing could not keep up with the increase, and only flimsy frame dwellings were constructed. Expansion of the city was rapid and by the middle of the Nineteenth Century conditions were such that crowded and congested living quarters were the accepted state. The shifting population moved steadily westward as they endeavored to escape this situation. The goal, apparently, was to move away from, rather than to improve, the existing neighborhood. Crime, pestilence, and sordid social conditions could not but flourish, and reform movements were of little effect.

This was the situation of the near west side when the Italians finally settled in it permanently. Torn by

factional strife, old world ideas, language difficulties and sub-standards of living, the people presented a chaotic social group.

After these problems were created by the neighborhood various attempts were made to solve and correct them. Of the various agencies engaged in this work the West Side Community Center was created, for it was felt that the type of program it had to offer could best help the people. Primarily it was to be founded on Catholic principles in order to help the people to become better Catholics. Secondarily it was to develop a community program that would involve not only the children, but would have those elements in it that would help to unite and to consolidate the older members into a solid group of citizens working for the betterment of the community. The stipulations under which the Catholic Youth Organization was to operate the Center are contained in a letter written by Clifford Shaw, Director of the Chicago Area Project, in a letter to His Excellency Bishop Sheil.¹

Although the immediate objective of the Center was the prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, the adults were

¹ Clifford R. Shaw, director, Chicago Area Project, Letter to His Excellency, Bishop Sheil. 1938.

to profit from and participate in the activity as well.

Juvenile delinquency prevention was the immediate objective of the C. Y. O. when it assumed operation of the Community Center. Toward that end three approaches were utilized.

1. Special cooperation with the regular and special schools with reference to the problems of truancy and school adjustment;
2. Cooperation with the local juvenile police officers, the probation officers and juvenile courts attempting to treat more effectively the delinquents within the local area;
3. The development of special programs for boys who were in need of special guidance or supervision.²

The earliest records of the Center state that the program was to be set up with this purpose in mind and that it was to be integrated into the life of the people of the neighborhood.

In its effort to be of utmost service to the people of the community, the West Side Community Center realizes that its objective will be reached only if the entire program is so developed that it becomes an integral part of the community life. In this connection, the Center has fostered progress by the West Side Community Center Council which has met regularly for the past year.³

² ~~Catholic~~ Youth Organization, op. cit., pp. 19.

³ Inorio, op. cit., September 1, 1940 to September 1, 1941. pp. 20.

Thus the Center, through the administration of the program, was expected to become a social influence in the community. The process of integration in becoming a part of the daily life of the people was to take place gradually through the following years.

The process of the movement to this end is best reflected in a study of the yearly reports of the Center and a comparison and study of the problems in the early days and at the present time. The author had the opportunity of working at the Center in 1941, on a volunteer basis, and was able to gather first hand information through personal observation and by working with the staff.

One of the significant factors in any organization is its members. Even at the sacrifice of experienced social workers, local workers were hired to run the program as much as possible. This policy is still in effect today and though it may be open to question this much can be said for it:

1. That persons born and raised in the community understand the inhabitants and motivating forces behind their actions.
2. That the records of the Center show that professional workers can be developed within the community and there is no need for calling in trained social workers.⁴

⁴ Inorio, op. cit., August 1, 1947 to July 1, 1948, pp. 2.

3. That if outside social workers were called in they would not get the cooperation of the community as the present staff is doing.
4. That the present staff has not been confined to the views and opinions of the community only. The Director, himself, is a graduate of the University of Illinois. Others of the staff went through the experience of life in social surroundings other than the narrow limits of the community. They are among the young progressive members of the near west side who want to improve the area in every way.⁵

In the early days of its existence the West Side Community Center becoming acclimatized had encountered many difficulties.

Although the new Center was staffed by Community personnel it was questionable whether or not the Center was an influence in the cultural lives of the people. One of the big factors that held back this movement was the clinging to customs of the provinces in the old country. The reticence of the immigrants in adopting the ideas and customs of the New World was due primarily to this.

⁵ Inorio, op. cit., August 1, 1944 to July 31, 1945, pp. 40.

