



LENOX HILL NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE

*A History of 125 Years of
Service to the Community*

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House

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“A settlement, like a pebble dropped in the sea of humanity, causes opportunities to circle outward as far as the eye can reach.”

—Head Worker Mary Wells, 1898

Beginnings

Stanton Coit, co-founder of the Union of Ethical Societies in Great Britain, had recently returned to the United States after spending some months at Toynbee Hall in London’s East End. Toynbee was the first in what would become a trans-Atlantic phenomenon known as the Settlement House movement. At a public lecture in New York in 1886, he informed his audience of the founding principle of the Settlement House: the social problems of the poor can only be understood—and thus, remedied—by working *with* not *for* the urban poor. In Coit’s audience that night, were several alumnae of the Normal College of New York (later, Hunter College). As the city’s premier public college for women, and home to the only model school in the public school system, its alumnae filled the public schools as teachers, and were well-acquainted with the new concept of the kindergarten for young children. In 1890, the Alumnae of Normal College organized a free kindergarten of their own for children in the neighborhood of Yorkville, located in rooms rented from a Protestant mission on East 63rd Street.¹



Figure 1: The first kindergarten class in 1890 taught by the Alumnae of Normal College

¹ Harry P. Kraus, “The Settlement House Movement in New York City, 1886-1914,” PhD Dissertation, New York University, 1970.

In order to aid the children attending the Kindergarten, the Alumnae funded a clothing committee to provide the attendees with appropriate, warm attire. A “Little Housekeepers” class taught young girls the basics of cooking, sewing and housekeeping. The Fresh Air Fund sent local children out to the country each summer for a couple of weeks. Housekeeping, in particular, seemed pertinent to improving the lives of locals. Members who visited families of the children observed that:

“the kindergartners gained more and more respect for the skill with which these mothers [in the East Side tenements] managed their large families in the smallest of rooms with the smallest of incomes. But they found abundant proof that one of the greatest needs in the homes was education, education along practical lines. Many a mother confessed her ignorance of household matters, and expressed a hope that her daughters might not have to learn all after the family cares had come, as she had been forced to do. In answer to this need came the ‘Little Housekeeper’s’ classes—classes in sewing, cooking and other household mysteries.”²

With the expansion of the Alumnae’s mission came more programs, and competition for space led the Alumnae to raise funds to purchase a building of their own. At the end of June 1894, the kindergarten on 63rd Street closed for the summer for the last time; it would reopen in the fall at 446 East 72nd Street, which had been built as a four-story railroad-style tenement. The children in this new neighborhood—due to population density, the reach of the Settlement in these early years barely extended beyond the block on which it was located—came from predominantly Bohemian families, with some German, Irish, Italian and Algerian families interspersed. English was spoken in relatively few homes.

Alumnae Settlement (commonly referred to as Alumnae House), as it was first named, opened with two resident workers in late 1894. Mary Wells served as Head Worker and a number of non-resident workers lived in the neighborhood. Its primary objective was to continue to run the kindergarten—which had an enrollment of 50 students by 1896—and to offer a variety of clubs and entertainments to educate and edify the neighborhood. Several classes offered instruction in a skill useful for employment or daily living: typewriting, stenography, sewing, cooking and dressmaking. These classes also instilled



Figure 2: The first official location, 1894-1916, only sixteen feet wide

² From the 1897 Annual Report, p. 10. Note: “Kindergartner,” in this era, referred to the teachers of kindergartens, not the students.

those characteristics which Progressive Era reformers believed to be necessary—hard work, cleanliness, and thrift—for rising out of poverty and living more middle-class, American life styles. The Alumnae observed, to their satisfaction, significant improvements in school attendance and petty crime rates.

Ameliorating the problems of a rapidly urbanizing area was of vital importance. Most immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe—Bohemians and Italians settled in large numbers in the Upper East Side—were rural peasants. Compounding this problem was the fact that the United States was itself experiencing a massive transfer of population from rural areas to urban centers. By 1900, ninety percent of all manufacturing took place in urban areas, which made these centers natural draws for new immigrants.³ By 1910, the district bounded by Second Avenue and the East River and by 54th and 86th Streets was known as the “Bohemian District,” and was home to over 60,000 people.

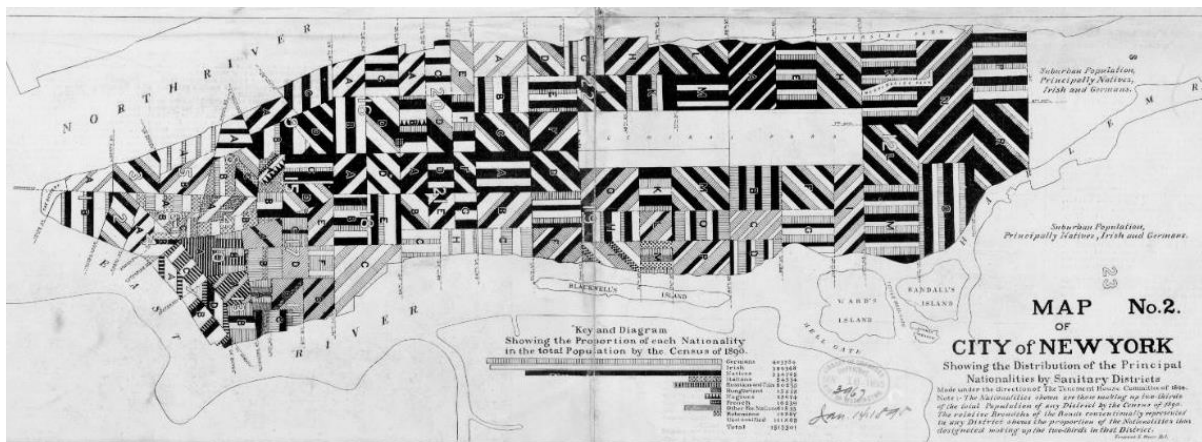


Figure 3: Map of the City of New York showing the distribution of the principal nationalities by Sanitary Districts, made under the direction of The Tenement House Committee of 1894

Most of the adults worked in cigar manufacturing, an industry notorious for its adverse effects on human health. Cigar makers were thought to be more prone to tuberculosis, but this was likely the result of the close quarters in which the workers lived and of the sweatshops in which cigars were produced. Cigar makers worked seated for long periods and the work involved repetitive motions of the arms and wrists. As a result, many cigar workers fell victim to “cigarmaker’s neurosis”: debilitating damage to the nerves in the shoulders and arms. Some ultimately lost muscle control in their hands.⁴ As a result, many of the men in the neighborhood were no longer able to go to work, and wives and teenage daughters had to work to support their families, often in the same sweat shops that had been so detrimental to their husbands and fathers. Girls at younger ages were taking up “the cares of a grown

³ Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982, 2007), 110-115.

⁴ Alan Kraut, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the “Immigrant Menace”* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 178-180.

woman,” cooking and cleaning for the older breadwinners and the younger children.⁵ At first, finding ways to help young children and women to escape the conditions of this daily toil, if only for a few hours, was the organization’s primary goal.

Alumnae Settlement offered classes in physical culture, literature, singing and scrapbooking. The Settlement also housed a free circulating library and the Penny Provident Fund Bank, which encouraged children to save their pennies. Cooking classes were focused not just on skills development but on cooking on a budget and preparing a more American diet.



Figure 4: Children from the “Banking Their Pennies” program



Figure 5: Cooking class

In 1897, girls in the cooking class learned how to make bread, biscuits, soup, coffee, broiled steak, potatoes, eggs, custard and cornstarch pudding. Most reformers felt that immigrants were ignorant of the principles of a nutritious diet, and that their national diets were not sufficiently nutritious or calorie-dense to sustain health in their new American environment.⁶ Classes in Bohemian needlecraft—which became the Lenox Hill Studio in the late 1910s—employed a skilled teacher from Slovakia to teach Russian and Slavic embroidery patterns. It was up to the members of the class to secure supplies for the class and then to find markets in which to sell the finished products, thereby also providing training in business management and marketing.⁷

⁵ Annual Report for 1901, p. 9.

⁶ From the 1897 Annual Report, p. 10. Based on recipes found in later cookbooks, cornstarch pudding was exactly as tasty as it sounds, which is to say, not very. For middle-class attitudes towards immigrant foodways, see Donna Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 122-148.

⁷ Annual Report for 1909, p. 10-12.

Table 1: Activities offered by age, 1898⁸

Boys Age 15+	Boys Age 12-15	Girls Age 14+	Girls Age 11-14	Girls Age 7-10
Singing	Literature	Cooking	Sewing	Sewing
Physical Culture	Scrap-book class	Embroidery	Cooking	Physical Culture
Stenography	Physical Culture	Physical Culture	Physical Culture	Dolls' Dressmaking
Type Writing	Social Hour	Dressmaking	Embroidery	Social Hour
Social Hour		Stenography	Dolls' Dressmaking	
		Singing		
		Social Hour		



Figure 6: Photograph from a promotional brochure for the Lenox Hill Studio. These embroidered curtains hung in the office of Mr. Harold Irving Pratt. Pratt was a son of Charles Pratt, founder of the Astral Oil Works in Brooklyn (which later became part of Standard Oil). Harold Pratt himself was on the Board of Directors of Standard Oil, and also served on the Council of Foreign Relations from 1923-1939. He and his wife, Harriet Barnes, owned a mansion at Park Avenue and 68th Street (where this office was located); his wife donated the mansion to the Council on Foreign Relations after his death in 1944. The CFR is still headquartered in this location. [Source: "The Work of the Lenox Hill Studio," Collection files box 88 folder 1]

The activities on offer listed in Table 1 reflect what the settlement workers perceived to be the needs of the neighborhood. In the words of Dr. Anne L. Langworthy, who became Head Worker at Alumnae House in 1898:

"Every settlement has its peculiar problems, and if we were to give the greatest need of our young people, we should say, purpose, determination, sticktoativeness. [sic] Born in inertia, fostered by environment, they tend to do only what impulse dictates.

"To meet this need, in our plans for the year we have provided for classes in pleasant and profitable work, with the stipulation that only those who do some work shall enjoy the regular social privileges of the house."⁹

⁸ 1898 Annual Report of Alumnae House, p. 15.

⁹ Langworthy, Report of the Head Worker, in Alumnae House Annual Report for 1898, p. 13.

Langworthy's assessment of the neighborhood's residents was in keeping with general attitudes towards immigrants in the early twentieth century. Even among those who supported an open immigration policy and tolerance of newcomers, the prevailing assumption was that these recent arrivals from Central and Southern Europe—populations that were conceived of as inherently different from the Northern Europeans and Britons who had settled in North America in earlier decades—could only prove themselves worthy by conforming to American ways of life. Observing that their Bohemian neighbors were “as gay by nature as their name implies,” were very fond of dancing and singing: “Thus, we offer our girls singing and dancing classes in which they revel, in order to lure them on to cooking classes which have small attraction for them at first. We cannot believe that any crusade against vice can change the realities of human nature, so our aim is simply to take these realities into account and to found upon them some sort of a scheme of social advancement.”¹⁰



Figure 7: Bohemian girls polka dancing at annual June Walk

Despite these prejudices that assumed immigrants shunned classes in cooking and housekeeping out of sheer laziness, workers at Alumnae House by the end of the 1910s had come to gain a better understanding of the plight of the neighborhood. In 1909, the organization set a mission statement, which read as follows:

“Normal College Alumnae House exists for the mutual benefit of its neighbors and the students and graduates of the Normal College.
“Its purpose is to give social expression to democracy; so to study its neighborhood as to gain insight into its best life and its special needs, and, as a result of this study, to stimulate self-help and co-operation, and wisely to lead and share the movement of the neighborhood toward civic consciousness and righteousness.”¹¹

¹⁰ From the 1901 Annual Report, p. 6.

¹¹ Annual Report for 1909, inside front cover. The opinions of these reformers were clearly influenced by the eugenics and euthenics movements of the early twentieth century. Eugenics held that some individuals and races were naturally genetically inferior and would only pass on their negative traits to their offspring. Its close cousin, euthenics, was also based in notions of inborn characteristics but held that through improving the living environment, social reformers could improve the personal and moral characteristics of the individual. See *A Century of Eugenics in America: From the Indiana Experiment to the Human Genome Era*, ed. Paul A. Lombardo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).



Figure 8: First day of kindergarten, 1909

That same year, Alumnae House had begun offering a special class for adults to study the pressing social issues of the day, particularly trade unions and socialism. Representatives from the Cigar Markers' Union and the Women's Trade Union League were invited as guest speakers to address issues of workplace safety and compensation.

In its first fifteen years, Alumnae House expanded from a kindergarten that tended to the needs of young children, perceived as neglected in the city environment, to an institution dedicated to fostering democracy at the grassroots level. This mission was to stay with the organization for most of the twentieth century, even as this expansion necessitated a reorganization. The Hunter

College Alumnae Association could no longer afford to support Alumnae House with its own finances or available labor and would need funding and expertise from the broader community.

“Alumnae House is largely a preventative measure. It is a white spot, a bit of leaven in the heart of a great neighborhood. Everyone who comes into it is taught respect for property and for the rights of others, the value of labor and co-operation, the beauty of cleanliness and simplicity, the grace of courtesy and giving, and the honor of citizenship.”

