

# The Commons

JANUARY, 1905

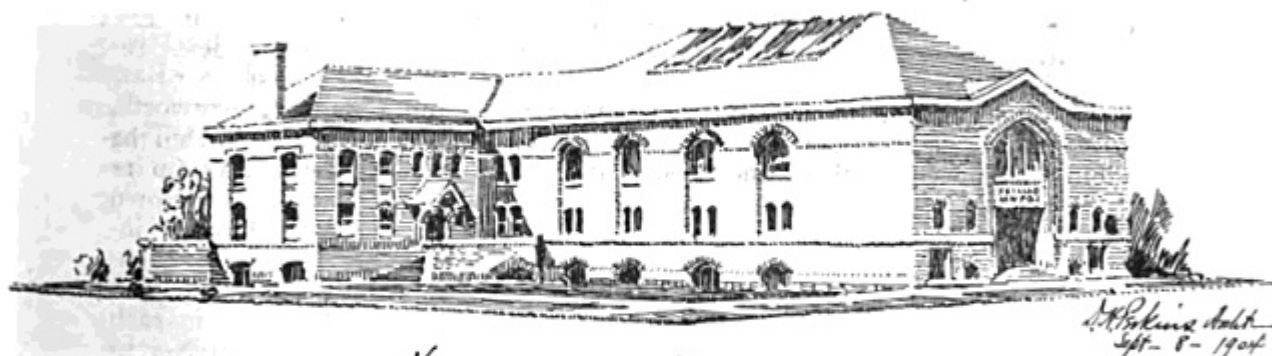
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## A People's Own Neighborhood Center Neighborhood House, Chicago

Neighborhood co-operation, not only in making club and class work successful and in bringing to a high degree of effectiveness the settlement influence in the community, but also in helping to manage and even largely to support the work — this is the great and fundamental aim of the Neighborhood

and sacrifice of the neighborhood. To this end a scheme of building certificates, in which it is hoped the people of the locality will invest, has been devised by a committee made up in large part of representative neighborhood people, who are only following out the wishes expressed by a general meeting of the



VIEW FROM THE NORTHEAST —  
NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE CHICAGO.

House Association. To a surprising extent this has been accomplished in the past. But plans are now being consummated to give even larger opportunity for neighborhood control and financial backing, and to make the immediate community more than ever responsible for its own enterprise; it is proposed that the new building, which the work stands so sorely in need of, shall be built by the personal interest

whole neighborhood.

Throughout the whole history of Neighborhood House prominence has been given to the idea that it really belongs to the whole people. An eighth grade teacher in one of the public schools nearest the House was asking her pupils to name the building, such as the public school, that all owned in common. The immediate answer from several children was "Neighborhood

House." In a very real sense Neighborhood House has become and is becoming what its name implies—a community clubhouse. The desire is that here all class lines should be eliminated and all differences laid aside as

Universalist Church of Englewood. But the first suggestion of the idea that has developed into Neighborhood House was given by Professor Ormsby, Principal of the Perkins Bass Public School in the same locality, who said he thought a creche was needed, as many children were kept from school to care for the little ones. Acting upon this suggestion the matter was presented to the young people of the church who responded enthusiastically, and a small cottage was rented and furnished for the purpose. But in a short time it was discovered that the need for a kindergarten was much greater, and a kindergarten was put in place of the matron, and so was started the first kindergarten south of 47th Street and west of Halsted Street, the two schools, Perkins Bass and D. S. Wentworth, co-operating with the



Building now occupied by Neighborhood House

each strives to give his best to the common life of his community and city.

Situated on the corner of West Sixty-seventh and May Streets, in a neighborhood which a few short years ago was a vast prairie—largely under water during the spring months—this social work has grown up with the neighborhood. The locality has now become well built up. Neighborhood House has outgrown one building and is now looking forward to the larger quarters for its future work.