Whereas the older generation partook but little in the social life of the community, the younger generation has been ambitious to improve conditions through community participation. This desire has, however, been aggressively evident only in the past decade. Since 1938 a new feeling has pervaded the neighborhood. It has taken concrete form through new building and improving of old ones. Likewise juvenile delinquency is not as evident as it was before. How much of this is due to the West Side Community Center can best be determined by seeing how the program has influenced the lives of the people. The question arises here as to the best kind of a program for this particular neighborhood. Primarily an agency of this type should be created for the use of the whole community for it can be argued that a program benefitting only one group is not a community project. There should be specific activities for all concerned and not a generalization in order to placate the adult group. The problem of full participation and a definite plan for all groups should be determined upon. Basically the whole idea hinges upon the Catholic Philosophy. Since it does, this most important point should permeate the thinking through, and acting upon, of any program devised. Following this

the program must not be a superficial one. Recreation for recreation's sake should not be the end and main purpose of such a program. The purpose, rather, should be a consideration of the whole individual, a development of the totality of being, an understanding not only of the individual but also the process of development and education of the individual toward his final end, and to his immediate end as a good citizen of the country with a properly developed personality.

Evidences of adult participation in the program of the Center became increasingly evident as the following excerpts show:

B. The Young Mothers' Club composed of about 40 women, was organized a few months ago. This group meets every two weeks, and engages in social and recreational activities at the Center, under the leadership of our staff members. Many of these women are wives and mothers of servicemen, and every effort has been made to assist them in meeting various war-time problems.⁵

However, in the year's report from 1943 to 1944 the direct participation of the fathers of the boys in the community, was requested to combat existing delinquency conditions.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 3.

A potentially strong and useful group of men, numbering approximately ninety members, were organized as a "Fathers Union." The group met at the Center almost weekly to discuss some of the current problems of youth, especially with regard to delinquency. This group, encouraged by some of the parish priests, exhibited genuine interest and concern in the welfare of their children and in the course of the year worked together to eliminate a few conditions in the neighborhood that seemed to contribute to delinquency. Several persons offered direct assistance in connection with the program at the Center. The organization of this group thus represents a further step in our objective to secure the widest possible participation of local residents in dealing with the problems of children.⁶

This program is still active in a modified form. It can be argued that the program was designed primarily for adolescents, yet the reports of the Center from the very beginning have stated that the Center was to benefit the whole community. The progress, then of the Center was rapid in respect to the education of the children, but the integration of the Center in the life of the neighborhood was slow and laborious.

Efforts were made to overcome exclusive concentration on the youth of the neighborhood. Two methods were devised; 1) A more active participation with the other agencies,

⁶ Inorio, op. cit., August 1, 1943 to July 31, 1944, pp. 3-4.

especially the West Side Community Council. 2) A direct appeal to the second generation, who by now were taking their part in the leadership of the community and the progress of the Center.⁷

In the course of these formative years there were many problems to be overcome. Disagreements as to policy, obtaining of the proper staff, indifference of the people, publicity of the program; all went through the process and change necessary to eventuate a program for the benefit of the whole community. Thus a proper perspective of the present can be obtained by an objective view of the past. Future planning can be based, then, on the determinations found in this review. Therefore, it was to the advantage of the West Side Community Center that a new director was installed on January 1, 1948, after the former director had found it necessary to resign and move out of the state because of his wife's illness.

By obtaining a new director, a fresh view of the problems at the Center will be observed. All the personnel have been imbued with a new desire to overcome these difficulties. Some idea of the new policies at the Center

⁷ Inorio, op. cit. August 1, 1945 to July 31, 1946, pp. 3.

can be obtained through a study of the program since January 1, 1948.

At that time these changes were proposed:

1. A need for aesthetic experience to broaden the cultural background.
2. Through a program of instruction in various musical instruments and choral groups.
3. Through emphasis on the creative element in dramatics.
4. Through citizenship classes sponsored by the Board of Education.
5. Through merging of the "Vocation School" program with that of Sheridan Park.
6. Through close cooperation with the West Side Community Committee in conducting a recreational program throughout the year.
7. Through a change in emphasis in the Physical Education program. The emphasis will be in developing citizenship and social experiences by
 - A. Teaching the participants how to settle differences in a democratic way.
 - B. De-emphasizing competition and emphasizing cooperation in the Physical Education Program.