~Annual Report of the Alumnae Settlement, 1909

1911-1928: Lenox Hill Settlement Association and the Professionalization of Social Work

On February 14, 1911, Lenox Hill Settlement Association was incorporated, with a Board of Directors recruited from the affluent neighborhoods of Park Avenue and its environs. The Normal College Alumnae Association would continue to control a significant number of board seats. Alumnae House was formally renamed the Lenox Hill House, as it “properly belonged to its neighborhood and be supported in great measure by those more fortunately situated in its environment.”¹² Although donors with last names such as Astor, Pierrepont, Pratt and Roosevelt from the west side of Lexington Avenue would provide substantial funding and leadership on programming, the neighborhood residents from east of Lexington could not be matched for their public-spiritedness: in 1912, locals raised \$3,000 for maintenance and repairs to “their” building.¹³



Figure 9: Lenox Hill Settlement Association, incorporated in 1911

¹² Annual Report for 1911.

¹³ Annual Report for 1912, p. 8. Average wages for workers in this area was on the order of \$4.50/week.

The early decades of the twentieth century, marked by industrialization and urbanization, saw an increase in the number of white-collar professional jobs,¹⁴ and Lenox Hill House was no different. Over time, head workers and resident workers would come from the new programs in social work being founded at various universities, rather than having been trained as educators, as were the first generation of Lenox Hill Settlement Association staff. Rosalie Manning became Resident Director in 1912. The work pursued in the period 1910 to 1930 reflects broader social concerns over the problems of urban living. Parents—and especially mothers—worked long hours at the neighborhood’s cigar factories, leaving young children unsupervised. Immigrant parents did not know the language and customs of the United States and, thus, lost influence over their teenage children. Overcrowding and lack of adequate affordable housing caused families to live in squalid conditions unfavorable for both physical and moral health. Finally, in a multi-ethnic community such as Yorkville, with its Jewish, German, Bohemian, Irish and Italian populations, hostility and distrust might fester.¹⁵

The 1910s saw the establishment of three of the organization’s landmark programs, which would set the pattern for the type of work pursued for decades to come: the Vocational Work Program for Adolescents (1914-1916); the Lenox Hill Tenants’ Association (founded 1917); and the establishment of the first Well Baby Clinic at Lenox Hill House (1919). Day programs still included the kindergarten and after-school day care. Programs for older children and adults began after 7:30 p.m. The weekly program for 1911 is reproduced in Appendix A.



Figure 10: Well Baby Clinic

Child labor was a particular concern for reformers in the early twentieth century, and many compulsory school attendance regulations were aimed to keep children out of the workforce for as long as possible. Developmentally speaking, staff felt it would have been more appropriate for children up to age fourteen to have been included in the “Brownies” classes (age 8-12), but because so many children were going to work by that age, it seemed more feasible to include them in the activities for teenagers that began later in the evening.

¹⁴ See Robert Wiebe’s classic study of the Progressive Era, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (Macmillan, 1967); Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (HarperCollins, 2009).

¹⁵ Overview of population from “Report of the Vocational Work of Lenox Hill Settlement,” Conducted at the Lenox Hill Settlement and financed by the Auxiliary of the Settlement, 1914-1916, Collection files box 22, folder 8.

Teens going to work at young ages presented another problem: often these young men and women entered the workforce with no skills and little training. Local law required that boys between the ages of fourteen and sixteen must either have been enrolled in school or have had full-time employment. Leaving school without a high school diploma was the norm. Only about 14 percent of Americans nationwide between the ages of 14 and 17 were enrolled in high school and only 18 percent of the total population over age 25 had a high school diploma.¹⁶ A 1914 survey of school graduates in Yorkville indicated that young men who left school with an eighth-grade education were prone to change jobs frequently in their first year in the work force and were unlikely to receive promotions. The more frequently they changed jobs, the longer the periods between employment, until many such young men could not find work at all. Frustrated with their circumstances, many became “loafers” in the



Figure 11: Boys cleanup squad

neighborhood, and prone to commit petty crimes. The Lenox Hill Vocational Assistance Program, begun in March 1916, attempted, at first, to provide career advice to children in the crucial 14-18 age range, but quickly converted to serving as an employment service. It received so many inquiries in its first six months of operation that the organization found it necessary to install a second telephone line specifically for the Vocational Program’s use.

The Program registered 952 young adults between the ages of 14 and 21 in the three-month period of March to June 1916: 645 boys and 307 girls. The service kept track of statistics on placements by gender, age, nationality and the type of industry in which the clients found employment. Ultimately the work of vocational guidance for students was turned over to the Attendance Bureau for the thirteenth school district, but the statistics compiled by Lenox Hill Settlement staff proved useful in determining new directions for policy advisement and settlement house programs. The committee concluded, first, that there were so few worthwhile opportunities for children ages 14-16 in the workforce that either the period of compulsory schooling should be extended or that a model that

¹⁶ *Report of the Vocational Work of Lenox Hill Settlement, 1914-1916*, p. 3, Collection files box 22 folder 8. National Statistics are from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, “The Life of American Workers in 1915,” (Feb. 2016), accessed online www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2016/article/the-life-of-american-workers-in-1915.htm

combined industrial and academic training should be promoted. They also concluded that “the thing we call character—industry, the ability to work with others, good habits—are more important for advancement than special abilities.”¹⁷ Programs that instilled these values would be the best avenue of pursuit for the schools and community service organizations. Statistics indicated that a large percentage of youth in the area went into office work, dress making and a few skilled trades (printing, electricity and jewelry making). Classes in typewriting, which had been discontinued at the organization around 1902, were put back on the program in 1916.¹⁸

1916 was also significant as the year that Lenox Hill Settlement Association moved from its original space on 72nd Street into a new building at 511 East 69th Street. The East 69th Street location opened to such crowds and fanfare that local police had to be asked to assist with crowd control. The new location was designed to provide ample space to provide the growing number of social work and social programming being put on by the organization, much of it with an eye to entice adult men and teenagers away from the saloons and dance halls which permeated the East Side. The new building boasted a 7,000 square foot playground, living space for twelve resident workers, club meeting space, a lounge, a

kindergarten that opened directly onto the rooftop garden, a boy’s workshop, a men’s pool room, a model apartment for teaching domestic science and a gymnasium with a stage that allowed it to double as an auditorium.¹⁹

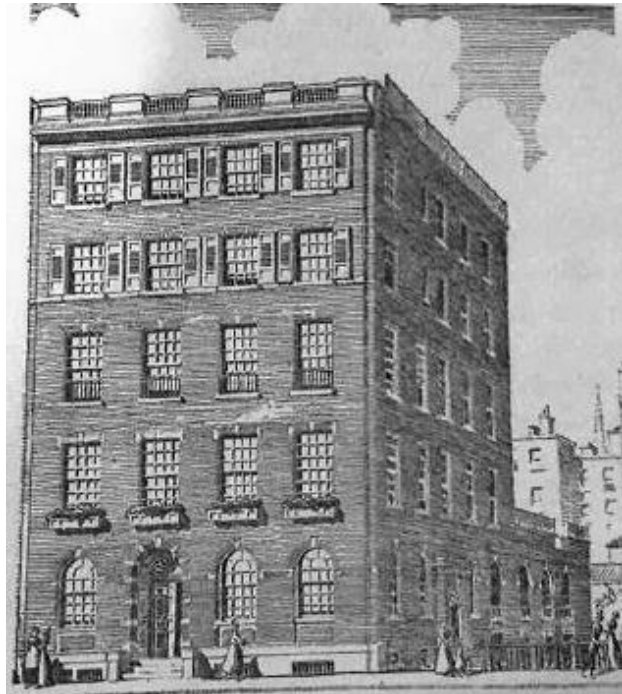


Figure 12: Lenox Hill Settlement Association at 511 East 69th Street, 1916-1928

¹⁷ *Report of the Vocational Work*, 6.

¹⁸ Annual Report for 1916, p. 7.

¹⁹ Annual Report for 1916, p. 7-9. It was on this auditorium’s stage that the actor James Cagney (1899-1986) first appeared as a member of the Lenox Hill Players, under the direction of Burton James. Cagney recalled that his mother had sent all of her children to the Settlement House in order to keep them from trouble. His brother Harry was the one meant for the stage (their mother believing that drama lessons would improve his speaking skills, and intended for Harry to study medicine), while James became something of a part-time assistant, working at the switchboard and attending to the pool room. When Harry fell ill, however, James took his part in one of the plays he had been cast, although it would be sometime later that he would pursue acting in earnest. See James Cagney, *Cagney by Cagney*, p. 25, photocopy in Collection files box 21 folder 10.



Figure 13: Kindergarten children on the rooftop at 511 East 69th Street, 1916

With the new building came new services: a full-time nurse was hired in 1916 whose task it was to give health exams to all children and club members who used Lenox Hill Settlement programs. In light of the prevalence of disease (1916 also saw a polio outbreak in the area) and the large number of neighbors using the facilities, this was likely a measure both to promote the general health of the neighborhood and to preserve the House from becoming the locus of disease outbreaks. This nurse was augmented with the formal organization of the Hygiene Committee of the Board of Directors in 1922, which was able to raise funds to provide a doctor, regular clinic visits for members and home visits to members' families to inspect their living conditions. The Hygiene Committee provided hospital escort services to aid members in getting the care they needed and in communicating with doctors, nurses, and administrators.²⁰



Figure 14: Health exams

²⁰ "Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association: Its History and Work," Nov. 1928, Collection files box 22 folder 4.

The grouping of so many nationalities in one area of the city—including especially Bohemians, Italians, Hungarians, and Russians—was some cause for concern for both settlement workers and the city government with America’s official entry into World War I in 1917. Italy and Russia were on one side of that conflict, and Austria-Hungary—which included the homelands of Bohemian immigrants—was on the other. In an effort to foster good will and increase the ties of these immigrant populations to the United States, the New York City Mayor’s Committee on Aliens requested Lenox Hill Settlement Association to host English Language classes throughout the summer, as night classes for adult learners of English were typically only held during the school year. “America” nights held at the House, where patriotic songs and speeches were performed, drew such large crowds that the police would order them to disperse, much to the consternation of staff, who felt that this sent the wrong message to recently-arrived immigrants who came to participate in these activities. As anti-immigrant fervor hit its peak in the years immediately after the War, the staff defended their neighbors, asserting “we consider these foreigners to be one of America’s greatest assets and that, given a fair chance and a helping hand, they will rank among our best citizens.”²¹

Indeed, one of the most common allegations lobbied against new immigrants during the Red Scare (1919-1921) was that new immigrants entered the country to spread, sometimes through violence, the ideas of socialism and anarchy. Fear stirred up by a series of bombings that targeted prominent American families was a motivating factor for the passage of the 1921 Emergency Quota Act and 1924 National Origins Act, which put strict restrictions on immigration. Although these pieces of legislation were intended by some to stymie the spread of radical ideas, Board and staff at Lenox Hill Settlement Association had other ideas for how radicalism might be checked. Access to affordable, adequate housing, they believed, would lessen the appeal of socialism.²²

Between 1900 and 1930, the population of New York City doubled from almost 3.5 million people to just under 7 million residents.²³ The difficulty of housing a booming population was compounded by the housing crisis brought on by World War I: limited access to capital and rising construction costs brought new housing construction in the five boroughs to a standstill. The vacancy

²¹ From the Head Worker’s Report, Annual Report for 1917, p. 7; quote is from Annual Report for 1919, p. 8. Opponents of unregulated immigration referred to unwanted groups as unassimilable. These activities were provided to imbue patriotism among new immigrants – and thus, proved their ability to become Americans. See Mike Wallace, *Greater Gotham: A History of New York City from 1898-1919* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2017), 951-957.

²² For the broader history of immigration restrictions, see Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004).

²³ U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1999*, No. 1415: “Population of the Largest 75 Cities: 1900 to 1996” accessed online www.census.gov/prod/99pubs/99statab/sec31.pdf.

rate fell to 0.3 percent, and rents increased at an astonishing rate. In the words of one historian, the city was on “the verge of civil disorder.” Across the city, tenants from all social classes brought lawsuits against landlords and petitioned the New York State Assembly to enact legislation to regulate rent rates. In 1920, legislators responded with the emergency rent laws, which governed rent rates and placed restrictions on evictions.²⁴ In Yorkville, the Lenox Hill Settlement Association sought solutions to the “rent wars,” as they came to be called.

The Lenox Hill Tenants’ Association was first organized in 1917 and was formally incorporated in 1920. Its founding mission was dedicated to cooperation between tenant and landlord, as evidenced by its Constitution:

“To better the living conditions of its members through co-operation with the owners and agents of their houses and with competent city authorities, to study the neighborhood conditions with a view to improve the housing situation among its members, to promote good feeling among all interested parties, to adjust differences in a friendly and neighborly spirit, to secure a hearty co-operation of all concerned parties toward a better, cleaner and healthier neighborhood, and to arrange for meetings, lectures, social affairs, and discussions, which will help to bring about the realization of these purposes.”²⁵

Over 30,000 individuals attended meetings between September of 1919 and the fall of 1920. The Tenants’ Association hired inspectors to investigate the conditions of housing in the Lenox Hill area and to find vacant apartments to which clients might be referred. Vacancies, however, were seldom located. In the course of one such investigation, it was discovered that a fire at 330 East 63rd Street had damaged the living quarters of twenty families, several of whom were still residing in the burned-out residence with no heat or running water, as they could find no other apartments for rent. A family of thirteen was living in three small rooms that had been spared much damage.²⁶ An open letter to the State Assembly read as follows:

“Any effort on the part of the real estate interests to conceal these dangerous conditions, the Lenox Hill Tenants’ Association regards as anti-social, and should the rent laws be repealed, the Lenox Hill Tenants’ Association believes that rioting will be the inevitable result, to say nothing of the hardship imposed on the people least able to bear it.”²⁷

²⁴ Robert M. Fogelson, *The Great Rent Wars: New York, 1917-1929* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 100-116. Quote is from Fogelson, p. 106.

