

FWA Approves Negro Center Project Here

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However, the War Production board must grant its consent for the erection of the building because of the critical materials involved, and Gallivan said this is probably the largest remaining hurdle before the federal grant can become a reality.

Concurrence of the War department also is needed to signify its value as a military project as the proposed center would serve to provide for the recreation needs of colored soldiers in this area for the duration of the war.

Erection of the building is also contingent upon obtaining \$14,100 in donations here. The Home and War Chest has pledged \$2,500 if its campaign for funds in November is successful and the remainder is to be raised by solicitations in Urbana and Champaign and among the Negro residents.

Colored persons obtained sufficient money in a drive last year to purchase two lots for the site for the building at Sixth and Grove streets, just opposite Douglas park.

The building would be of concrete block or similar lightweight masonry construction, 82 by 63 feet and would provide a large hall 35 by 68 feet, and smaller rooms for library, reading room, kitchen, office, showers and lavatories.

Gallivan Plans New Plea for Colored Center

Federal officials have thus far declined to approve a federal grant for the construction of a Negro community center in northeast Champaign, Lyle H. Gallivan, executive secretary of the Home and War Chest association, announced today.

Approval has been withheld by officials of the Federal Works agency on the ground that the war-connected need is insufficient, he explained.

The War department, which must approve the project as the building would serve as a recreation center for Negro soldiers until after the war, has ruled there are not enough colored troops currently stationed at Chanute Field to justify the expense.

'New Evidence' Ready

However, Gallivan said that he and others interested in the project are continuing to press the request for federal funds and are planning to present "new evidence" on the need for the project.

Gallivan conferred Wednesday evening with the committee of colored persons who have been assisting in the efforts to obtain such a center. Members of this committee are Ray Scott, Alvin G. Foxwell, Dr. H. D. Ellis, Dr. L. P. Diffay, Fred Pettiford, and Richard Edwards. Prof. A. G. Anderson, president of the Community Chest, was present.

\$32,000 Building Sought

Cost of the building is estimated at \$32,600 with a federal grant to provide \$18,500 and the remaining \$14,100 to be raised in Champaign-Urbana.

The recently-concluded Home and War Chest drive brought in \$2,500 for the project, more than \$1,500 has been raised in Urbana, and funds are also being obtained in Champaign and among the Negro residents.

A site at Sixth and Grove streets, purchased in 1942 by Negro residents when a similar project was under discussion, is available. Plans have been drawn for a two-story concrete block structure providing a large recreation hall, library, reading room, kitchen, offices, shower and lavatory rooms.

\$10,000 Drive Is Opened for Colored Center

Drive to raise \$10,000 to provide a building and to finance the first year's program of a community center for colored residents of Champaign-Urbana was launched today by the joint advisory committee of the Twin City Community committee. Printed letter outlining conditions favoring establishment of the center was mailed to a selected list of potential contributors and similar material will be distributed to all residents of the city.

The circular letter showed a photo of The Cozy Corner, a partially condemned building at Fourth and Vine streets, which has been selected as the site of the project. Funds will be used either to remodel this building or to provide a temporary structure in the same neighborhood. The drive also includes a campaign to raise enough money to provide for the first year of operation.

The following needs which have led to the movement were listed in the printed letter: (1) need for organization for self-help by a minority hitherto too poorly organized; (2) need for a meeting place and community center; (3) need for better recreation for children, youths and adults; (4) lack of desirable places where young men of this group may take their girl friends for a coke or soda whereas they are welcome at undesirable places for whisky and gin; (5) need for child welfare services for certain types of neglected and pre-delinquent children in spite of the work of some excellent child welfare services of a different with which the T. C. C. C. will cooperate.

(6) need for group sponsorship of unorganized and individual efforts to aid these people, for lack of which misunderstandings have arisen; (7) urgent need for adult education in child care, health, etc.; (8) need to eliminate serious health hazards which menace both the local and entire community; (9) need to eliminate factional differences and opportunities for exploitation which have grown naturally out of discrimination against a heretofore ill-organized minority group; (10) need for responsible leadership to prevent possible development of race friction during war and post-war years.

Answering some questions raised by persons who have had doubts of the feasibility of the project, the committee discussed issues of war time legitimacy of the project, its relation to the Negro soldiers center, advisability of making it a tax-supported enterprise and certain race relations problems.