During the year of 1948 these objectives have been accomplished in respect to the music, dramatic and physical

education activities. The West Side Community Council recreational program and the citizenship classes have not as yet begun. These classes were requested by Mexicans who have begun to enter the neighborhood.⁸ As yet the number is small and this program is expected to get under way when more of them express their desire for it.

Because the West Side Community Council shows it has an influence on the people of the neighborhood, a very close cooperation has been established. Since the director of the Center is a member of the Council there has been a new impetus to integrate the program at the Center more along the needs for the whole community. The Scouting program shows this integration and the description in Chapter III indicates the scope and future that the program will enjoy.

As yet, there are no specific plans for an adult program. The problem here concerns itself with the type activity that would be best, for past efforts have shown that various attempts to provide for the adults have had only temporary success. However, it is not enough that all groups participate in a set program. The main idea is whether or not the Center has played a part in bringing

⁸ See Table II.

cultural experiences and social education to the people. The program should meet these needs and unite the neighborhood in one harmonious group. A possible answer to this question is the seizing of the opportunity presented by the building of the Congress Street Highway. In cooperation with the West Side Community Committee, the Center has endeavored to educate the people concerning the advantages the community will enjoy through the construction of the highway. The necessity of improving the appearance of the neighborhood, and consequently enjoying a justifiable pride in community accomplishment will more closely unite the various interests of the people. This is a consensus of opinion among the young business and professional men in the community.

Mr. Hulbert reported he finds it particularly necessary to stress the following points:

- (2) There is as yet no plan and no planning and will not be until a fully representative group sets up a planning board,
 - (b) Planning must be done locally and cannot be left to "downtown agencies."
 - (c) Additional people are not being added to the present committee; invitations to others actually to join in the effort will be issued at a

- later date after we have talked to many more people,
- (d) The present informal group has no pre-conceived ideas except that it wants to work toward a planning agency which will be of service to all kinds of people who want to improve their property and will create a plan to include various kinds of new housing, all kinds of community, commercial and industrial facilities.⁹

It is through such projects, more than through the actual program, that the Center is engaging the attention of the adult members of the community.

But the older people are becoming more aware of the Center through the participation of their children in its program, through these community projects engaged in by the Center, and through the sponsoring of such adult activities as wedding showers, programs planned for adults, and especially through the soliciting of the interest of the young adult class in the entire program.

More emphasis and enthusiasm in planning and conducting a program for the young adults, obviously is needed.

⁹ Eri Hulbert, Executive Secretary, Organizing Committee, For Redevelopment of the Near West Side; Letter to Committee Members November 1, 1948.

The previous errors and misjudgements have had an opportunity to be synthesized into a more practical viewpoint of the whole situation. A result of this, then, should be an overall program that will make the Center, a true expression of all the people in the community thus completing the process of integration.

CHAPTER V

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

The various factors that determined the cultural aspect of the West Side Community Center were themselves determined by the early history of Chicago. From the time that the immigrants first began flocking to the middle west the growth of the city was so great that social progress lagged far behind. Housing conditions were deplorable, and this condition led in turn to equivalent conditions of vice, overcrowding and sanitation. Reforms were attempted but little real progress was accomplished. By the time that the great Italian immigration from 1900 to 1910 had run its course the near west side presented a picture of social chaos. The shanties that were built to house the new cheap labor were inadequate both in respect to sufficient room and proper construction. Sanitation was grossly neglected, saloons were most common, and crime flourished.

One of the most stubborn difficulties was that caused by the division of the Italian people into various factions. The people clung to the custom of the provinces from which

they came. Consequently there was a great deal of suspicion, caution, and distrust. Instead of unity there was division.

In the years from 1910 progress was slow, and the real work of unification began only when the second generation took its place in the affairs of the community.

By the time the West Side Community Center was founded in 1938 conditions had improved slowly through the efforts of various agencies and the second generation of the immigrants. However, a new evil had appeared in the form of juvenile delinquency, and this was one of the basic reasons for the creation of the Center. Bishop Sheil, realizing the need for aiding the children, established a branch of the Catholic Youth Organization in this area. His aim was to take care of the spiritual, cultural, and physical needs of the children and adults in this neighborhood. The Center was to influence the lives of the people and awaken in them a desire to improve themselves and their environment. The program of the Center was planned for the purpose of making the Center an integral part in the life of the neighborhood, and basically it has not changed since its inception. Although the program was

essentially for the benefit of all the community, it was through the work with the adolescents that this was to be accomplished. At first glance, it might appear that only the children would benefit from the program, but with a deeper study of the activities at the Center it can be understood how all the people of the neighborhood could use the facilities for their own particular needs.