²⁵ Constitution of the Lenox Hill Tenants’ Association, Article II, Collection files box 62 f 4.

²⁶ Lenox Hill Tenants’ Association, Open Letter to the State Assembly, 1920, Collection files, box 62 folder 4.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 1.

Critics of the rent laws affirmed that they were akin to socialism and represented government over-reach with respect to the fair market. Staff, however, argued that protection of tenants' rights and moderate interventions to ensure access to affordable housing was the surest way to head off political agitators.

"Our experience in this Settlement leads us to believe that the gross injustice toward these poor tenants contributes, more than anything else, to Red anarchy."

~1919 Annual Report, Lenox Hill Settlement Association²⁸

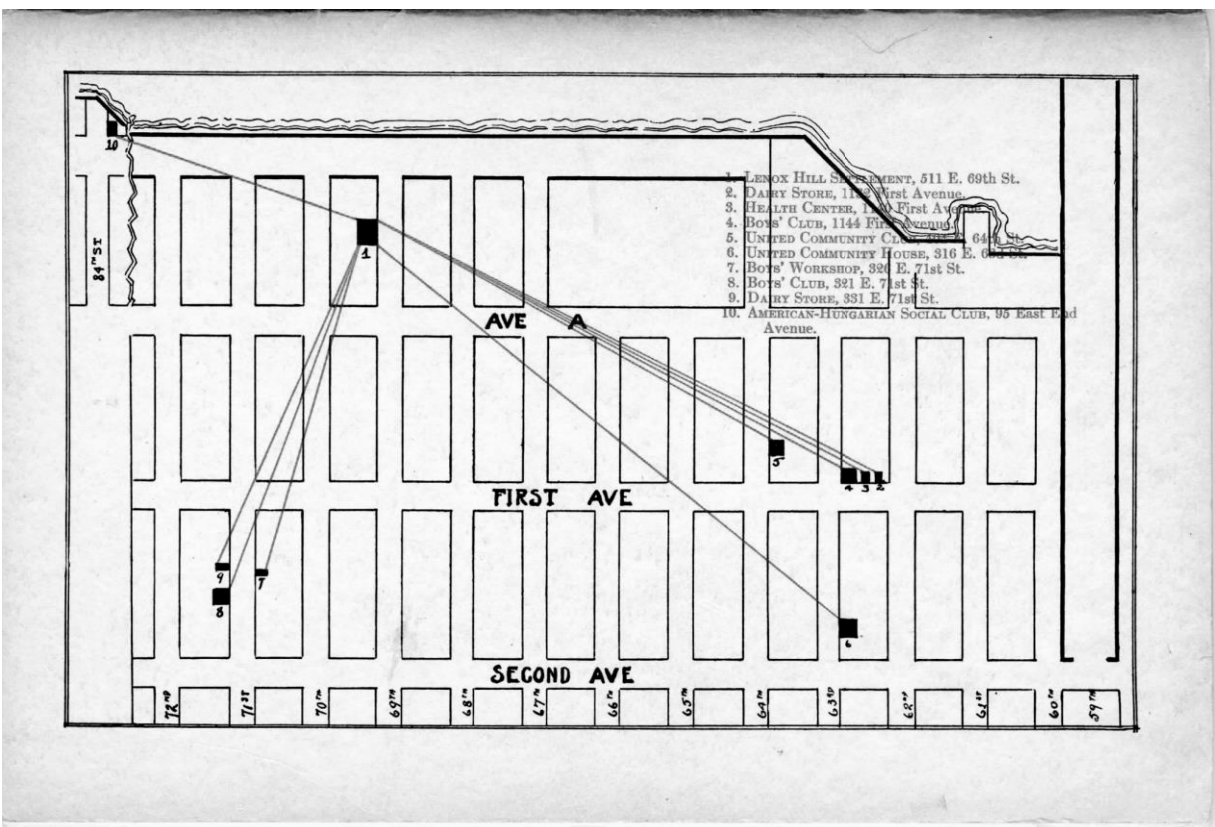


Figure 15: Map of Lenox Hill Settlement and its branches, Annual Report, 1919

Lenox Hill Settlement also extended its physical plant in these years. A number of storefronts and smaller meeting spaces were rented or purchased to serve as club houses for men and boys to serve as alternatives to the saloons and pool halls in which working class men so frequently congregated. In 1919, with fundraising assistance from the Italian Men's Club, Lenox Hill Settlement purchased outright

²⁸ Quoted by Lillian Robbins, "Democracy Means Everybody," 63rd Annual Meeting of Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, 1959, p. 4, Collection files box 15 folder 5.



Figure 16: Lenox Hill Settlement Boys Club, opened in 1918

a “notorious saloon, dance hall, and rooming house” and converted the facility into the United Community House. Community House initially included a range of programming similar to that of Lenox Hill House’s, with a kindergarten, Opera Chorus, social clubs for adults and rental space for weddings and festivals for the Italian community in the area. Within a very short time, Community House—just like Lenox Hill House—was oversubscribed. As the need for kindergarten and all-day care

was seen as most important, in 1927 Community House was converted to Children’s House for the exclusive benefit for children under the age of 13. It continued to house a kindergarten, free or reduced cost lunches to local school children and after-school programming until its closure in 1951.²⁹ To reflect the organization’s expanding footprint in the neighborhood, in 1922, Lenox Hill Settlement Association was reincorporated as Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association.

Since its founding, an important piece of the summer programming had been to send children from the crowded Yorkville streets out into the country for a period of several weeks, or for an afternoon picnic at the very least. Through the early 1900s, individual children were invited to be guests on the farms and country estates of various families connected with Hunter College. After the incorporation of Lenox Hill Settlement in 1911,



Figure 17: Playground at United Community House

however, staff preferred to coordinate large groups of children to take to camping grounds outside the city. In 1924, Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Field, of department store fame, donated a parcel of land on their Long Island estate near Eatons Neck to be used as a permanent summer camp. The camp came with a kitchen, bathing facilities and bunks to accommodate forty boys. There was a beach and swimming area,

²⁹ “Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association: Its History and Work,” p. 7-9, Collection files box 22 folder 4.

baseball field, handball courts and wooded areas for hiking. In its first season, it accommodated 53 boys and over 600 visitors, some of whom were parents visiting their sons, others were social workers and philanthropists interested in the workings of the camp.³⁰



Figure 18: Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association bus, 1926

The most visible change was the relocation of Lenox Hill House to its present building. In 1927, the New York Hospital purchased the East 69th Street facility, and the profits from this sale—combined with the proceeds of a ten-day strenuous campaign for funds—went to purchase a new site on East 70th Street. The new building, which occupied two lots, boasted more square footage and larger rooms than the prior property. Amenities listed in the 1928 Annual Report included: the swimming pool, separate boys' and girls' gymnasiums, a theater, play roofs, kitchen, offices, clinic facilities, residents' quarters and club rooms for each age group of boys and girls, as well as those for the Bohemian, Hungarian and Italian clubs. The new building was opened with much fanfare; *The Yorkville Observer* reported that

³⁰ "Camp Marshall Field," in Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association Annual Report for 1924, p. 42-43. The girls had a separate camp at Sharon, Connecticut, until 1928, at which point it was closed due to its maintenance costs far exceeding the budget.

“social barriers were discarded when the blue bloods of the ‘400’ rubbed elbows with those of all other strata of society at the auspicious opening of the new \$800,000 Lenox Hill House.” Wrestling and boxing tournaments were part of the opening festivities, with world heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey refereeing one of the bouts.³¹



Figure 19: Late 1920s drawing of 331 East 70th Street

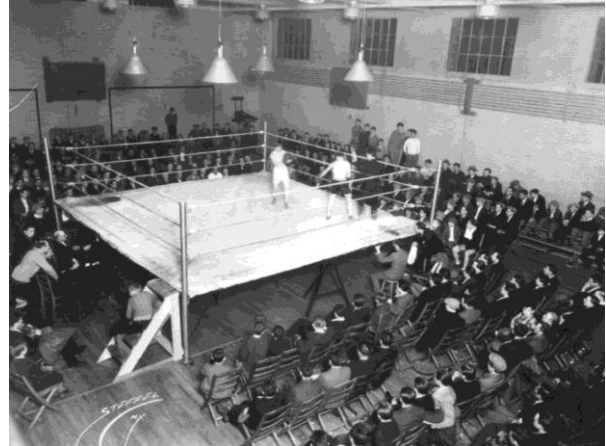


Figure 20: Boxing match in gymnasium

Finding creative solutions to meet the housing needs of the neighborhood was also of importance and the Board sought other properties to acquire that could be administered as model tenement housing at affordable prices. On October 8, 1929, the Board approved purchase of 333-335 East 70th Street (accruing \$160,000 in debt)³² to provide additional space for activities as well as to be refurbished as model tenements. This project was almost immediately halted by the Stock Market Crash on October 24, which triggered the Great Depression. Real estate values nation-wide plummeted, and in New York, charitable giving came almost to a standstill. It would take government intervention to ensure the continuation of social welfare programs until the advent of World War II.

“It is not charity to contribute to the support of such work as we do. It is enlightened self-interest. Happier and more contented people mean better and cleaner homes, streets, cities; a more intelligent and healthier people means better and more stable government.”³³

³¹ “Bluebloods at Lenox Hill,” *Yorkville Observer*, 6 Nov 1928, Collection files box 88 folder 1.

³² Harvey D. Gibson’s report on Lenox Hill Settlement Association’s debt, 1935, box 12 folder 16.

³³ From the “Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association: Its History and Work,” p. 25.

The Great Depression, War and Hard Times for Social Work

The organization was in danger of closing in the early 1930s. In 1931, the Board formed a new corporation, the Lenox Hill Housing Corporation, for the purpose of taking on the cost, debt and management of the 333 and 335 East 70th Street properties; at that time, the buildings were worth about half of what the organization had paid for them. The staff took advantage of several New Deal programs to fill in the budgetary shortfall caused by the lack of private donations during the Depression, although continuing many of the usual activities—especially entertainments such as dramatic performances and film screenings—caused controversy between Rosalie Manning and the Board of Directors. Manning insisted that these types of activities were necessary to maintain morale among the large number of unemployed individuals on relief in the neighborhood. Throughout the Depression, Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association continued to offer after-school programs and free or low-cost lunches for school children, health clinic services and cultural programming.

A number of temporary staff came through the Emergency Work Bureau, part of the 1933 Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), part of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. FERA, and its successor program, the Works Progress Administration (WPA, enacted in 1935), were targeted to relieve the sufferings of the nation's 11 million unemployed; WPA would employ 8.5 million of these individuals by 1936. FERA and WPA were both born of the idea that



Figure 21: 1930 Children's House Council

direct payments to the unemployed—known derisively as the “dole”—were demoralizing to recipients. Instead, useful work was to be created for these individuals, even though the cost to the federal government was far greater. The WPA constructed public libraries, post offices, municipal buildings, roads and bridges, and funded artistic and cultural programming through the Federal Writers' and Federal Art Projects.³⁴ The WPA was unique in that its architects recognized that not only blue-collar workers were in need of assistance but that white collar professionals were also out of work.

Federal programs paid salaries for these workers but emergency assistance to clients was supplied by emergency funds provided by the Prosser Fund and by Mrs. E. Marshall Field (totaling about

³⁴ See William E. Leuchtenburg's landmark text, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963).

\$180,000 in 1931). Sometimes, the line between staff and clients became blurred by the circumstances of the Depression. One female worker who had been placed by the Emergency Work Bureau, after her second day on the job, confessed to the executive staff that she had not eaten for days before receiving the position. She would not receive her first paycheck for another week; she asked for and was granted a small sum to provide for herself until she received her salary. This assistance notwithstanding, by January of 1933, the Association was \$70,000 in debt. Through the work of Board President Harvey D. Gibson, who was also involved with a number of charitable societies, Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association was able to secure maintenance funds through the Civil Works Administration (another New Deal program) and to maintain free milk distribution and the hygiene services through the Milbank Fund. The Board also, without the staff's knowledge, transferred all of the regular staff onto the payroll of the Emergency Work Bureau; "we did not want them to feel that they were part of the army of unemployed," Gibson asserted, although these funds were exhausted by the end of 1934.³⁵



Figure 22: Lobby of 331 East 70th Street

Harvey D. Gibson had become both President and Treasurer of the Board of Directors in 1928 and played a key role in fundraising and negotiating with government agencies and private charities to obtain the funds necessary to cover budgetary shortfalls. However, in October 1936, Gibson resigned abruptly to chair the finance committee for the 1939 World's Fair. Gibson's sudden resignation put an end to several plans—including a proposed consolidation of several services duplicated by

Lenox Hill Settlement and the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor (AICP). The AICP had been given office space on the third floor of Lenox Hill House and was then conducting family welfare services for the entire district. AICP would continue to administer welfare programs well into the 1940s, but Gibson's vision of combining funding and governance of the two organizations would not be carried out.