The joint advisory council's letter advanced two reasons to support the contention the project is legitimate in war time. They are: (1) it will remove conditions tending to cause delinquency, ill health and friction, all of which hinder the war effort; (2) it refutes a major argument of Nazi propaganda, that we do not really fight for democracy since we discriminate against our own minority

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groups.

Discussing the Negro soldiers'
center, the letter said:

"While many individuals con-
tributed to the soldiers' center
fund, our organization, as such, had
no connection with that fine effort.
We understand that money is ear-
marked for a more specific pur-
pose, that its use depends upon
securing the aid and sanction of
the military and that there is at
least no immediate possibility that
the soldiers' center may be con-
structed. However, inquiries as to
this should be addressed to those
who collect or administer the
funds."

CONTINUED
FROM
PAGE # 1

Taking up the question of
whether the community center
should be tax supported, the letter
stated "we feel sure that this need
cannot and should not be met in
that way."

"Tax funds can hardly be used
for the immediate interests of a mi-
nority, even though benefits to it
will indirectly benefit the whole
community. Moreover, there are
special reasons why this type of
movement must, at all costs, be
kept out of politics."

"Are we sufficiently agreed up-
on the principles of race relations
to unite in a joint effort in this con-
troversial field?" the committee
asked itself in the letter.

Here is its answer:
"This is an important question,
but we believe the right answer is
'yes.' In a community like Cham-
paign-Urbana there are varied at-
titudes on race relations and cor-
responding views as to what to do
about them. For example, some
wish to promote inter-racial con-
tacts; other to discourage them al-
though the latter may be equally
glad that a minority group seeks to
improve its status through self-
help. Usually these latter recognize
that the majority must assist the
minority financially and through
furnishing such advice and cooper-
ation as is requested.

"The emphasis in the T. C. C. C.
is on self help, but the movement
furnishes abundant opportunity for
those who wish to do so to make
helpful contacts with the minority.
Democracy permits any community
organization to engage in any legal
activities, and no one can tell in
advance just what the I. C. C. C.
will wish to do. But the movement
cannot be called radical, communis-
tic, a 'race rights' movement and
certainly not provocative of any-
thing but harmony and democratic
cooperation."

ASSURE URBANA DONATION FOR NEW CENTER

NEWS GAZETTE

FRI, SEP 17, 1943

Assurance of an Urbana donation of \$2,000 toward the construction of a recreation center adjoining Douglas park in Champaign for colored service men was expressed at a meeting of 35 Urbana citizens Thursday night in the Urbana Association of Commerce office.

Oscar Steer, A. of C. president, was chairman of the informal meeting which included representatives of the A. of C. board of directors, the Urbana city council and various social and service organizations.

Lyle Gallivan, executive secretary of the Champaign-Urbana Home and War Chest, who formulated and developed a cooperative plan for sponsoring the center, reviewed the steps taken to date and announced the tentative approval of the project by the Federal Works agency and the Federal Security agency. He reported that the plans are now on their way to Washington for the expected approval of the War Production board.

\$18,500 From Government

Governmental approval of the plans, revised after being rejected a year ago, would mean a government grant of \$18,500, Gallivan stated, toward the total cost of \$32,500. Local support, he added, would include a \$3,000 contribution by Champaign-Urbana colored citizens, \$2,500 by the Home and War Chest organization in lieu of a donation to the Washington street colored nursery; \$3,500 from the Champaign community and \$2,000 from the Urbana community.

Major E. F. Resek, in charge of all recreational facilities at Chanute Field, expressed the opinion that a "real need" for such a center existed in the Champaign-Urbana community, although adequate recreational facilities had been provided for colored men at Chanute Field.

Need Is Urgent

Mayor George Hurd agreed that

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The building would be of concrete block or similar lightweight masonry construction, 82 by 63 feet and would provide a large hall 35 by 68 feet, and smaller rooms for library, reading room, kitchen, office, showers and lavatories.

Battle Veteran Breaks Ground At New Center

Consummation of the community's long-cherished hope for a Negro community center was signalized Sunday afternoon as between 125 and 150 spectators gathered in the cold February sunshine to witness the breaking of ground for the building at 510-512 East Grove street.

Honor of turning the first bit of earth went to Sgt. George Evans, son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Evans, 504 East Tremont street. He is home from 28 months in the Mediterranean theater of operations wearing campaign ribbons with four battle stars.