Year by year the program has been enlarged to include more adult participation. The Women's Sewing Club; the cooperation of the fathers and mothers in the juvenile delinquency program; the scouting activities, using the young adults as scoutmasters, and directors; the dramatic program and citizenship classes; the planning of outings and tournaments with the cooperation of the adults; and the recent drive to better the neighborhood in preparation for the Congress Street Highway, are all manifestations of the growing sense of adult participation. The Center is becoming a focal point for meetings of this latter type of activity. Through the participation of their children in the Christmas play of 1948, parents who never before had been in the building, have become interested in what the Center is striving to accomplish. It is through such community projects that the Center is increasing its

usefulness as an integrating and unifying force in the community. Because of the success of the Christmas play, it is planned to augment this program by increasing participation. The purpose behind such an activity is to broaden the cultural experience and to increase the appreciation for aesthetic values in the children and adults.

What the Center has accomplished in the one decade of its existence for the benefit of the community can best be gauged by the opinions of the leaders who represent the people. Personal interviews were obtained with the following:

Father Lawrence Dal Bon of Our Lady of Pompeii Church,
Father Emile Herbert, Pastor of Notre Dame Church,
Miss Marie Plamondon, Associate Resident of Madonna Center,
Captain Phelan of the Maxwell Police Station,
Officer Joseph J. Fleming, Acting Desk Sergeant, Maxwell
Police Station,
Father Clear, S. J., Holy Family Church,
Mr. N. Taccio, Director of the West Side Community Council,
Probation Officers of Juvenile Court,
Mr. Clifford R. Shaw, Director of Chicago Area Project.

Father Lawrence Dal Bon of Our Lady of Pompeii stated:

"The Center has been a definite influence in the neighborhood for helping to overcome racial discrimination. This has been accomplished through its program of teams

in various athletic contests. The Center has also helped to unite the people and to bring about a better community spirit. More spiritual supervision is needed, however, for those participating in the activities at the Center."¹

At a meeting of various community interests in the spring of 1948, at which the director of the Center was present, Father Herbert of Notre Dame Church, offered the opinion that;

"Vernon Park should be made into a playground for children and not a park for older persons because if it became a park it would only be a breeding place for crime. The people of the neighborhood should improve the surroundings of their own homes to take care of the needs of the older people." He added that, "Because the director of the Center was present at this meeting, it is a good indication of the trend towards improving the neighborhood that the Center is taking."²

Miss Marie Plamondon, Associate Resident of the Madonna Center told the interviewer that:

"The West Side Community Center has been a cultural influence on both the younger and older people of the neighborhood. The people through this influence have improved their homes and have united in a more harmonious group. Through the participation in the Center's program as well as

¹ Reverend Lawrence Dal Bon, Our Lady of Pompeii Church, Interview, December 27, 1948.

² Reverend Emile Herbert, Pastor, Notre Dame Church, Interview, December 27, 1948.

the program at the Madonna Center, and other Catholic agencies, the people have been educated in the practice of their religion, and have come to realize the importance it plays in their daily lives."³

According to Captain Phelan of the Maxwell Street Police Station who has been on duty there for the past two years, there has been little or no juvenile or adult crime in the area of the West Side Community Center:

"I try to be at the scene of any trouble, and in my two years at this station there has been very little crime either juvenile or adult."⁴

Officer Joseph J. Fleming, the Acting Desk Sergeant at Maxwell Police Station offered this information:

"I have lived in this neighborhood for twenty three years. Ten to twenty years ago there was a great deal of crime in the neighborhood of the West Side Community Center. Gangs of boys were notorious, and such groups as the "42" gang were greatly feared. However in the past ten years these activities have dwindled away until now there is practically no trouble either from juveniles or adults. I attribute this decline to the programs of such places; as Bishop Sheil's Community Center; to the war, because the training the boys received broadened their outlook on life; the housing projects; education; and an increase in social agencies. All of

³ Miss Marie Plamondon, Madonna Center, Interview, December 27, 1948.