As a result of Gibson's resignation, the Board initiated a study into whether the organization was still viable or whether Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association should be closed. Rosalie Manning was accused of mismanaging the organization's funds—allegations which seem to have been based more in

³⁵ Board meeting minutes for 1934 and 1935, Collection files, box 12, folders 16 and 17; Gibson quoted in meeting minutes for January 23, 1935, in box 12 folder 18.

personal disagreements than in facts—and was asked to resign.³⁶ But in August 1937, an anonymous group—who contacted the Board through Mr. and Mrs. Kermit Roosevelt—pledged \$50,000 to cover the budgetary shortfall if Manning was kept on and several named Board members (all of whom were known to clash with Manning) stepped down. The Board accepted the agreement. Manning decided to resign in May 1938, to take effect January 1, 1939, for personal reasons, and continued to work on behalf of housing needs in the neighborhood for several years thereafter.³⁷

In the face of the Depression, Manning and her staff felt many of the services more important to the people than ever. Fundraising letters sent to private donors had, in many cases, been rebuffed: one potential donor wrote that he was more interested in seeing people fed than in seeing them swim.³⁸ In response to such criticisms, Manning repeated to the Board the anecdotes of weary, downtrodden people waiting in line around the House all day for relief payments or for appointments with social workers, and how plays and entertainments put on at the House had boosted the spirits of such as these, providing distractions from their troubles. Police officers were invited to speak to the Board in support of the work the organization did to benefit the community. Prior to the opening of the pool, for example, idle boys and young



Figure 23: 1936 Play roof

men had congregated on the banks of the East River to swim, which fostered the formation of street gangs and contributed to turf wars. With the House they were given new, supervised places to congregate, and “their energies [could] be diverted to organized athletics.” There was, as a result, comparatively little juvenile crime in the district.³⁹ Volunteer aid also made possible the first legal aid clinic, The Lenox Hill Law Association, which was organized in 1933 by Manning with the assistance of

³⁶ Manning to the Board of Directors, 30 Dec. 1936, Collection files box 12 folder 19.

³⁷ Board meeting minutes, May 18, 1938, Collection files box 13 folder 2.

³⁸ Meeting minutes for Dec. 15, 1931, p 3, box 12 folder 14.

³⁹ Board meeting minutes for February 9, 1932, Collection files box 12, folder 15.

five young attorneys. These professionals offered pro bono services to the poor of Yorkville “regardless of creed, color, nationality, or political affiliation,” in criminal and civil cases.⁴⁰

Table 2: Use Statistics, October 1933-September 1934

Total Attendance (Lenox Hill House, Children’s House and Playground)	390,551
Lenox Hill House Attendance:	301,872
Average Daily	1,069
Highest Daily (recorded in February)	1,295
Lowest Daily (recorded in July)	761
Highest Single Day	2,156



Figure 24: Children’s House outdoor swimming pool

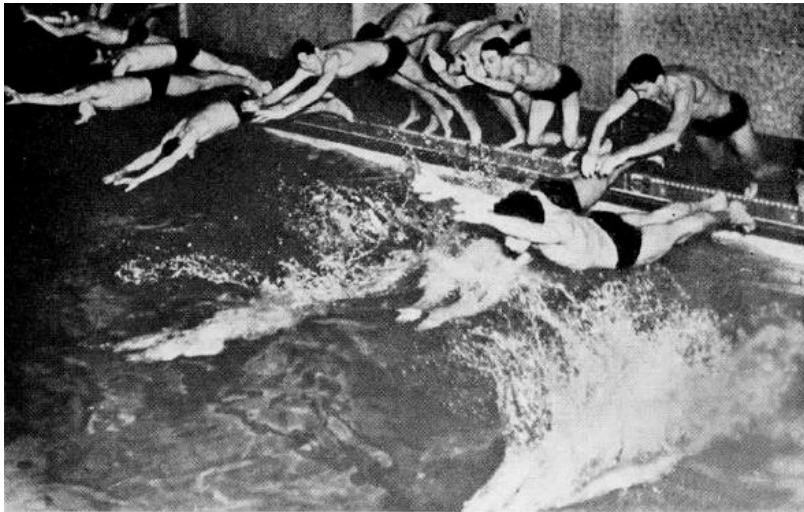


Figure 25: Indoor pool at 331 East 70th Street

⁴⁰ Board meeting minutes for May 22, 1934, Collection files box 12 folder 17.

Lenox Hill House During World War II

“To you and to all of those who in some way contributed their money, labor or time I would like to say, ‘Thanks a million.’ We here in the Armed Forces know, with a people as generous and thoughtful as you to back us up, that we must win.”

~ Letter from unnamed soldier and member of Lenox Hill House, 1943⁴¹

During World War II, several of the same accusations of frivolity were made concerning the activities of the organization. In November of 1941, Board Member Mrs. Walter B. Devereux reported that: “in asking for contributions she had encountered criticism that such services as ours were merely providing good times for people in the neighborhood while the war relief charities were enabling many people to live. Their work is essential whereas ours may be regarded as a luxury.”⁴² To these criticisms, staff responded that the House provided comfort and useful work to those whose loved ones were overseas. Of 1,216 people who lived on 70th Street between First and Second Avenues, 300 had gone to war.⁴³ Several of the social clubs would continue throughout the war, and many turned their attention to war work. The mothers’ clubs took up knitting and sewing for war refugees and for the troops. One of the teenage boys’ social clubs had, on their own initiative, taken up a collection to aid refugee children.

As a major population center and center for war production and troop concentration, New Yorkers lived under a constant threat of attack for the duration of the war. Activities that helped the neighborhood to cope with these circumstances were in high demand. First aid classes were offered for adults and teenagers, as was training in fire suppression and coping with gas attacks. Enrollment in

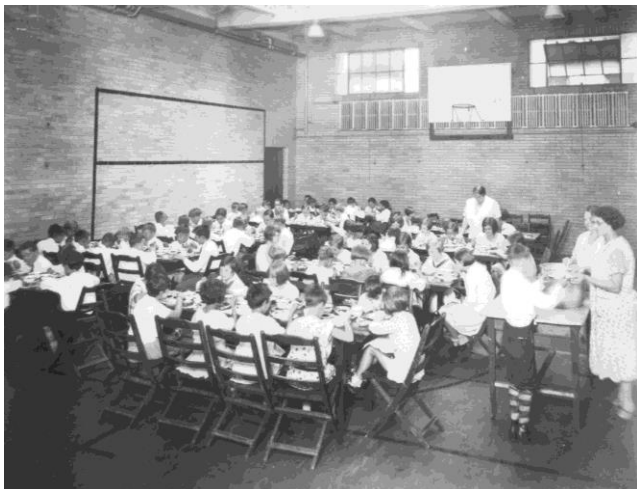


Figure 26: Children participated in all-day care, which included meals in the gymnasium

citizenship classes increased, as immigrants from the neighborhood wished to show their support for the United States. James Boswell, who was Executive Director during the first half of the war, was Senior Air Warden for the neighborhood. The House was a designated emergency shelter equipped to accommodate 500 adults and children. Continued work on behalf of children, moreover, was especially important, as the number of mothers working in war production

⁴¹ Quote included in William S. Kilborne’s President’s Message, 1943 Lenox Hill Digest, Files box 4 folder 4.

⁴² Board meeting minutes for Nov. 18, 1941, box 13 f 5.

⁴³ 1943 Lenox Hill Digest, Collection files box 4 folder 4.

and fathers absent in service left few adults at home during the day to care for children. All-day care was provided year-round at the behest of the Mayor's Committee for Care of Children in Wartime; about 200 children participated in afternoon and evening activities.

Lenox Hill House's hygiene service worked with area boys who failed the physical examination for the draft to rehabilitate them, and many of those boys were subsequently accepted into the armed services. The teenage girl groups formed correspondence clubs to write letters and send care packages to men in service from the neighborhood, and by the end of the war, there were over 390 names on Lenox Hill House's "Roll of Honor," which listed those young men who were members of the House in the Armed Services. Lenox Hill House hosted U.S.O. dances on Saturday nights to entertain troops stationed in New York; men stationed locally from all over the United States, and foreign allies as well, were allowed to participate in classes and other offerings. A group of British sailors had made a point of visiting the pottery classes whenever they were in port to make souvenirs for their loved ones back in England.⁴⁴

Providing distractions from the hardships of war was a core activity, and one that had a more serious side as well. By the fall of 1944, the organization also offered support groups for discharged service men in cooperation with the Payne Whitney Psychiatric Clinic of New York Hospital. Veterans in the neighborhood organized their own dramatics group, which was considered a therapeutic exercise. Above all, the staff learned that listening to the members who had been through war was the best way to assess their needs. "Don't tell us what to do," one young man insisted while he was home on leave, "and don't fuss about us—just have the old program going on like we used to have."⁴⁵ Those returning

from war, especially, seemed to crave normalcy.



Figure 27: During the war, Lenox Hill Neighborhood House continued its service to members of the community, who participated in a variety of activities to support the war effort. Here, service men and local women posed next to a poster for one of several entertainments hosted in conjunction with the USO to benefit those in the service.

⁴⁴ Annual Report for 1944, p. 9.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

The 1950s Through the 1970s: Coping with the Post-War World

“Czechs, Irish, Poles, Germans, Slovaks, British, Hungarians, Italians, Greeks; nationalities far too numerous to mention live side by side in our neighborhood with old American families. They have come here in their search for a new way of life, for economic opportunity, for political refuge, for freedom of religious observance.”⁴⁶

Up until the 1920s, the multi-ethnic populations of neighborhoods such as Yorkville were continually augmented by new immigrants from Europe. With the passage of immigration restrictions, the neighborhood population began to decline. In 1920, the population density of the census tracts between Third Avenue and the East River from 68th to 86th Streets averaged around 350 people per acre. By 1930, the population density of these same census tracts averaged about 250 people per acre. Although the war boom temporarily brought more people to the city, families with the means to do so would move out to the suburbs after the war was over, drawn by developments that offered single-family housing at affordable prices.⁴⁷

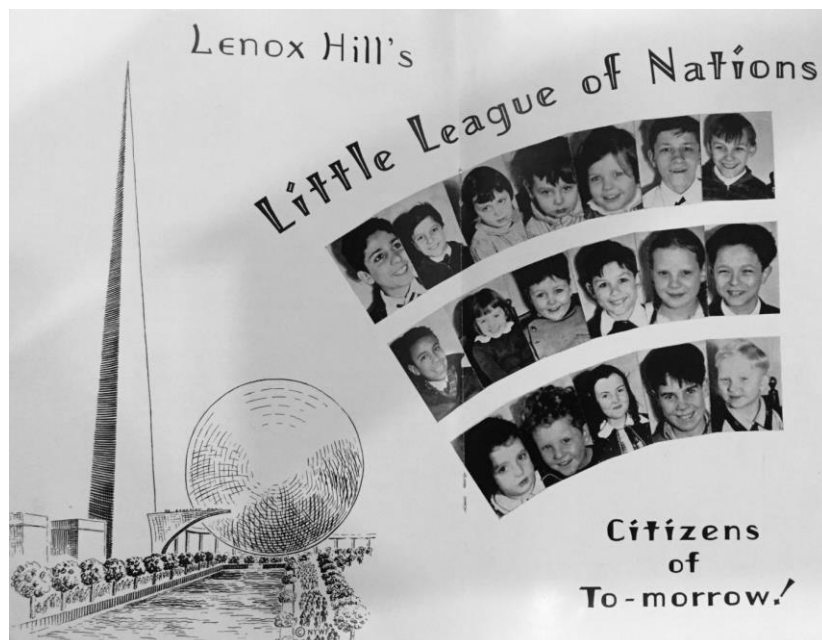


Figure 28: From Accent on Youth, the Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association Annual Report for 1938, p. 4-5. The Forward to the report noted that people of 25 different nationalities made use of the facilities daily, “thus growing to know and appreciate one another.”

Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association—which had always had a keen sense of Yorkville as an international neighborhood—embraced the liberal international order championed by the United States and western nations during the Cold War. In a move that made the 1938 notion of the Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association as a “Little League of Nations” (see Figure 28, above) seem almost prescient,

⁴⁶ Quote included in William S. Kilborne’s President’s Message, 1943 Lenox Hill Digest, files, box 4 folder 4.

⁴⁷ See Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

groundbreaking began in September 1948 on the site of the complex for the new United Nations, just south of the Lenox Hill neighborhood in Turtle Bay. The site was envisioned by urban planners as a model of sleek modern design that would displace the nuisance of slaughterhouses that once stood on the East River between First Avenue, 42nd, and 48th Streets, and would provide a headquarters for the world to meet. What city planners and U.N. officials—including Robert Moses, Le Corbusier, Mayors Fiorello La Guardia and William O’Dwyer, and U.N. Secretary General Trygve Lie—perhaps did not understand when the site was chosen, was that not far away, Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association was already engaged in setting the tone for community development on the world stage.⁴⁸

Between 1950 and 1960, the House played host to a number of visiting scholars and activists who were keen to understand how the settlement house operated. In 1949, a social worker from France arrived for a period of one year to work with the Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association staff and to study the organization’s methods of combatting juvenile delinquency. Within two years, there was a waiting list for residency, encompassing a swath of interested parties from college students to foreign



Figure 29: Community members celebrating their new citizenship

scholars; residents in 1951 included three German social workers, the secretary of the Dutch Federation of Settlements, two Italian scientists, and workers from Czechoslovakia, France and India. Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association was asked to entertain Queen Juliana of the Netherlands during her U.S. visit in 1952, as she had heard of the organization from the prior Dutch visitor. Asha Devi Aryanayakam, an Indian freedom fighter and associate of Mahatma Gandhi, also resided at Lenox Hill House in the summer of 1952 while she served as a delegate to the U.N. Social Commission. Aryanayakam inspired much commentary and admiration from Lenox Hill House members, especially from women with skills in weaving and embroidery, who were impressed by her hand-made saris. Lillian Robbins herself was invited to India in early 1953 to observe conditions and offer advice on community self-help in several villages. She spoke to the Board of Directors of the necessity of supporting development work in India as

⁴⁸ Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 33-69.

the only sure way to prevent that country from turning to communism.⁴⁹ The executive staff's awareness of the global links of their small neighborhood imbued many of the organization's activities during the Cold War era with a sense of purpose and urgency, and was shared as well by the children and club members at Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association. In November of 1947, instead of their annual Thanksgiving feast, the children's clubs had all voted to send their food (in the form of monetary donations) to feed the hungry in post-War Europe.⁵⁰

Attention to the global context was part of a broader shift in the provision of social services. Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association had made the transition from viewing clients as new immigrants to be "Americanized"—or taught how to conform with prevailing cultural expectations—to viewing clients as individuals whose rights and needs were to be respected and preserved. Robbins asked attendees of the Sixtieth Annual Meeting in 1954 the following questions:

"What is neighborhood work? Visiting your next-door neighbor with a listening ear? Asking the police to designate a Play Street? Preparing a family for referral to a hospital, a family service agency? Reporting a neglected child? Serving on a Neighborhood Council Committee?