Achievement of the plan for the center, together with the recreational possibilities its erection presages, was hailed in brief talks by Richard Edwards, chairman of the campaign for funds among the Negro residents, and R. A. Stipes, Jr., member of the Home and War Chest building committee.

Ray Scott, president of the Douglas Community Service organization, introduced Mayors George J. Babb and George F. Hurd, the members of the Home and War Chest building committee, members of the Champaign recreation and playground board, and others interested in the project.

Rev. M. A. Crowder, pastor of the C. M. E. church, gave the invocation, and Rev. B. J. Bayne of the Salem Baptist church, the benediction.

Dr. L. P. Diffay was the master of ceremonies. After Sergeant Evans had disposed of the initial clump of ground, members of the Home and War Chest building committee, led by Mrs. L. T. Gregory, took a turn at the task.

E. N. DeAtley, Champaign contractor, will begin work within the next two weeks if the weather permits. Last minute revisions in plans are still being carried through. The latest addition is an enlargement of shower facilities.

125 and 150 persons, gathered at the corner of East Grove streets Sunday afternoon witnessed the breaking of ground by Sgt. George Evans, battle veteran.

for the \$35,000 Negro community center for Champaign-Urbana. Sergeant Evans recently finished 28 months of overseas service. Reading from the left are Alvin Foxwell, Mrs. L. T. Gregory, Isaac Kuhn, A. H.

Lybyer, Mayor George F. Hurd, Lyle H. Gallivan, Sergeant Evans, Mayor George J. Babb, Richard Edwards, Cecil Nelson, Ray Scott, Royal A. Stipes, Jr., Dr. H. D. Ellis, Dr. L. P. Diffay, and Delos L. Huxtable.

Construction of the one-story concrete block building will be started within the next two weeks by E. N. DeAtley, Champaign contractor, if the weather is favorable.

the need for the center was urgent and expressed the full approval of the Urbana council. Other opinions expressed were the plan is "practicable," that the colored persons supporting it "really mean business" and that the communities should take advantage of this opportunity to help provide a center for colored soldiers now and for the use of other colored persons in the community after the war.

The Urbana group instructed Steer and Hurd to appoint a committee immediately to raise Urbana's share of the necessary funds.

Colored Citizens To Meet Friday

A meeting of all colored citizens of Champaign-Urbana to discuss funds for the erection of the colored Servicemen's center will take place at 7:30 p. m. Friday at the CME church, Fifth and Tremont streets.

The meeting is sponsored by the colored servicemen's organization of Champaign-Urbana.

ty Operation of Center Has Group Approval

outlining the Douglas Service organization's of the Champaign County and War Chest proposal for city-owned community center for Negroes has been released by a six-man committee. The group declared that a position for "self-help" center taken by the executive committee of the joint advisory council of the Twin City Community committee does not represent the viewpoint of the masses of colored people of the community.

The statement follows:
"It appears that a number of the Home and War Chest subscribers are confused by the letter received from Prof. Donald R. Taft, chairman of the executive committee of the advisory group of the Twin City Community committee. Some seem to think that they are to decide as to whether they wish the proposed Negro community center building to be owned by the city and operated by the city recreation commission or whether it shall be privately owned and controlled.

'ORIGINATORS' OF MOVEMENT
"This is not the case as it appears to us there is no alternative. The only question is whether we have a city-owned building or no building at all as there are no other provisions made in the money already raised or that offered by the chest providing the subscribers agree.

"The effort for a community building was begun in 1941 by the Douglas Community Service organization. The movement was supported by 32 Negro civic, social and fraternal organizations of the Twin Cities.

"Negro citizens of the community have contributed \$3,000 to be building fund with the understanding and knowledge that the building would become the property of the city.

"The five Negro members of the joint advisory council of the Twin City Community committee had approved this plan, and two of its

members served on the campaign for funds committee. This, however, was before the Twin City Community committee was organized.

"The Chest committee plans to supplement the fund originally promised but later refused by the federal government.

LIBRARY, HOSPITAL CITED

"While the Twin City Community committee's letter may meet the unanimous approval of the five white and five colored members of its advisory group, the Chest proposal meets the approval of the masses of Negroes who are to be served by it, and the masses feel that the Chest proposal gives the only assurance of a building and of a permanent maintenance and program.