Two changes have previously been made to accommodate the growing work. The first winter, of 1895, was spent in a small cottage. Inspiration for the initial season of activity was furnished in a rather interesting way. Mrs. Harriet M. Van Der Vaart had become familiar with the neighborhood in connection with the charity work of the

young people in support. As an indication of how the work has grown and how it has brought broader influences also into play, it may be mentioned that now there are no less than three kindergartens, one in each of the two schools and one in Neighborhood House, all supported by the Board of Education.

The cottage was opened in the evenings for a reading room and boys and girls' club started. But this small space was outgrown in one winter, removal being taken to a larger house, in which Mr. and Mrs. Van Der Vaart took up residence. Two years sufficed to make this also inadequate for the growing needs, and another change of location became necessary. A building containing four flats and two stores, on the corner of 67th and May Streets, was transformed into a center for the work.

## THE WOMAN'S CLUB.

One of the most successful organizations from the start has been the Woman's Club. Its beginning came about through a mothers' class in connection with the kindergarten, and from that it has grown into a large Club, with far reaching activities, and committees which actually accomplish a great deal. Last year the club members studied city and county institutions, visiting them and reporting on their object, condition, equipment, management and efficiency. The weekly programs of the Club include a great variety, from musicales, and stereopticon lectures on art and travel, to discussions of such topics as

tribution has been made to the vacation schools each year. A library has been opened one afternoon a week, books furnished by the club and distributed by a committee of the club in a branch of the Herman Raster school.

A woman's club chorus is maintained. A philanthropic committee is doing active work. The club is contributing weekly to one of the scholarships maintained for widowed mothers where the new child-labor law seems to work a hardship by throwing the child who was under age out of work.

Perhaps the spirit that most distinguishes the club is the breadth of sympathy and tolerance that allows the



Neighborhood House Boys' Club

"Woman in Modern Industry," or symposiums by club members on the institutions visited.

The club joined the State Federation of Woman's Clubs in 1898 and has sent and paid the expenses of two delegates to every meeting since. The interests and sympathies are broad, the club sending delegates to all city and county bodies having for their object the betterment of public conditions. A con-

presentation of a great variety of subjects not usually found on club calendars and that invites and welcomes all women as members, regardless of all differences.

## OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.

The young Woman's Culture club organized in 1900, meets every Monday evening, is limited to fifty members and usually has a waiting list. The



purpose of the club is educational and social. It gives four parties during the year, has a programme of music, talks on health, hygiene, art, house-keeping, home-making and labor conditions. The club conducts class work

ment taught by a student of the Lewis institute.

The Little Woman's club is limited to girls who are higher in the public school than the sixth grade, has forty members, meets Saturday afternoons.



The Cooking Class prepares its own dinner

for its members, having had classes in millinery, cooking, fancywork, gymnastics and Shakespeare.

On Tuesday evening the Englewood Girls' club meets, with a membership of thirty-five. This club has educational talks, entertainments, parties, and a gymnasium class.

The Men's Social Science club is in its fourth year and devotes its time to lectures and discussions on civic and economic questions.

An industrial school for girls is held every Saturday morning from October to May. There is always a long list of children waiting their turn to gain admittance to the school. Calisthenics and music form a part of the regular programme. In connection with the school the Englewood Woman's club is maintaining a domestic science depart-

Class work is a great feature of this club—gymnasium, elocution and singing.

A free circulating library of over 1,000 volumes is maintained and is open Tuesday from 3:15 to 5 p. m., Saturday from 7 to 8 p. m. This library was started by the Cook county superintendent of schools, with the assistance and support of the Cook County Teacher's association, a generous donation being given this year.

A penny savings station has been maintained for years under the management of Miss Irene Bay.

Boys' and girls' afternoon clubs meet nearly every afternoon after school, each with its own distinct organization, programme and parties. A league of all the boys organizations meeting at Neighborhood house has been form-

ed, and has a meeting one evening a month, with a stereopticon lecture or an entertainment.