Yes, it is all this—and much more. The Settlement is a sounding and a spring board, an interpreter of the conditions it fights, a translator from the status quo to a better destiny. It is not content with existing social mechanisms when these do not operate to improve the conditions of the community, to make an individual healthier, a happier person."⁵¹

By 1950, the population of Yorkville had stabilized, although it would not remain so for long. Ethnically, it remained a diverse neighborhood, with just over 60 percent of the population being considered native-born whites; 34 percent were foreign-born whites—predominantly German, Irish and Italian; approximately one percent of the Yorkville population were Puerto Rican, and one percent African American. Economically, the median income ranged from \$2,971 annually in the neighborhoods east of First Avenue to \$3,451 annually in the neighborhoods in the western edge of Yorkville, along

⁴⁹ Robbins address to the Board of Directors, Feb 1953 monthly meeting, Collection files box 14 folder 8; Lillian Robbins, "60th Annual Report of the Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association," presented at the Annual Meeting, 4 May 1954, p. 7, Collection files box 14 folder 9. According to Zipp, many non-white delegates to the United Nations in its early years had difficulty finding hotels and apartments to rent due to racial segregation in housing. This circumstance hints at another, more practical reason, that Aryanayakam chose to stay at Lenox Hill House: the staff was willing to house a person of color when other entities were not. The staff's welcome for Aryanayakam also stands as testimony to their commitment to racial equality and inclusion.

⁵⁰ Board meeting minutes for 16 Dec. 1947, p. 2.

⁵¹ Lillian Robbins, "60th Annual Report," p. 4.

Third Avenue between 68th and 86th Streets; these figures were significantly lower than the annual average income for New Yorkers of \$5,105, and somewhat below the national average of \$4,237.⁵²

Among the lower-income Yorkville residents, many lived in non-traditional households. Approximately 16 percent of married women had husbands who were not “in residence,” and up to 26 percent of young adults over age 14 were not living with family members. It was common, in some circumstances, for a childless aunt or neighbor woman to take in the older children of larger neighbor families, when they had the room. Lillian Robbins spoke frequently of the problem of over-crowding in tenement dwellings and its effects on young children. Many children were known to loiter on the steps of Lenox Hill House on Sunday mornings before opening hours, occasionally getting into fights and causing property damage because they had been “underfoot” at home and sent out at the earliest



Figure 30: 1950s summer camper

possible hour. There was young Tommy, a boy of thirteen (though staff had thought he was only seven or eight years old) who submitted his application for summer camp with a number of questions. What would they do for kids who did not have the required changes of clothes and pajamas? Would he be sleeping alone at camp? Could he go to bed whenever he was tired? Tommy, it became clear, shared a folding cot in his family’s kitchen with one or more siblings and was never able to go to sleep until the last household member had retired. As a result, he was often tired and performed poorly in school.⁵³ Although activities to combat childhood delinquency and programs to foster childhood development would also be core components of the organization’s work in the mid-twentieth century, housing was a primary concern.

⁵² Figures for Yorkville are from Community Council of Greater New York, “Population Characteristics and Social and Educational Services for Yorkville-Park Avenue Station,” March 1955, Collection files box 30 folder 11; national and NYC figures are from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Consumer Expenditure Survey: 1950,” p. 21-23, accessed online, www.bls.gov/opub/uscs/1950.pdf. These figures range from \$30,176.73 to \$51,851.97 in 2017 U.S. dollars.

⁵³ Robbins, “Investment in People,” Address at the 61st Annual meeting of the Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, 10 May 1955, p. 1, Collection files box 15 folder 1.

Tenants' Rights

During the 1950s, it seemed that the entire focus of Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association was on housing: issues of tenants' rights, evictions and the responsibility of developers to provide or assist evicted residents in finding housing in the area that they could afford. Compounding the problem of overcrowding was, in what may have been the first move towards gentrification of a New York neighborhood in the twentieth-century, a spike in the rate of the demolition of tenements in order to make way for luxury housing.⁵⁴ As part of Robert Moses's plan to redevelop New York into a modern, car-friendly city, the Third Avenue IRT line (an elevated or "El line") was taken out of service and demolished between 1950 and 1955.⁵⁵ With the destruction of the El, which had been a *de facto* boundary between the more affluent neighborhoods of Park Avenue and Fifth Avenue to the west and the immigrant and working-class neighborhoods to the east, it was as though Yorkville had been "opened up" to luxury development. Over the course of the 1950s to early 1970s, thousands of individuals were displaced; an estimate from 1964 indicates that over 50,000 residents had been displaced to create 20,000 units of luxury housing.⁵⁶

Pressure came from two sources. Landlords, observing the development of the first luxury high rises, found ways to evict or convince tenants to leave, so that their tenements could be demolished and sold to developers. On the other side, the expansion of hospitals along "Bedpan Alley" (First Avenue between 60th and 72nd streets) squeezed tenants out: institutions including The Hospital for Special Surgery, the New York Hospital and Memorial Sloan-Kettering owned a number of



Figure 31: Lenox Hill House and East 70th Street during the 1950s

buildings in the area. As non-profits, the hospitals could not offer their tenants the same protections as those offered to tenants who rented from private landlords, and tenants of individual or corporate

⁵⁴ Transcript of Celine Marcus interview, 1994, box 21 folder 10. There is some indication that Lenox Hill was the first neighborhood in New York to experience gentrification in the twentieth century.

⁵⁵ Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 897.

⁵⁶ From files on Yorkville and Swope Housing, box 23 folder 14.

landlords issued eviction notices that were vague or threatening, leaving many residents in doubt of their rights.⁵⁷

This situation was of critical importance to the organization, not only because it affected the lives of their clients, but because if so many people who relied on the services of Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association were relocated to other neighborhoods, the purpose of the House itself might become obsolete. The Board of Directors formed a Housing Committee in December 1953, in order to better study and provide solutions to the problem. A survey of twenty-five families facing eviction in June of 1955 found that every family except one had tried to find housing elsewhere in Yorkville to no avail, and thirteen of those families were eligible for public housing but only four of them had known to apply. “The vast majority of the families were so tied to the Yorkville community,” noted Housing Committee Chair R. Fulton Cutting, “some for realistic reasons such as proximity to work, medical care, dependent relatives, etc., and others because of more social and psychological reasons such as membership in a local church, familiarity with local store keepers” that most of them refused to accept that they would be evicted, nor could they face the prospect of uprooting and relocating. Finally, the situation was



Figure 32: Family activities

politically dangerous: one staff member commented that “families who had been politically conservative may be drawn toward splinter, lunatic fringe groups, who will capitalize on this situation.”⁵⁸ Intervention, therefore, was crucial to promote stability in the community. The Housing Committee set up and funded the Housing Department. It hosted meetings to educate neighbors on their rights as tenants; knocked on doors in buildings where demolition was slated to survey tenants on their needs; and provided assistance in finding new housing. The Housing Department also provided legal aid,

⁵⁷ Interview with Celine Marcus by Jim Moske, Jan. 1994, Collection files box 21 folder 10; Board meeting minutes for 17 Nov. 1953, box 14 folder 8.

⁵⁸ Housing Committee Report, June 1955, p. 3-4, Collection files box 15 folder 1.

especially to tenants whose landlords were “speculatively” evicting them, with the aim of then being able to sell a vacant property to a developer at a considerable profit.

Community organizing also became a major component of the Housing Department’s work. The swift demolition of tenement houses in the area during the 1960s left a number of vacant lots which “became eyesores, dumping grounds, and health hazards.” The Housing Department was successful in persuading the New York City Housing Authority to construct public housing in the area, and in 1963, York Hill—the first Mitchell Lama Housing in Manhattan—was dedicated.⁵⁹ In July of 1967, 108 families moved into the Rosalie Manning Apartments, developed with the sponsorship of Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association, as a middle-income housing development that would, it was hoped, help the neighborhood retain some of its socioeconomic diversity. By 1969, Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association had organized the Tenants Against Demolition, which evolved into the East Side Tenants Union. Both of these groups petitioned developers to preserve existing housing stock or to provide low and moderate rental apartments in new buildings.

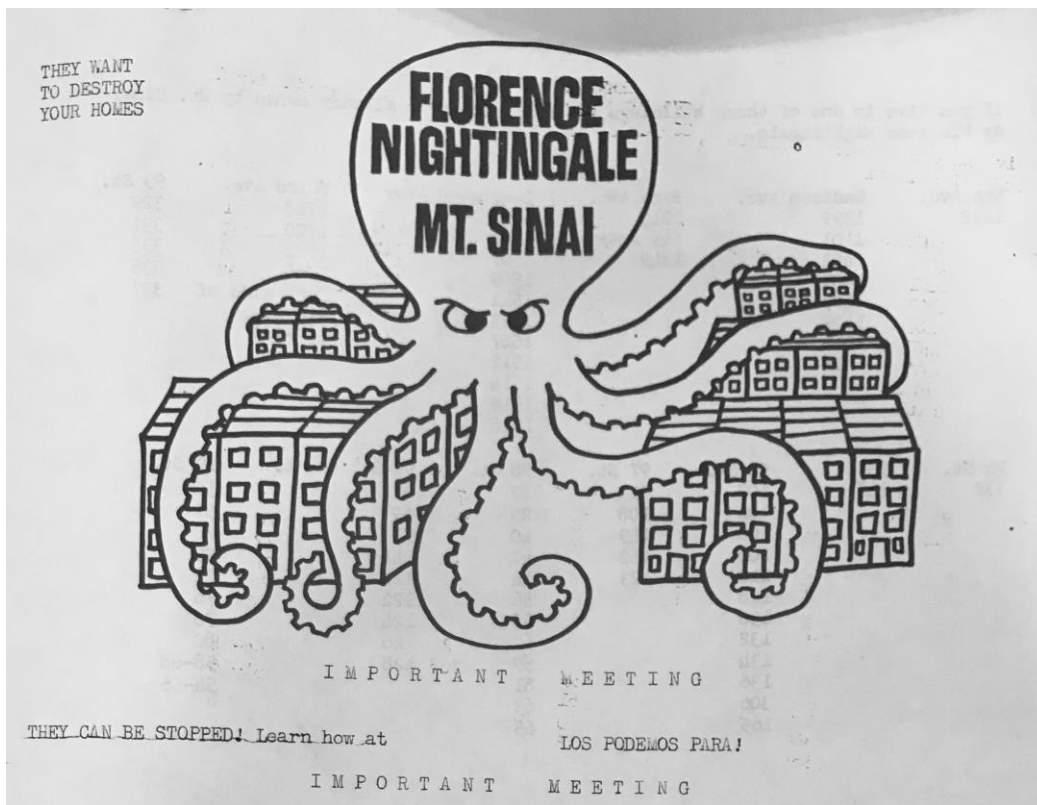


Figure 33: Image from a flier for the Upper East Side Tenants for Community Preservation, scheduled for April 15, 1971. The meeting was to inform tenants living in the neighborhoods surrounding Mount Sinai of their rights as tenants. [Source: Collection files box 61 folder 5]

⁵⁹ “Highlights of 80 Years,” Collection files box 1 folder 9. The New York State Limited-Profit Housing Corporations, or Mitchell-Lama, Law, allowed for the incorporation of cooperative housing projects. See Zipp, 334-339.