⁴ Captain Phelan, Maxwell Police Station, Interview, December 27, 1948.

these have helped to create a new spirit in the people. The proof of this is the fact that in the past ten years there have been fewer and fewer calls for the police from that neighborhood."⁵

Holy Family Church was the next place visited. Father Clear, S. J., of this parish told the writer that the Center has proven to be a definite help to the people of the community.

"The West Side Community Center has co-operated in everything asked of it. It has been very obliging and helpful in permitting the use of its facilities to outside agencies. The Catholic Youth Organization program at the Center has been an important factor in overcoming the factional strife in the neighborhood. Through its social and athletic program it has helped to unify the interests and aims of the people. The Center is giving excellent training to the youth of the community by its careful supervision and strict discipline. The parents seeing this good effect have become more interested in the activities of this agency. The result of this particular phase is the developing of more responsible and better citizens in the community. The spiritual welfare of the people must not be neglected and there should be more supervision in this respect."⁶

The West Side Community Council is one of the most active and progressive groups on the near west side. Mr. Nicholas O. Taccio, the director of this agency had this

⁵ Officer Fleming, Maxwell Police Station, Interview, December 27, 1948.

⁶ Reverend Clear, S. J., Holy Family Church, Interview, December 27, 1948.

to say about the Center:

They have learned the importance of community cooperation in promoting community affairs. Some of the boys of the neighborhood have grown up and are now on the police force, others are active in community affairs, while others have businesses of their own or strive to further their education. The people in general don't want to move out of the neighborhood but do want to improve their property and the existing facilities of the community. The West Side Community Center has played a definite part in this process. It is expanding its program to include more of the community projects. Having the director of the Center on the Board of Directors of the Community Council helps the Center become more of a focal point usually in planning various neighborhood activities. This is also a big factor in helping to integrate the program at the Center with the needs of the people. The Christmas play this 1948 year brought out many people who never before had been in the Center. The program through the children is interesting the adult element more than ever so that more of them are becoming aware that the Center is for the whole community. There are some things, however, that would facilitate the program. A larger staff is necessary, preferably one developed from the community. More space at the Center should be utilized for individual Club Rooms. The staff should mingle more with the older people and acquaint them with the program and show them how it benefits all the people.

The causes of the change in attitudes was the influence of the war because it broadened the social experience of the people. The second and third generation has also changed the attitudes and feelings of the older generation through its active participation in the social and athletic programs of the various agencies

in the neighborhood. The fact that the people are now able to enter the industrial field more easily has helped to give them an added sense of responsibility, and finally the building of the Congress Street Highway has inspired the people with a new pride in continuing and augmenting the re-development of the near west side.⁷

In order to get a clearer picture of the decline in juvenile delinquency a visit to the Juvenile Court was made. In the office of Mr. E. J. Nerad, head of the Boys' Division, there is a map on which is pinpointed the areas in which juvenile offenses are committed. Another map shows where the delinquent boy or girl resides. In the area of influence of the West Side Community Center there were only two places indicated where a delinquent act had been committed and these were on the outskirts of the neighborhood. In a discussion with several probation officers who formerly worked in that district it was agreed that the sharp decline of delinquent activity in this area was due to the following; cooperation of the various agencies in the area, the efforts of the West Side Community Center in working with the parents the war, home improvement, education of the adults through the program of the Center, and the close cooperation between the probation officer assigned to the district, the West Side

⁷ Mr. N. Taccio, West Side Community Council, Interview, December 27, 1948.

Community Council, and the West Side Community Center.