Musical instruction is greatly facilitated by the generosity of the Englewood Woman's Club in placing a piano in the building. Violin and vocal lessons are given as well as those on the piano. A recently organized orchestra is doing good work and gives enjoyable concerts from time to time. The Children's Chorus is found to be very popular.

Several gymnasium classes are held each week, and educational work is also undertaken, a class in charcoal drawing and water color painting proving to be an attractive Saturday afternoon appointment.

Dramatic work monopolizes the attention of no one club, but practically all of the clubs do something in this line during the year.

Under the initiative of the House there have been organized very strong parents' clubs in connection with the two neighboring public schools. Last summer these clubs secured from the Board of Education the location of a summer manual training school for the district. The neighborhood defrayed much of the expense, however, through its subscriptions.

About thirty non-resident helpers have rendered very efficient service in heading up some of these special lines of work.

Clubs of various churches and private individuals have been glad to avail themselves of the opportunity of using this clubhouse. From three different churches the young people's societies meet for their social meetings at Neigh-

borhood house. Private individuals rent the rooms for weddings, surprise parties and anniversary banquets, thus making it all that its name implies—a Neighborhood House.

The support contributed goes directly to the work, those living at Neighborhood House paying their own rent and expenses entirely, and no salaries being paid except to trained teachers who have classes in music.

Those living at Neighborhood House are Mr. and Mrs. S. S. Van Der Vaart and Misses Anna and Grace Nicholes. No inconsiderable part of the influence



The Gymnasium Class

center, in many ways the most valuable exerted from the Neighborhood House of all, has come through Mrs. Harriet M. Van Der Vaart's service to the whole community, not only in the immediate locality but throughout the city of Chicago and the state of Illinois.

As chairman of the industrial committee of the State Federation of Women's Clubs, she has, with her co-laborers, made a thorough investigation of the conditions of working children in Chicago and Cook county. To her persistent efforts and indefatigable service was due, in no small degree, the passage by the state legislature of the new law to improve the conditions of work-

ment Association, the South Park Board was led to allot two of the recently established small parks in the region surrounding Neighborhood House.

The neighborhood subscription plan for erecting the new building has so far met with the encouragement of having the lot for its location given. It is hoped, where individuals cannot afford



The Kindergarten Circle

ing children. And its enforcement has been greatly aided by her vigilance in watching conditions in many localities. Only recently, she laid bare shameful violations of the law on the part of the glass manufacturers. She is also General Secretary of the Illinois Branch of the Consumers' League.

Miss Anna Nicholes exerts a most effective influence as Secretary of the Illinois Woman's Trade Union League and as editor of the Woman's Department in the *Union Labor Advocate*.

Through Mrs. Van Der Vaart's leadership, backed up by a fine neighborhood spirit, in co-operation with the public schools and the local Improve-

ment Association, the South Park Board was led to allot two of the recently established small parks in the region surrounding Neighborhood House. The neighborhood subscription plan for erecting the new building has so far met with the encouragement of having the lot for its location given. It is hoped, where individuals cannot afford to take even one share (five dollars each) in the building fund, that families will do so collectively. The certificates provide that if the Neighborhood Association shall at any time dissolve and leave no successor, the land and buildings shall be sold and the proceeds divided among the holders of certificates as their interests may appear. The real ownership will therefore rest, as intended, with those who subscribe for the stock.

The building will be two stories in height and the exterior will be plain but exceedingly satisfying and restful in appearance. On the main floor will be an auditorium 48 by 64 feet with 418

seats. This will be flanked at one end by a stage 24 by 14 feet, an office and dressing room; and at the other by the cloak rooms and the main vestibule opening upon Sixty-seventh Street. At the rear of the auditorium and facing upon an alley will be a neighborhood parlor, 26 by 20 feet; a reception room, 15 by 10 feet; a dining room, 15 by 20 and kitchen, 11 by 16 feet. There will be an entrance from the hallway opposite the dining room and reception room, into the office at the rear of the auditorium. Two club rooms each 33 feet by 30 are planned for erection later.