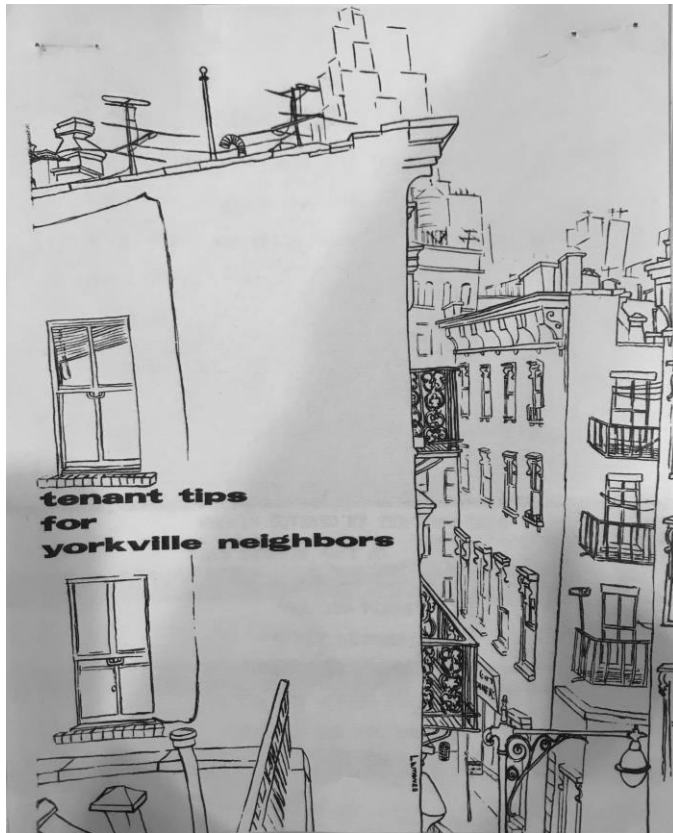


Figure 34: Cover of a mimeographed pamphlet produced by the Lenox Hill Housing Department for distribution throughout the neighborhood. The pamphlet included topics such as the rights and responsibilities of tenants, what to do if your landlord sent you a threatening letter, remodeling of older buildings, requirements for maintenance and upkeep of rental apartments, and rezoning of residential areas for office buildings. [Source: Collection files box 62 folder 9]

Juvenile Delinquency

Combatting juvenile delinquency was at the core of the organization's mission from its days as Alumnae Settlement. In the post-War era, many of the problems were familiar: drug use, drinking among adolescents and gang activity. In the 1950s, social workers at Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association focused on the necessity of social structure and positive influences in deterring delinquency. In late 1952, for example, a group of five young men who had been part of one of the local street gangs applied for membership at Lenox Hill House. Each of them had been detained by the police on more than one occasion and thought that involvement with the House would keep them out of trouble. From that point, the social worker for young men, Mr. Bailey, made a point of separating the gang members into different clubs, working especially with those "weaker members who were in the gang because they needed the support of gang structure." As a result, within a matter of weeks, a total of nine young men ages 14 to 15 had disassociated themselves from their gang entirely and affiliated instead with activities at Lenox Hill House.⁶⁰ In 1961, Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association initiated a summer work program for "problem" teenage boys, putting them to work on maintenance projects throughout the community.

⁶⁰ House Report from Victor Remer, Board of Director minutes, 27 Jan 1953, p. 2, Collection files box 14 folder 8.



Figure 35: Saturday Night dances for teenagers in the 1950s and 1960s were a continuation of earlier programs to provide supervised activities and socialization for young people.

Vandalism was the cause of some friction in the neighborhood: Lillian Robbins received a complaint letter from Oliver J. Neslage, Jr., of 330 E 70th Street (right across the street from Lenox Hill House) that alleged teenage boys were hanging out on the steps of the House after hours, drinking beer, throwing cans into the street, harassing women and evidently picking up and moving small foreign-made cars. Neslage suggested that Lenox Hill House fence off the area or install floodlights to deter such activities. Robbins's response was to school Neslage on his building's history:

"I believe that much of the hostility directed toward the tenants at 330, as well as those in other new buildings, is due to the resentment of the long-term residents of our neighborhood who have been evicted in order to make way for new housing which they need desperately but wherein the rents are beyond their reach. This fact does not excuse improper behavior; it may explain the basis for some of the antagonism expressed.

"The particular building in which you live is one which replaced five old tenements. This owner (not the present owner) refused to give these families an additional ten days in which to find apartments. He stated in court that he had to recover the property immediately in order to proceed with his plans to demolish and rebuild. We were able to arrange a stay of eviction for two weeks and helped most of the families to relocate. Then the buildings stood idle for about two years before they were sold, in violation of the law and creating a hazard in the neighborhood."⁶¹

⁶¹ Robbins letter to Neslage, August 1960, box 23 folder 6.

As voluntary participation in social activities declined among teenagers in the 1970s, Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association shifted its focus to interventions for at-risk youth. In 1972, the Julia Richman Mini-School began operating in the Lenox Hill House auditorium with 100 students. This alternative high school provided more focused attention to students at risk of dropping out or being expelled. Staff stepped in to provide assistance to students in securing welfare benefits, food stamps and part-time employment. Students were granted access to the woodshop and gymnasium.⁶²



Figure 36: After school chess club

Early Childhood Education and Project Head Start

In the mid-1960s, the organization participated in a pilot project administered by the United Neighborhood Houses, called the Parent-Child Development Centers; Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association's was deemed the most successful, and became a model program for Head Start. Celine Marcus attributed this to the economic integration of the class; over 60 percent of area residents had an income of \$75,000 or higher in the 1960s. Project Head Start was part of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society social welfare agenda. Administered by the Office of Economic Opportunity, it provided funding for community-sponsored early childhood education programs targeted at low-income families. The model developed at Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association included a great deal of parental involvement, and rules adopted by the Council Against Poverty⁶³ in December 1967 stipulated that fifty percent of the



Figure 37: Early childhood education

⁶² Annual Report for 1972-1973, p. 10 and for 1974-1975, p. 10.

⁶³ The Council Against Poverty was a city agency that served as a clearinghouse for funds from federal anti-poverty programs. See Robert F. Pecorella, *Community Power in a Postreform City: Politics in New York City* (M.E. Sharpe, Inc, 1994), 89.

governing committee for each Head Start class was required to be parents of current students. Marcus's assessment was that by having an economically diverse student base, low-income parents benefited by observing the parenting methods modeled by higher-income parents.⁶⁴

Owing to the success of the demonstration program of 1967-1968, Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association's Head Start class became a full reality in October of 1969. The enrollment for the first class was sixty preschoolers (ages 3 and 4 years old) and ten toddlers (age 2 and under; toddlers who had brothers or sisters in the Head Start class were eligible). Parental involvement and direction was of utmost importance, and by 1974, the program had implemented a training program for parents to qualify as substitute teachers for the Head Start staff. Several mothers of enrolled children were employed as helpers to the teachers, social workers and kitchen staff. Volunteers produced the *Mothers News*, a newsletter covering the activities of the Head Start class and parenting advice. Men assistant teachers were employed in three classrooms with the aim of giving young children caring and positive adult male role models.⁶⁵



Figure 38: In the wake of Dr. King's death, all evening activities at Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association were cancelled on April 10, 1968. The staff held a public memorial in honor of Dr. King in the auditorium. The staff participated in a number of social justice and civil rights causes in the 1960s. During the Vietnam War, staff participated in the annual War Moratoriums for 1969 and 1970, during which participating businesses and organizations closed down for a national day of mourning for those who died in combat and of protest.

⁶⁴ Authority and Responsibilities of New York City Head Start Committees on the Levels of Class, Center, Delegate Agency, City-Wide, adopted Dec. 17, 1967, box 65 folder 3; Celine Marcus interview, 1994, box 21 folder 10.

⁶⁵ Annual Reports for 1969-1970, p. 3-4, and for 1974-1975,

“It is not easy to strike a balance between our twofold interest in social action and reform, and practical services. We must continue to be a front-line agency, working with our neighbors to solve community problems by influence public policies and programs, basing our action on first hand day by day local experience. Simultaneously we should focus on the needs of our neighbors as they see them and on providing certain selected services which have significance and meaning to them.”

—Celine Marcus.⁶⁶

Senior Citizens

A significant change in the demographics of Yorkville prompted a revision in the services offered. In 1957, over 20 percent of the population of the area was over the age of 60 years, compared to 14.3 percent of the citywide population. Social programming for the elderly gradually increased in scope across the 1950s, with the Golden Age Division providing such activities as swing, drama, community singing and the annual Thanksgiving dinner. Through this work Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association staff became familiar with the unique problems of this constituency. As Mary Ann Cameron, stated, “if Lenox Hill is truly a group work agency and not a recreation center, then I feel it is my duty as Golden Age Supervisor to work with the problems of this age group.” These included ongoing health and mobility issues, the need for psychological support and coping with isolation and loneliness, and the upheavals of eviction and finding adequate housing that plagued most of the neighborhood.⁶⁷



Figure 39: Volunteer programs

The shortcoming of the programs run by the Golden Age division, as its supervisor saw it, was that nearly all of these programs relied upon the motivation of individual senior citizens to seek out help and to contact the organization to request enrollment. In 1971, Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association initiated Project SCOPE (Seniors’ Community Outreach Program to the Elderly) with the objective of sending volunteers to canvass the neighborhood and identify chronically ill, homebound and socially isolated elderly, and to work with them to ensure that they received the help and care that

⁶⁶ Annual Report for 1969-1970, p. 7.

⁶⁷ Golden Age Division Summary, August 1962, Collection files box 23 folder 10.

they required. In 1974 they started hiring teenagers to handle chores, shopping, and errands. By 1979, SCOPE also provided homemaking and housekeeping services, which were partially funded by the City's Department of the Aging under Title III of the Older Americans Act.⁶⁸

The Golden Age Division coordinated with other Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association departments and community organizations to establish the Voluntary Services for the Elderly of Yorkville (VSEY) in the mid-1970s. VSEY coordinated volunteers to staff a number of programs that ran in conjunction with Project SCOPE. Telefriend was a support hotline for senior citizens that ensured telephone contact at least once daily for individuals who otherwise might go days or weeks without outside contact, thus ensuring their continued safety and well-being. The Library for the Homebound dispatched volunteer runners with requested library books to the homebound. The Volunteer Visitor Program matched teenage volunteers to elderly neighbors who requested someone to stop by for social visits and to help with small chores. The Health Escort Service of Yorkville provided transportation to and from doctors' appointments.⁶⁹ Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association was also instrumental in convincing the New York City Housing Authority to set aside 55% of the apartments in the first public housing projects for Yorkville for residents over 60.⁷⁰ In 1964, the organization was instrumental to the founding of the Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center, which would establish a number of services for senior citizens, including a Meals on Wheels program (the Isaacs Center became an independent entity in 1968).⁷¹

One of the most important changes to come to the governance of Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association in the 1970s was the gradual shift away from funding revenue coming from private donors to funding from government entities. For decades (the era of the Great Depression notwithstanding), the Board had been reluctant to accept more than fifty percent of its operating budget from state and federal agencies, arguing that these funds were necessarily earmarked for specific purposes, whereas money that the Board could raise itself could go towards activities that the Board wished to prioritize. For example, federal grants for home attendants for the elderly first became available in the early 1970s, but it would take staff nearly a year to convince the Board that a grant application should be made, which would ultimately fund the Caring Neighbor program, despite the fact that services for the elderly were already a priority for the Board. Although Marcus understood the necessity of public funds to support the growing number of social services provided by Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association, she

⁶⁸ Annual Report for 1978-1978, p. 3.

⁶⁹ Annual Report for 1978.

⁷⁰ Annual Report for 1959, p. 4.

⁷¹ "Highlights of 80 Years: Lenox Hill Neighborhood House," Collection files box 1 folder 9.

also, to an extent, shared the concerns of the Board: by raising separate grants for separate programs, “you are earmarking your money depending on how you can raise money and then your programs for which it is very difficult to raise money—like community work, tenant organizing, advocacy—those are the programs that are running on deficits and are in danger.”⁷²



Figures 40 & 41: Art programs for senior citizens

⁷² Celine Marcus interview, p. 6.

The 1980s: New Challenges and New Solutions

Several demographic trends that had begun in the 1970s continued into the 1990s. For one, immigration settlement patterns had shifted away from the east side of Manhattan—where successive waves of immigrants had made their homes in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—to the outer boroughs, predominantly Queens and Brooklyn. Some members of the newest groups of immigrants, from the Dominican Republic and China, did find their way to the Upper East Side. By 2000, Yorkville-Lenox Hill’s foreign population comprised 20 percent of the total population for those neighborhoods; the city-wide population for that year was 36 percent foreign-born.⁷³ Another continuing trend, spurred by the development of high-rise developments, was the influx of young urban professionals into the neighborhood.

In the 1970s, the number of single-person households had risen by five percent in the three-year period from 1975 until 1978 (this number accounted for both young and old living alone). Staff recognized the importance of reaching out to this younger, more affluent, but less socially connected group. In 1979, there were 700 adults who participated in adult programs, the majority of whom were between the ages of 21 and 35,

single, and had moved to the area in the past five years (a third of that number having come from outside the city). Newcomers predominantly had college educations, while those adults with only a high school education (or less) were long-time residents of the neighborhood. The newcomers were attracted by such special-interest activities as ceramics, yoga, modern dance, photography and fitness programs.⁷⁴ Children who were served by Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association no longer necessarily came from the immediate environs of the House itself. While luxury high rises and expanding hospital complexes had displaced many of the working class and immigrant families from the neighborhood,



Figure 42: Planting trees outside Lenox Hill House at 331 East 70th Street

⁷³ The notable exception to this is Washington Heights, which continued to attract immigrants from Latin America well into the 2010s. Two thirds of the immigrant population in 2000 resided in Queens and Brooklyn. See New York City Department of City Planning, Population Division, *The Newest New Yorkers: Immigrant New York in the New Millennium* (nyc.gov/planning, October 2004, NYC DCP #04-10), p. 65-70.