"We do not feel that the city ownership of such a building will make it a political football any more than our city library or hospital, which are city-owned, and tax-supported institutions. We have not lost faith in our form of city government.

"Too much emphasis cannot be placed on the need for such a building, and its use will be more urgent when our boys return from the war to a rehabilitation program.

"The committee of the Douglas Community Service organization urges that you sign and vote favorably on the Home and War Chest proposal as a delay or an attempted change of policy may mean the loss of a much-needed building."

OPENS NEW CAMP LIBRARY

CAMP KILMER, N. J. (ANP)—Langston Hughes, famous poet and playwright, was the guest speaker at the opening of the new Service Club Liberty No. 3 on Sunday. The dedication ceremonies were held in the main auditorium of the service club before a large audience of officers, enlisted men, and visitors.

Dawson Escorts Powell To Floor; Sit Together

Hazel Scott Is Present During First Session

BY HARRY S. McALPIN

WASHINGTON, D. C. The historic 79th Congress of the United States, before a packed gallery which had less than 30 Negro spectators in it, saw two Negroes take the oath of office when Congressmen William L. Dawson (D) of Illinois and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., (D) of New York were sworn in. The oath was taken by the entire body of 374 Congressmen present at the same time.

Powell, newest member of the Congress and the first Negro from the State of New York, was escorted to the Legislative Chambers by Dawson. Their offices are next to each other in the old house office building. The two Negro Congressmen sat together during the preliminary organization of the House during which time Representative Sam Rayburn (D) of Texas was reelected speaker.

MEETS COLLEAGUES

Later, during the session, Powell spent much of his time talking with Representative Vito Marcantonio (ALP) of New York, who will be their colleagues during the 79th Congress.

Rumors that Powell would be seated beside Representative John Rankin (D) of Mississippi, failed to materialize during this first session. Rankin occupied five different seats during the session. No one was assigned to any particular seat. Powell, by choice however, was seated on the Democratic side of the House, though elected on the Democratic, Republican and American Labor Party ticket.

From New York for the swearing in ceremony and to pay their respects to the new Congressmen came Hazel Scott, of movie and night club fame, whose name has

(Continued on back page)

Taft Report Many Replies

"Encouraging replies" have received to a circular mailed the joint advisory council of the Twin City Community committee to subscribers of the Champaign County Home and War Chest for diversion of surplus funds to building of a Negro community center. Prof. Donald R. Taft, chairman, said today.

The community committee group's letter contained postcards asking Chest subscribers to express themselves on the issue of the executive committee's proposal to divert one-half plus, approximately \$175,000, establishing the center would be turned over to the Champaign County Recreation Commission.

Favoring a self-help plan which ownership would be in a joint bi-racial commission management, would be the hands of the colored group, advised of a bi-racial group of the Twin City Community committee and its advisory council has proposed the Chest's arrangement.

Professor Taft complained in a letter accompanying the postcards that an earlier proposal by the Chest did not allow opportunity for expression on alternatives. Therefore, the city committee issued its piece to allow further opportunity for expression.

Mailing by the community committee group has not been completed, about 1,000 letters being sent to go out after the Christmas holidays. Volunteer help is being used in preparing the pieces.

Professor Taft pointed out that the community group is not yet ready to make a public announcement on the subject expressed in the poll, and added that he is writing to Lyle van, executive secretary, in agreement on future procedure.

"We of our group still are for a mutually satisfactory arrangement, Professor Taft commented.

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Work Defended

A few recreation workers can not be expected to do the work which is supposed to be handled by the police department. Taylor Thomas, director of the Douglas Community center, 510-12 East Grove street, pointed out today.

It was outside the center that the fatal stabbing of U. S. Lynn, 27, occurred Monday night. He and his assailant, Robert Zachary, 17, had argued in the building a half hour earlier.

Thomas declared he has never asked Chief of Police Clyde Davis or anyone else for a police officer at the Douglas center. "In fact, I told Davis that a recreation center was no place for a uniformed policeman.

"A check of the facts would show that Douglas center is doing more to prevent delinquency and crime than Davis' and his whole police force.

"There is a curfew law in this city, but Davis does not see that it is enforced. In fact, he told me he did not enforce it. If Davis and his police force is so efficient why do they permit youths and adults to carry knives and other deadly weapons on their persons at all times?"

Referring to purported talk of an investigation of the center's operation, Thomas said, "I challenge anybody to make that investigation and at the same time how about investigating the activities of Davis or any other city official who is interested in investigating the activities of Douglas center?"