The democratic nature of the scheme will be carried out in the internal management. There will be a House Committee of seven whose chairman shall be the executive head of the house. This chairman shall have power of initiative, but his or her actions are

subject to review by the House Committee. The House Committee in turn will, of course, be subject to the Board of Directors. In important matters the action of the Board of Directors will be subject to a referendum vote by the entire membership of the Association.

After the house is once established it is hoped that the income from the use of the hall, club dues, etc., will pay a large share of the running expenses.

The Neighborhood House Association is thus built upon true guild and co-operative lines. No other similar organization, inaugurated in Chicago, has so frankly and freely called upon the neighborhood in which it moves to assume such large financial and managerial burdens. There is not a figure-head on the board of directors, its members are all active members, thoroughly acquainted with the possibilities and limitations of the work.



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of Union Seminary, New York. He is one of the Rhodes scholars and is attending New College. Throughout his vacation at the settlement he was hard at work as secretary of the Canning Town Ward Committee, administering the relief fund of the *Daily News*.

TO THE EDITOR:

In the last issue of THE COMMONS, in the article on Neighborhood House, through no fault of the compiler the real relationship between what was then the "Universalist Church of Englewood," now "The Peoples Liberal Church" and the settlement in its early days, was not shown. The young people of the church organized the work and with the assistance of the church supported it for the first four years, both financially and actively participating in the work. At the end of this time as the work had expanded, it was deemed advisable both by the church and the residents to call upon the community at large for the maintenance of the work. Since this time, while the church members stand by it as individuals, the residents alone are responsible for the maintenance of the work of Neighborhood House.

HARRIET M. VAN DER VAART.

## Book Review

### The Principles of Economics

With Applications to Practical Problems

By Frank A. Fetter, Ph. D., Professor of Political Economy and Finance, Cornell University. 610 pp. \$2.00 net. The Century Company, New York.

The emphasis placed by this book on the human values involved in the subject it treats is regarded by the editor of THE COMMONS as of such significance that he reserves his discussion of it for the editorial columns of the next number.

APPRECIATIONS.

BY PROF. FRANK L. M. VEY.

Dr. Fetter's recent book, admirable in tone and sanity of discussion, differs in at least three aspects from the older discussions on economics. These differences are found, first, in point of view; second, in outline; and third, in the unification of economic laws relating to distribution.

The point of approach is that of distribution opened by the key, value. This eliminates the old fashioned treatment of production and exchange, but the problem having been regarded as fundamentally one of distribution, the forces of production are treated only as they affect distribution, thus dismissing from the book the analysis of such agents. In the outline the difference is still striking. The book is divided into three parts: I. The part dealing with Value of Material Things, under which are treated

Wants and Present Goods, Wealth and Rent and Capitalization and Time Value. II. The Value of Human Services divided into Labor and Wages, Enterprise and Profit. III. the Social Aspect of Value which is treated in two subdivisions: Relation of Private Income to Social Welfare and the Relation of the State to Industry.

In the third respect the author has presented a view of rent that coordinates the laws of rent interest and wages. Thus the law of diminishing returns becomes a factor in all forms of production and makes it possible to consider the returns from the agents as forms of rent.

Many readers will not go with the author in his analysis of economic principles as they apply to distribution, but each of them will receive a new impulse to thought and be struck at the same time by the careful yet frank discussion of the many problems treated in Part III.

University of Minnesota.

BY PROF. H. C. DAVENPORT.

I regard Professor Fetter's book as masterly in doctrine, in arrangement, in exposition and in suggestiveness. It is everywhere in line with the most progressive of late thought and in some respects makes important contributions to the forward movement of the science.

University of Chicago.

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