⁷⁴ Annual Report for 1978-1979, p. 6-9.

many of these same individuals—who now worked at institutions such as Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center—took advantage of the pre-school and day care facilities at nearby Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association.⁷⁵

Austerity budgeting also continued well into the late-1980s. Cuts to federal anti-poverty programs, combined with New York City's struggles in the wake of the 1975 fiscal crisis in which the city almost went bankrupt⁷⁶, squeezed Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association from both sides. There was higher demand for services, especially from the rising homeless population, and dwindling dollars to supply those services. In 1979, Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association was dependent on public funding for about half of its operating budget, and in 1980, lost about \$250,000 in direct grants and fifteen staff positions. This led to cuts in services for elder care, crime prevention, community organizing and camping programs. Within the following six years, however, Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association effectively mobilized and utilized volunteer labor and fundraising campaigns to raise its budget back to pre-1980 levels (\$2 million in 1979 versus \$2.5 million in 1985). Moreover, its own client based stepped in to fill needs: senior citizens who attended the Senior Center volunteered to tutor teenagers and younger children. A program funded by a grant from the NYC Department of Mental Health provided outreach services to homeless individuals living on the streets of the Upper East Side; this program relied on the volunteer labor of over 100 individuals who went out into the community to take a census of the homeless.⁷⁷ Executive Director David J. Stern observed:

“Our experience over these past years has also helped us to recognize some basic principles involved in our work in this community. We have learned: 1) that in order to tackle some of the pervasive problems of our society we need a real partnership of public, private, and voluntary interests, 2) that many of our neighbors want to help and that the challenge we face is finding ways to channel their enthusiasm and concern, 3) that through perseverance, patience, and understanding we can reach even the ‘unreachable,’ and 4) that inspired leadership can provide us with the vision and courage to go forward.”⁷⁸

Cutbacks in federal and state budgets across the 1980s did result in some drastic changes to Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association's programs. Analysts predicted that the passage of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 would result in a 27 to 44

⁷⁵ Spotlight on Anissa and Arman Muller, whose mother worked at Sloan-Kettering, 1991-1992 Annual Report, p. 2.

⁷⁶ See Kim Phillips-Fein, *Fear City: New York's Fiscal Crisis and the Rise of Austerity Politics* (New York: Metropolitan, 2017).

⁷⁷ Annual Report for 1984-1985, p. 2-3, Collection files box 120 folder 2.

⁷⁸ Stern in *ibid*, p. 7.

percent reduction in federal spending on housing, Medicare and Older Americans Act programs.⁷⁹ Budgetary shortfalls caused the closure of Lenox Hill Camp at Lake Bantam in Connecticut in 1991.⁸⁰ Since the closing of Camp Marshall Field on Long Island during World War II, Bantam Lake had been a home away from home for a number of the neighborhood's children as well as a welcome annual summer retreat for senior citizens. Nevertheless, the division for children and youth continued to find day trips within the city to provide recreation and amusement for children beyond the bounds of the neighborhood.



Figure 43: Lenox Hill Camp at Lake Bantam in Connecticut, which closed in 1991

The adaptability of the mission has continued to allow the organization to be responsive to changes in the Yorkville community. Partnering with other community agencies helped to spread operations costs. The organization brought the staff of those partner institutions into its own program, helping those entities to provide their employees with better benefits at lower costs.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Annual Report for 1985-1986, p. i, Collection files box 120 folder 2; The Balanced Budget Act, as it is most often called, was signed into law by President Reagan in 1985 and required that Congress pass a balanced budget. If the budget resulted in a deficit, there were automatic spending cuts written into the bill that would trigger. These triggered cuts were ruled unconstitutional in 1990, but nevertheless, the effects on the social services sector were severe, see Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008* (Harper Perennial, 2008), 307-308.

⁸⁰ Annual Report for 1991-1992, p. 1, Collection files box 120 folder 4.

⁸¹ Annual Report for 1991, p. 2, Collection files box 120 folder 4.

A Model 21st Century Settlement House

In 1994, Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association officially became Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, which it remains to this day. This change in name was in recognition of the fact that the six-story house on East 70th Street is a physical center of community life and the most visible symbol of the organization's century of service. At the same time, the Neighborhood House's leadership decided to renew the organization's focus to strengthening the populations it had traditionally served (the elderly, immigrant populations and the disadvantaged) and rededicated itself to the historic objective of helping those in need as well as improving the quality of life for everyone in the community.

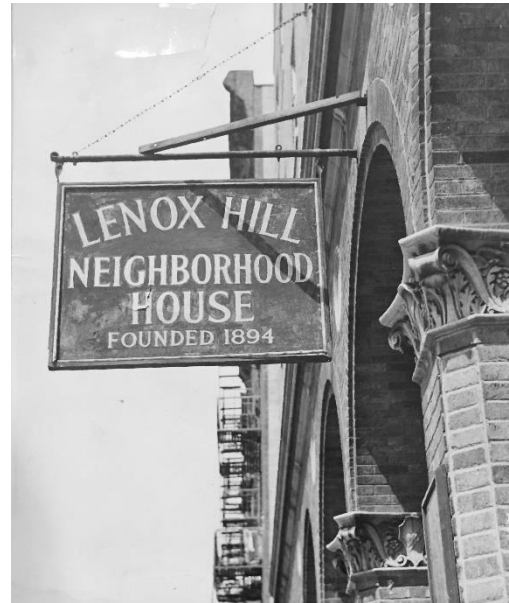


Figure 44: Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association officially became Lenox Hill Neighborhood House in 1994

Homelessness and Housing

During the mid-1990s, in response to the growing number of homeless New Yorkers, Lenox Hill Neighborhood House opened two new sites—Casa Mutua and the Women's Mental Health Shelter at the Park Avenue Armory. Located at 102nd Street and Lexington Avenue, Casa Mutua, which opened in 1992, is a 54-unit permanent supportive housing residence for formerly homeless individuals with a history of mental illness. The Casa Mutua community helps residents gain independence and stability by providing comprehensive social, psychiatric, recreational, counseling, legal and other supportive services to its residents. In 1996, the Neighborhood House successfully applied to New York City's Department of Homeless Services (DHS) to operate a 24-hour homeless shelter at the Park Avenue Armory to serve homeless women, age 45 and over, living with mental illness. The Women's Mental Health Shelter at the Park Avenue Armory provides shelter, psychiatry and comprehensive services to 80 women daily, each year supporting the recovery of approximately 250 women, through on-site mental and physical health services, civil legal services, fitness, visual and performing arts, art therapy, nutrition, farm-to-table meals and more.



Figure 45: The Women's Mental Health Shelter at the Park Avenue Armory

Older Adult Services

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House continues to expand its Older Adult Services to better serve the growing population of seniors in the community. In 1998, the Neighborhood House piloted CARE, an award-winning arts-based day program for older adults living with Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia. To address the needs of some of New York City’s most vulnerable residents, Project SCOPE (initiated in 1971; see p 36) evolved into today’s Geriatric Care Management program, which provides comprehensive care management services to 1,800 frail and homebound older adults each year, helping these individuals to remain safe, healthy and independent in their homes and communities. Care Managers help clients to receive home-delivered meals and coordinate a wide range of services to support their independence and well-being, from home care to supportive counseling to civil legal services provided by their Legal Advocacy Department.

In addition to the existing senior center at the corner of 70th Street and First Avenue, the Neighborhood House saw a significant new opportunity to provide services to older adults living in East Midtown. In 2001, Lenox Hill Neighborhood House opened the Senior Center at Saint Peter’s Church on 54th Street and Lexington Avenue, with 800 members joining within the first six months. Today, the Senior Center, which serves hundreds of members daily, is open five days a week, serves farm-to-table lunch and offers a full schedule of social, legal, recreational, health and arts programming.



Figure 46: Members at the Senior Center at Saint Peter’s Church participate in a hula dance class

In 2011, Lenox Hill Neighborhood House won a very competitive application process for new funding from the New York City Department for the Aging to redesign the Senior Center on 70th Street as one of eight “Innovative Senior Centers,” meant to be model 21st century senior centers. The Center @ Lenox Hill Neighborhood House opened on January 1, 2012, offers three farm-to-table meals daily, enhanced programming and an expanded schedule, and is open 12 hours a day, 365 days a year. The Center now serves more than 3,000 members annually, with a daily schedule of 15 to 20 activities, including: fitness and aquatics; language, technology, arts,



Figure 47: Yoga class at the Center @ Lenox Hill Neighborhood House

crafts and culture classes; recreation; and a wide range of workshops and support groups to address issues of aging and engage community members. The Center also provides physical and mental health services, evidence-based programs, nutrition education, civil legal services and more.

The Adult Education Department, a long-running program that serves both older adults and others in the community, provides programming for members of both senior centers, families from the Head Start program and additional community members. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and technology classes, offered at various skill levels, help students to succeed and to become more engaged in their communities, obtain better jobs and be more involved in their children's education. Clients and members of the East Side community also benefit from the Fitness and Aquatics Center, which serves a variety of Neighborhood House programs and helps to ensure the health and wellness of its neighbors. Each year, more than 300 children learn to swim in the pool, while older adults improve their physical and emotional well-being through waterize classes.



Figure 48: Young swimmers in the Neighborhood House pool

Legal Advocacy

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House created a Legal Advocacy Department in 2004 to address the lack of free civil legal services in the community. Their 26 full-time attorneys and advocates, working with many distinguished pro bono partners, now provide free, comprehensive civil legal services benefitting 5,000 low-income New Yorkers annually. The team helps individuals and families avoid eviction, secures much-needed repairs for New York City Housing Authority tenants, helps immigrants and people with disabilities access health care and other critical benefits, provides critical elder law representation to thousands and much more. Their legal services model breaks down traditional service silos that create unnecessary barriers for low-income individuals, as attorneys and advocates assess

clients for needs and offer a broad spectrum of free civil legal services at all the Neighborhood House's East Side locations, as well as through visits to homebound clients and other community and faith-based organizations. This integration of civil legal services into social service/educational programs was one of the first of its kind in a New York City community-based organization; this synergy of legal advocacy and social services creates a powerful tool to achieve social and legal



Figure 49: The Legal Advocacy Department, created in 2004, provides free civil legal services to 5,000 New Yorkers each year

justice for those in need. Lenox Hill Neighborhood House is still one of the few resources on the East Side for low-income individuals and families to turn to for help with their civil legal problems.

Healthy Food and Wellness

Beginning in 2011, Lenox Hill Neighborhood House committed to transform its institutional food services to a farm-to-institution model so that its low-income clients can eat, access and learn to use healthy, fresh, locally sourced and sustainable foods to improve their overall health and well-being. The Food Services team now serves more than 90% fresh produce (approximately 40% of it locally sourced), locally grown and milled whole grains, and sustainably harvested fish and local organic meat in creative menus with a focus on scratch cooking and more plant-based meals. Through this model, the Neighborhood House serves over 390,000 meals annually, 365 days a year, through two senior centers, the CARE program, the Women's Mental Health Shelter, Early Childhood Center, and RealArts After School and Summer Camp.

Leveraging the expertise gained from their farm-to-table transformation and successful cross-programmatic implementation, the Neighborhood House launched *The Teaching Kitchen at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House* in 2015 to train other institutions to implement their farm-to-institution model. *The Teaching Kitchen* is a cutting-edge training, technical assistance and consulting program that helps local nonprofit organizations with institutional food programs serving low-income clients to serve more fresh, healthy and local food. By training senior centers, preschools, homeless shelters, soup kitchens and other organizations serving low-income New Yorkers, *The Teaching Kitchen* works to localize publicly funded institutional food systems, more broadly improving the health of low-income New Yorkers for generations to come and strengthening the regions' farms, economy and sustainability. In

2016, the New York State Health Foundation awarded *The Teaching Kitchen* their 2016 Emerging Innovator Award, which honors organizations “poised to make radical improvements to the state of New York’s health over the next 10 years.”

Performance Management and Evaluation

In 2015, the Neighborhood House added a Performance Management and Evaluation team to enable the organization to better understand and address the evolving needs of their clients and community and to ensure the effectiveness of their programs. This three-person team has led an ambitious expansion of the collection, analysis and use of data across the organization and built a robust, state-of-the-art information infrastructure. Program and executive staff now use sophisticated databases, program materials, community needs assessments, surveys, dashboards, reports and more to support effective performance-based decision making and to explain their work to clients, partners, funders and others. The Neighborhood House is now a leader in nonprofit performance management and evaluation and regularly presents at local and national conferences to share best practices developed to improve client outcomes and program effectiveness.



Figure 50: The Teaching Kitchen at Neighborhood House

Early Childhood Center

One hundred and twenty-five years after its founding as a kindergarten for immigrant children, Lenox Hill Neighborhood House is regarded as one of New York’s premier nonprofit organizations, a leader in innovation and developer of best practices in the diverse fields in which it works—including



Figure 51: Early Childhood Center

early childhood education, which remains a core program area. The Neighborhood House’s Early Childhood Center is a nationally recognized model program and lab school, providing advisement to both the National Head Start Association and the New York City Department of Education. It serves as an incubator for new programs developed both internally and with partners (such as Sesame Street), and is an official Partner School of NYU Steinhardt,

functioning as a research partner, teacher training site and collaborator in developing new program innovations. Most importantly, each year the Early Childhood Center provides unparalleled educational and support services to erase the school readiness gap for 141 children and to help those children and their families—many of them recent immigrants—to succeed in school and in life.

Capital Advancements

By the early 2000s, the House, the historic home built in 1928, was in disrepair. Beginning in 2003, under the leadership of Executive Director Warren Scharf and Chief Operating Officer Mark Andermanis, Lenox Hill Neighborhood House prioritized and commenced a series of ambitious capital projects to modernize the building and improve organizational capacity and effectiveness. Projects included the construction of a new elevator, renovation of the old staff dormitories on the fifth and sixth floors and expansion of the sixth floor to house administrative and program offices, renovation and expansion of the main kitchen, creation of the 7,500-square-foot Environmental Playscape on the second-floor roof, expansion of the lobby and opening of the overlook gallery, full modernization of all buildings systems—steam, electrical, plumbing, heating and cooling, technology—and addition of ramps and lifts to make the building fully accessible. As Lenox Hill Neighborhood House celebrates its 125th anniversary in 2019, it is completing a new 4,500-square-foot Vertical Addition and 1,500-square-foot green roof and garden. This modernization and significant expansion ensures that Lenox Hill Neighborhood House has the program and administrative space to continue to grow to meet the evolving needs of its clients and community for the next 125 years.