"If the city of Champaign was progressive and spent a little money for adequate recreation facilities and personnel it wouldn't be necessary for so much money to be spent on an inadequate police force. You can't expect a few recreation workers to do the work that is supposed to be done by a police force.

"No doubt Davis doesn't realize that there has been a crime wave in the last few months. If he cannot face facts and do his duty it would be better for the community if he resigned."

OCT. 23, 1946

Nov. 18, 1946
Douglas Center Troop Formed
11-8-46

A new Girl Scout troop for colored girls at Champaign Junior high school held its organizational meeting Tuesday evening at Douglas center, with Joan Velentz elected president of the new group.

To be known as Troop 19, the intermediate troop is open to girls in grades seven, eight and nine. Troop leader is Miss Mary White and Margaret Springfield Cook and Virginia Busch are assistant leaders.

Other officers elected were: Vice president, Delores Hendricks; secretary, Marilyn Pickens; treasurer, Gloria Jean Cardwell. Mrs. Glenn Finger introduced the leaders to the girls and directed the troop.

Plans were made for a treasure hunt and winter party to be held Nov. 12 in Douglas center.

Nov. 24, 1946
Thomas Eyes Council Race
11-24-46

Taylor Thomas, director of the Douglas Park community center, 510-12 East Grove street, may be a candidate for city commissioner in the February 25 primary in Champaign, it was learned Saturday.

Thomas has been director of the center since it was opened in September of 1945. Prior to that, he was a federal government employe at Chanute Field and in Indianapolis. He is a graduate of Champaign high school and attended the University of Illinois.

Several months ago when the Champaign police force was being expanded by the addition of eight patrolmen, Thomas appeared before the council to present petitions requesting greater Negro representation in the department.

He clashed recently with Police Chief Clyde R. Davis on the question of whether uniformed police protection had been asked for the Douglas center.

Inquiry already has been made at the city clerk's office about

SEPT. 23, 1952

DOUGLASS CENTER MARKS 7th ANNIVERSARY



Several hundred persons gathered in Douglass Park Community Center, 510-12 E. Grove St., Sunday afternoon to commemorate the seventh anniversary

of its founding. Reading from the left, seated, are Mrs. Helen Hite, director of adult activities, State Rep. Corneal Davis of Chicago, the speaker, and Mrs. L. T.

Gregory of the advisory board. Standing are R. M. Scott, chairman of the advisory board, and James E. Jones, director of the center.

Latin American Grants Told

fellowship

Hearings to Continue On Gibson City Boys

Elliott (Staff)

Hearing on the case of two Gibson City boys, aged 10 and 12, opened Friday and was continued next week by Judge I

Panels Named At Monticello

MONDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1965.





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MONDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1965.



News-Gazette Photo by Ron Beckley

HONOR DOUGLASS FOUNDERS. Several of the original committee and staff of Douglass Community Center were honored Sunday at a celebration of the 20th anniversary of the founding of the center. Pictured at the celebra-

tion, left to right, are Mrs. Raymond Scott, wife of one of the founders; Mrs. Edna Diffay, past secretary; Richard R. Edwards, past board chairman; Taylor Thomas, first director; and Odelia Wesley, past secretary.

Work Deferred

A few recreation workers can not be expected to do the work which is supposed to be handled by the police department. Taylor Thomas, director of the Douglas Community center, 510-12 East Grove street, pointed out today.

It was outside the center that the fatal stabbing of U. S. Lyon, 22, occurred Monday night. He and his assailant, Robert Zachery, 17, had argued in the building a half hour earlier.

Thomas declared he has never asked Chief of Police Clyde Davis or anyone else for a police officer at the Douglas center. "In fact, I told Davis that a recreation center was no place for a uniformed policeman."

"A check of the facts would show that Douglas center is doing more to prevent delinquency and crime than Davis' and his entire police force."

"There is a curfew law in this city, but Davis does not see that it is enforced. In fact, he told me he did not enforce it. If Davis and his police force is so efficient why do they permit youths and adults to carry knives and other deadly weapons on their persons at all times?"

Referring to purported talk of an investigation of the center's operation, Thomas said, "I challenge anybody to make that investigation and at the same time how about investigating the activities of Davis or any other city official who is interested in investigating the activities of Douglas center?"