The last interview was had with Mr. Clifford R. Shaw, Director of the Chicago Area Project. Mr. Shaw is well acquainted with the work of the Center since the Chicago Area Project occupies two rooms at the Center for its work. It was under Mr. Shaw's Directorship that the building of the West Side Community Center was first handed over to the Catholic Youth Organization. One of the conditions by which the building was offered to the Catholic Youth Organization involved the question of utilizing the services of the Organization for the entire community's benefit. In commenting on the work of the Center Mr. Shaw offered the following observations:

The West Side Community Center was not founded only for the benefit of the young people. It was the purpose of the Chicago Area Project that the Catholic Youth Organization take over the building on Vernon Park Place and conduct a program that would be useful and beneficial for all members of the community. It was also the desire of all concerned that the Center should become an integral part of the neighborhood. In reviewing the history of the Center it is evident that this has been done. The former director did an excellent job in planning and operating the initial program. Like new enterprises there were many difficulties to be overcome. Such problems as factional strife, juvenile delinquency and division of interests could only be resolved because the basic program remained unchanged. Today the

new director is augmenting ~~g~~ this program and has added a fresh viewpoint~~ant~~ and new vigor to the activities at the Center~~ter~~. The Center has matured and is now a definite part of the neighborhood. This integration has been possible because of the close cooperation with other agencies in the community. Of special merit is the cooperation between the Center and the Churches, the West Side Community Council, and the juvenile delinquency authorities.

Throughout the area there are twenty or thirty social and athletic clubs for young men, which have their own individual meeting places and club rooms. Helping to organize these clubs into a cooperative body has been part of the work of the Center. In doing this the Center is becoming more closely connected with the interests of the people but this interest is more than just promoting athletics for it also takes into consideration the cultural needs of the people. It is by this type of cooperation that the Center has shown that it is carrying out the purpose for which it was founded.⁸

From the summary of opinion of the various individuals interviewed it is evident that the Center has evolved into a mature agency able to take its place in caring for the needs of the people.

There is a new attitude among the people concerning their community, a new spirit of neighborhood cooperation.

Because the West Side Community Center has helped to unite the people through its program the people have come to accept the Center as a part of their daily lives.

⁸ Mr. Clifford R. Shaw, Director, Chicago Area Project, Interview, December 28, 1948.

They do not feel that this agency is operated by someone outside of the neighborhood but know that it belongs to them in the sense that the staff itself was born and raised among them.

The result, then, is a place firmly entrenched in the daily lives of the people, a Center where the whole neighborhood may partake of the program and finally it is a Center that can fulfill the spiritual, cultural and physical needs of the people in the area of influence because they can feel people of "their own" district are striving to make this Center inviting, social and cultural.

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TABLE I
COMPARISON OF WHITE AND NEGRO POPULATION BY CENSUS TRACT
1940, IN THE AREA OF INFLUENCE OF THE WEST
SIDE COMMUNITY CENTER

RACE	<u>All Tracts</u>		<u>408</u>		<u>409</u>	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Total	13,868	100.0	1,913	100.0	838	100.0
Native White..	9,567	69.0	1,271	66.4	618	73.7
Foreign Born						
White.....	3,840	27.7	637	33.3	220	26.3
Negro and Others ¹	461	3.3	5	0.3	0	0.0

RACE	<u>421</u>		<u>429</u>		<u>430</u>		<u>435</u>	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Total	3,838	100.0	4,691	100.0	277	100.0	2,311	100.0
Native White	2,599	67.7	3,518	75.0	193	69.7	1,368	59.2
Foreign Born								
White.....	1,231	32.1	991	21.1	84	30.3	677	29.3
Negro and Others ¹ ...	8	0.2	182	3.9	0	0.0	266	11.5

¹ Includes 32 persons reported as "other races," 20 of whom are in tract 429 and 7 in tract 435.

TABLE II
COMPARISON OF WHITE AND MEXICAN POPULATION BY CENSUS
TRACT 1940, IN THE AREA OF INFLUENCE OF
THE WEST SIDE COMMUNITY CENTER

RACE	All Tracts		408		409		421	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Total	714	100.0	135	100.0	92	100.0	226	100.0
White ¹	622	87.1	102	75.6	82	89.1	213	94.2
Mexicans ² ...	47	6.6	20	14.8	7	7.6	11	4.9
Not Reported.	45	6.3	13	9.6	3	3.3	2	0.9

RACE	429		430		435		Other	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Total	60	100.0	25	100.0	45	100.0	131	100.0
White ¹	59	98.3	25	100.0	40	88.9	101	77.1
Mexicans ² ..	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	4.5	7	5.3
Not Reported	1	1.7	0	0.0	3	6.6	23	17.6

¹ Includes 10 foreign born whites.

² Includes 46 native born Mexicans and 1 foreign born Mexican

Source: Registration Cards, West Side Community Center.