Figures 52 and 53: The 7,500 square foot Environmental Playscape, unveiled in 2016, provides a one-of-a-kind space for children in the Early Childhood Center and RealArts programs to engage with nature, learn and play.

Today, 125 years after its founding in 1894, Lenox Hill Neighborhood House is still here, adapting its programming and services, innovating and using data to enrich lives and fit the changing needs of its community. At its core, the work has not changed since its founding—the Neighborhood House is still teaching children, feeding hungry neighbors, advocating for vulnerable individuals, and providing critical, comprehensive services to immigrants and low-income New Yorkers, helping them to gain the skills they need to strengthen themselves and build a better community for tomorrow.



Appendix A: 2019 Board of Directors

Honorary Chair

Sydney Roberts Shuman

Chair Emeriti

Thomas J. Edelman

Diana R. Quasha

Chair

Elizabeth P. Munson

Members

Nancy S. Baker

Margery Baker-Riker

Mal L. Barasch

Gary A. Beller

Thompson Dean

Richard E. Farley

Mark F. Gilbertson

Helene D. Goldfarb

David J. Greenwald

Audrey B. Gruss

Amabel B. James

John H. Manice

Othon Prounis

John Rosselli

Guy G. Rutherford, Jr.

Juan A. Sabater

Christopher Spitzmiller

Kristen Swenson

Helene H. Tilney

Charles S. Warren

Hedi H. White

Bunny Williams

Judith M. Zabar

Honorary Member

Renée Landegger



*Figure 54: Young girl paints historic headquarters
at 331 East 70th Street*

Appendix B: Leadership History of Lenox Hill Neighborhood House

Chairman of the Board of Managers of Alumnae House

1894-1899	Alice R. Northrop
1899-1904	Miss A. Minnie Herts
1909-1911	Mrs. Harry Arnold (Jessie Winterton) Day

President of the Board of Directors

1911-1914	Dr. Godfrey R. Pisek
1914-1928	Mr. Thomas S. McLane
1928-1936	Mr. Harvey D. Gibson
1937-1938	Charles Blackwell
1938-1939	Mr. Fraiser W. McCann
1939-1941	Mr. Ethan A. Hitchcock
1941-1946	Mr. William S. Kilborne
1946-1951	Arthur O. Choate, Jr.
1951-1958	James Snowden
1958-1961	Harcourt Amory
1961-1967	Mrs. Richard (Peggy) Kaye Korn
1967-1976	John Pierrepont
1977-1979	Christopher J. Elkus
1979-1985	Mrs. Felix G. (Elizabeth F). Rohatyn
1985-1989	Mrs. Carl D. (Katherine) Lobell
1989-1993	Guy G. Rutherford, Jr.
1993-1997	Mrs. Sydney Roberts Shuman
1997-2005	Diana Ronan Quasha
2005-2014	Thomas J. Edelman
2015-current	Elizabeth P. Munson

Head Workers

1894-1898	Mary Wells
1898-1899	Dr. Anne L. Langworthy
1899-1900	Clara Byrnes
1900-1904	Jane E. Robbins, M.D.
1904-1907	Mary Anderson Hill
1907-1912	Miss Alice Gannett
1912-1938	Rosalie Manning

Resident Directors

1939-1942	Mr. James H. Boswell
1942-1947	Mrs. Kathryn S. Oswald
1947-1950	Miss Julie Bouchard

Executive Directors

1950-1969	Lillian D. Robbins
1970-1982	Mrs. Celine Marcus
1982-1990	David J. Stern
1991-2003	Nancy Wackstein
2003-current	Warren B. Scharf

Appendix C: Samples of Activities by Decade¹

1898: Activities by Age Group

A) Boys Age 15+

Singing
Physical Culture
Stenography
Type Writing
Social Hour

D) Girls Age 11-14

Sewing
Cooking
Physical Culture
Embroidery
Dolls' Dressmaking

B) Boys Age 12-15

Literature
Scrap-book Class
Physical Culture
Social Hour

E) Girls Age 7-10

Sewing
Physical Culture
Dolls' Dressmaking
Social Hour

C) Girls Age 14+

Cooking
Embroidery
Physical Culture
Dressmaking
Stenography
Singing
Social Hour

¹ Note: Lists culled from available Annual Reports and may not be exhaustive, as they only pertain to those activities that the authors of the annual reports felt important to showcase.

1911: Weekly Program

Mondays

3:30 p.m. Sewing School
3:30 p.m. Library
5:00 p.m. Piano Practice
7:30 p.m. Library
8:00 p.m. Bohemian Needlecraft
Guild
8:00 p.m. Pansy Friendship Club
8:00 p.m. English Class (men)

Tuesdays

3:30 p.m. Good Cheer Club
3:30 p.m. Girls' Game Club
4:00 p.m. Medical Gymnastic Class
5:00 p.m. Piano Practice
7:30 p.m. Pleasure Seekers' Club
8:00 p.m. Sylvent Star Social Club
8:00 p.m. Young Rovers' Club
8:00 p.m. English Class (women)

Wednesdays

2:30 p.m. Neighborhood Civic Club
3:30 p.m. Eta Pi Handwork Club
5:00 p.m. Piano Practice
8:00 p.m. Delegates' Council
(monthly)
8:00 p.m. Eagle Athletic Club
8:00 p.m. English Class (women)

Thursdays

3:30 p.m. Painting Club
3:30 p.m. Sewing Class
3:30 p.m. Library
3:30 p.m. Modeling Class (boys)
3:30 p.m. Lenox Hill Club
5:00 p.m. Piano Practice
7:30 p.m. Library
8:00 p.m. Emblem Club
8:00 p.m. Friendship Club
8:00 p.m. English Class (men)

Fridays

3:30 p.m. Embroidery Class
3:30 p.m. Dancing Class
5:00 p.m. Drawing Class
5:00 p.m. Piano Practice
3:00 p.m. Kindergarten Mothers' Club
(monthly)
8:00 p.m. Castalian Literary and Social
Club
8:00 p.m. Lenox Hill Boys
8:00 p.m. English Class (women)
8:00 p.m. Penny Provident Bank

Saturdays

9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Piano Lessons
5:00 p.m. Piano Practice
8:00 p.m. Club Parties

Sundays

Fortnightly Concerts

1922: Committee Activities

Drama and Music Classes

- The Lenox Hill Players
- Children's Ballet
- Marionettes

Hygiene Committee

- Children's clinic
- Adult clinic and hospital referrals
- Home inspections and follow-up calls

Lenox Hill Industries (Fine needlework)

Women's and Girls' Department

Junior dept (ages 6-14)

- Sewing
- Knitting
- Dancing
- Singing
- Girl Scouts & Brownies
- Gymnastics

Senior Dept (ages 14 through adults)

- Dancing
- Gymnastics
- Girl Scouts (for ages 14-15)
- Millinery
- Dressmaking
- Arts & Crafts
- Dramatics
- Swimming
- Social clubs

Men's and Boys' Department*

- Athletics: Gymnasium, Basketball, Track,
- Headquarters for Yorkville Athletic League
- American Hungarian Social Club
- Summer Camps

Social Service Department

- Relief Fund (\$350.00 endowed by the Havens Relief, for temporary emergencies—rent, food, clothing—loan to be repaid)
- Provided hot lunches for children who couldn't afford
- Assisted with widows in search of pensions, domestic disputes, landlord disputes, employment bureau

* Reorganized in 1922, with the assistance of Mr. Kermit Roosevelt, to be better financed and organized to suit the needs of the men and boys in the neighborhood. "The Committee's influence became quickly apparent in increased efficiency and enthusiasm. One young man remarked: 'That this is the first time ever I saw a man director over here. If men like that would get interested, we could really do things.'" (Annual Report, 1922, n.pag.)

1935 Activities

- Movies and Parties for all ages and both sexes
- Children's Work (The Brownies, all children up to age 9)
 - Hot lunches
 - Kindergarten and Nursery
 - After-school care
 - Children's House
- Girls' Work (ages 9-17)
 - Midgets (age 9-14): gymnasium time for general games and athletics; swimming 2 days per week; classes in interpretive dance, pottery, painting, sewing; Children's chorus and opera
 - Juniors (ages 15-17): room for their use equipped with games; athletics (swimming and basketball); pottery, painting, sewing; dramatic groups; weekly dancing classes and social dances held in conjunction with junior boys
 - Seniors (Age 18 and older): also have a room for their use; also basketball and swimming popular; art and pottery; sewing and dressmaking; sponsored dances and teas
- Boys' Work (ages 9 and up)
 - That year, a newly organized coterie of senior boys to volunteer to assist with and mentor the younger groups
 - Much of the same social activities of the girls; boys as well took classes in dramatics, painting, drawing, poster design, pottery, social dancing
 - Athletics the major component: basketball, boxing, handball
 - Programs for unemployed young men began in 1933
 - Legal advice and free representation provided through the Mr. Oliver Pendar (defense for minor offenses)
- Social Service and Hygiene
 - Center for the "Make Work Division," Prosser Relief Fund Committee
 - Clinics for pre-school children
 - Distributing sandwiches and milk free to school children
- Art: Theater, dramatics, dance, opera
- Summer camps and playgrounds

1944: Services[†]

- All-day Care for Children Under Six
- Midgets (8-13 years): after-school programs: gym, swimming, pottery, painting classes, woodworking, interpretive dance and singing
- Juniors (Teenagers): basketball, dances, pottery, painting, photography, carpentry, swimming (for girls). Boxing, basketball, weight lifting, photography, and swimming for boys.
- Seniors (older than 18): 390 names on the Roll of Honor (those in service). Girls produced a weekly newsletter for the men in service, "The Duration Times." Girls entertained service men, offered pottery classes, dances.
- Adults: woodworking and pottery classes; English and citizenship classes; preparing surgical dressings for the Red Cross; clothes making; neighborhood committees and social clubs.
- Social Workers: questions on dependency allotments, citizenship, employment, rationing, housing, etc.
- Clinics: provided health exams, treated minor illnesses, and providing classes for mothers.

[†] Note: Activities for children were no longer gender-segregated after World War II, with the exception of organizations such as the Boy and Girl Scouts.

1959 Activities

- The Housing Committee and Housing Service

Children's Activities:

- Newspaper
- Snack bar
- Saturday Night Dances
- Weekend camping trips (Spring & Fall)
- Summer camp
- Athletics leagues
- Arts, Crafts, and Woodworking classes
- Juvenile Delinquency prevention programs: Neighbors United and Interfaith Neighbors
- Summer Play School (ages 6-12)
- Bethany-Lenox Hill Day Care Center

Programs for the Elderly:

- Social clubs
- Sewing and art classes
- Singing and Dramatics clubs
- Advocacy for housing for the elderly in public housing
- Summer vacation at Camp

Adult Programming:

- Weekly Family Nights
- Mother and Babies Club
- English and Citizenship classes
- Hobbies, Civic, and Social clubs

Health & Social Services:

- Assistance with domestic conflicts
- Referrals and counseling for mental health
- Economic assistance
- First aid emergency clinic
- Free medical exams

1969 Services

- Tenants Against Demolition (organizing tenants of buildings in process of eviction)
- Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association Head Start
- *Mothers News*: weekly publication of news and information for young mothers.
- Bethany Lenox Hill Day Care Center
- Golden Age Club
- Teenage Groups on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays only (a cut from five-days/week due to budgetary issues)
 - Included athletics, lounge and game room facilities, and photography classes
- Day Camps for Elementary and Tween groups
- After-School Programs for elementary school children:
 - Music & art programs
 - Woodshop classes
- Resident Camp in Connecticut
- Yorkville Interagency Committee on Drug Abuse

1978 Services

I. Programs & Services for the Aging

- Project SCOPE (Seniors' Community Outreach Program for the Elderly—est. 1970)
- Voluntary Services for the Elderly of Yorkville (VSEY)
 - Telefriend
 - Library for the Homebound
 - Volunteer Visitor Program
 - Health Escort Service of Yorkville
- Apartment Sharing Project
- Lenox Hill Senior Citizens Neighborhood Service Center
- Legal Services
- Helping Your Older Relatives

II. Community Work and Housing

- East Side Tenants Union
- Housing Department (legal services)
- Housing Clinics (education on code violations and tenant-landlord conflicts)

III. Group Services for Children, Teenagers, Adults and Families

- Junior Division Program: after-school activities and day camp
- Teen Program: social, recreational, and skills development classes
- Community Jobs for Community Youth
- Adult Program: modern dance, yoga, ceramics, photography, athletic teams, exercise classes.
- Single Parents Group
- English as a Second Language classes
- Head Start (government-funded)
- Hunter-Lenox Hill Creative Center (government-funded after-school programs)

IV. Health and Social Services

- Registered Nurse: advice and counseling for health issues; health education classes; first aid and safety courses; monthly clinics for Bethany-Lenox Hill Day Care Center; flu shots for the elderly
- Social Worker: resource on entitlements and benefits programs; crisis intervention; emergency relief; referrals for government agencies.

VI. Community Anti-Crime Program

- Anti-Crime Through Organized Neighborhood Effort (ACT ONE)
- Community Organization for Block-based Crime Prevention Activities
- Community Organization for Recreational Development

VII. Lenox Hill Camp in Bantam, Connecticut

- Summer Camp
- Residential Environmental Education Camp
- Weekend Camping

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Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, widely recognized as one of New York's premier nonprofit organizations, is a 125-year-old settlement house that provides an extensive array of effective and integrated human services—social, educational, legal, health, housing, mental health, nutritional and fitness—which significantly improve the lives of thousands of people in need each year, ages 3 to 103, on the East Side of Manhattan.



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