"If the city of Champaign was progressive and spent a little money for adequate recreation facilities and personnel it wouldn't be necessary for so much money to be spent on an inadequate police force. You can't expect a few recreation workers to do the work that is supposed to be done by a police force."

"No doubt Davis doesn't realize that there has been a crime wave in the last few months. If he can not face facts and do his duty it would be better for the community if he resigned."

OCT. 23, 1946

Nov. 18, 1946

Douglas Center Troop Formed

11-8-46

A new Girl Scout troop for colored girls at Champaign Junior high school held its organizational meeting Tuesday evening at Douglas center, with Joan Velentz elected president of the new group.

To be known as Troop 19, the intermediate troop is open to girls in grades seven, eight and nine. Troop leader is Miss Mary White and Margaret Springfield Cook and Virginia Busch are assistant leaders.

Other officers elected were Vice president, Delores Hendricks; secretary, Marilyn Pickens; treasurer, Gloria Jean Cardwell. Mrs. Glenn Finger introduced the leaders to the girls and directed the troop

elections. Plans were made for a treasure hunt and winter party to be held Nov. 17 in Douglas center.

Thomas Eyes Council Race

Nov. 24, 1946

11-24-46

Taylor Thomas, director of the Douglas Park community center, 510-12 East Grove street, may be a candidate for city commissioner in the February 25 primary in Champaign, it was learned Saturday.

Thomas has been director of the center since it was opened in September of 1945. Prior to that, he was a federal government employee at Chanute Field and in Indianapolis. He is a graduate of Champaign high school and attended the University of Illinois.

Several months ago when the Champaign police force was being expanded by the addition of eight patrolmen, Thomas appeared before the council to present petitions requesting greater Negro representation in the department.

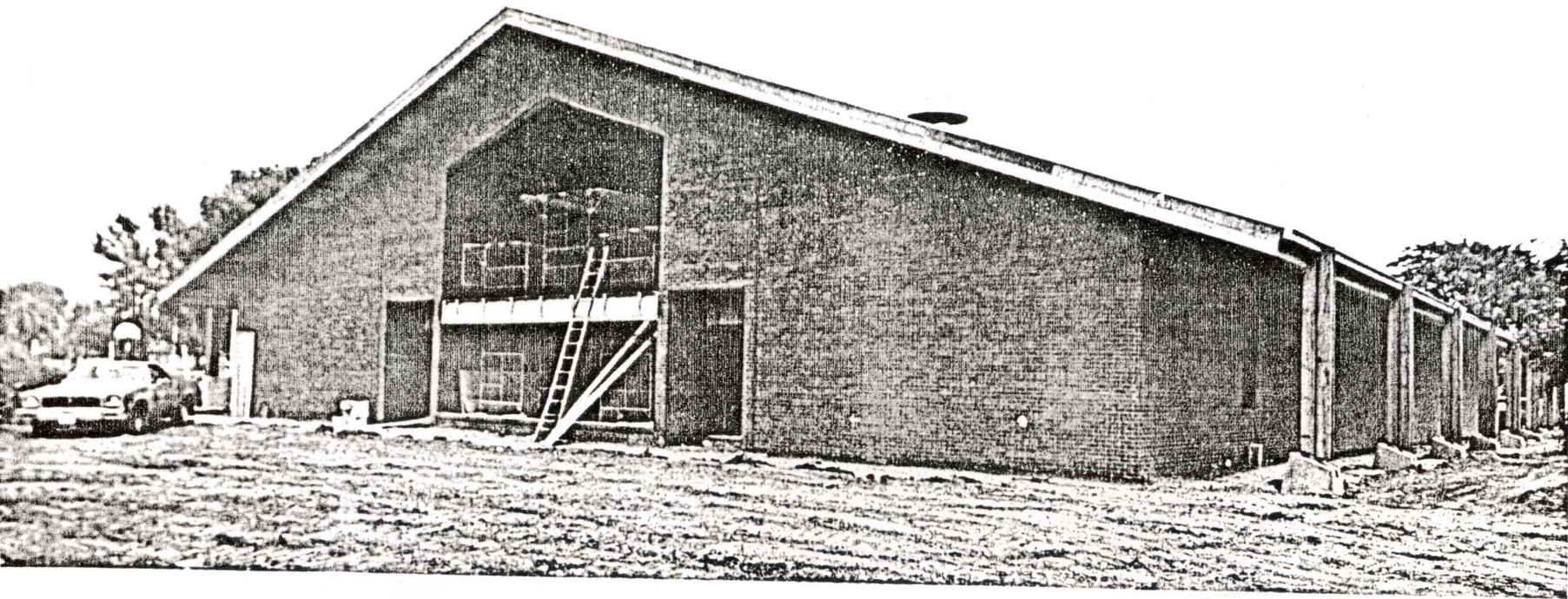
He clashed recently with Police Chief Clyde R. Davis on the question of whether uniformed police protection had been asked for the Douglas center.

Inquiry already has been made at the city clerk's office about obtaining petitions to place Thomas in the running for nomination.



FREDERICK DOUGLASS
RECREATION CENTER
CHAMPAIGN PARK DISTRICT

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Fredrick Douglass Community Center, a \$1 million multi-purpose center in the city's north side.

History

Two decades has passed since a group of persons decided on the idea of the importance of a community and service-men's center in northeast Champaign.

The Douglass ^{Center} Park Recreation Council was ^{an} authorized by Mayor James D. Flynn, of the City of Champaign and Mayor George F. Hurd, of the City of Urbana, to solicit funds with which to build the much needed center. This facility would provide a meeting place for various organizations as well as wholesome recreation for all ~~Negro~~ Citizens of the community as well as ^{to} servicemen.

The Council was composed of Mr. R. M. Scott, President; Mrs. Odelia Wesley, Secretary; Mr. Ray E. Hines, Chairman Campaign Committee, Mrs. Edna Diffey, Secretary; Dr. Harry D. Ellis, Treasurer.

The Community Center Drive Committee was composed of Mr. Richard R. Edwards, Chairman; Mr. Alvin Fopwell, Mr. L. P. Diffey, Mr. Cecil Pope and Dr. H. D. Ellis.

Other persons closely connected with the movement by way of affiliation with the council or board of directors ~~were~~ Mr. Al Rivers, Mrs. ^{Alvin} Fowell, Mr. ~~L. P.~~ L. P. Duffay, Mr. George Mc Combe, Mr. Julius Davis and Mr. Paul New Hurst.

The Ways and Means Committee: Mr. Banks, Chairman, Mr. Leroy Pickens and Mr. Raymon Scott.

The Program Committee: Mr. John Walker, Chairman, Mr. Percy Larry, Mr. Cecil Nelson, and Mr. Eram Scott.

The House Committee: Mr. Cecil Nelson, Chairman and Mrs. Odelia Wesley.

The Devience Committee: Mr. Harry Fletcher, Chairman and Mr. George Roberts.

From this drive approximately \$39,000 dollars was raised. More aid was needed in this effort and many business people responded. ~~Mr. Hinton~~ of the ~~Hinton~~ and ~~Stimmons Company Incorporated~~ was ~~many local citizens made~~ ~~the necessary~~ contributions. Thus a dream became a reality.

New Douglass rec center will be opened Saturday

By Michael Murphy
Of The Courier

The Champaign park district expects to open its new Douglass Park recreation center this week.

Following months of stormy debate and a year of reconstruction work, the center in northeast Champaign will be reopened Saturday.

Robert Toalson, general manager of the park district, said his weekly report that an open

house has been set for 1 to 3 p.m. that day.

The new building replaces a 30-year-old cinder-block structure that was a community as well as a recreation center for black residents of northeast Champaign.

Community residents strongly opposed reconstruction plans for the center, saying the \$900,000 allocated would replace gymnasium space in the old building but would not allow

enough space for other neighborhood activities.

Demolition of the old building and English Bros. construction work on the new center were delayed for several weeks by the protest. The project was finally moved off dead center a year ago, when the park board voted an additional \$100,000 to the project.

The money was to be used to add a senior citizens wing on the building at 6th and

Grove Streets. It became available when bids on the park district's Bicentennial Center project came in well under estimates.

Both recreation centers were financed with funds from a successful 1972 bond referendum.

When inflation forced the park board to scale down its Douglass Center plans, a long-running feud was touched off between park board President

William Helms and Richard Davis, who was the board's only black member until he moved from Champaign earlier this year.

In addition, a group of area residents organized to demand a more complete recreation center. Its leader, activist Roy Williams, was jailed on one occasion, when he allegedly interfered with workman at the construction site.

Pickets also roamed the site

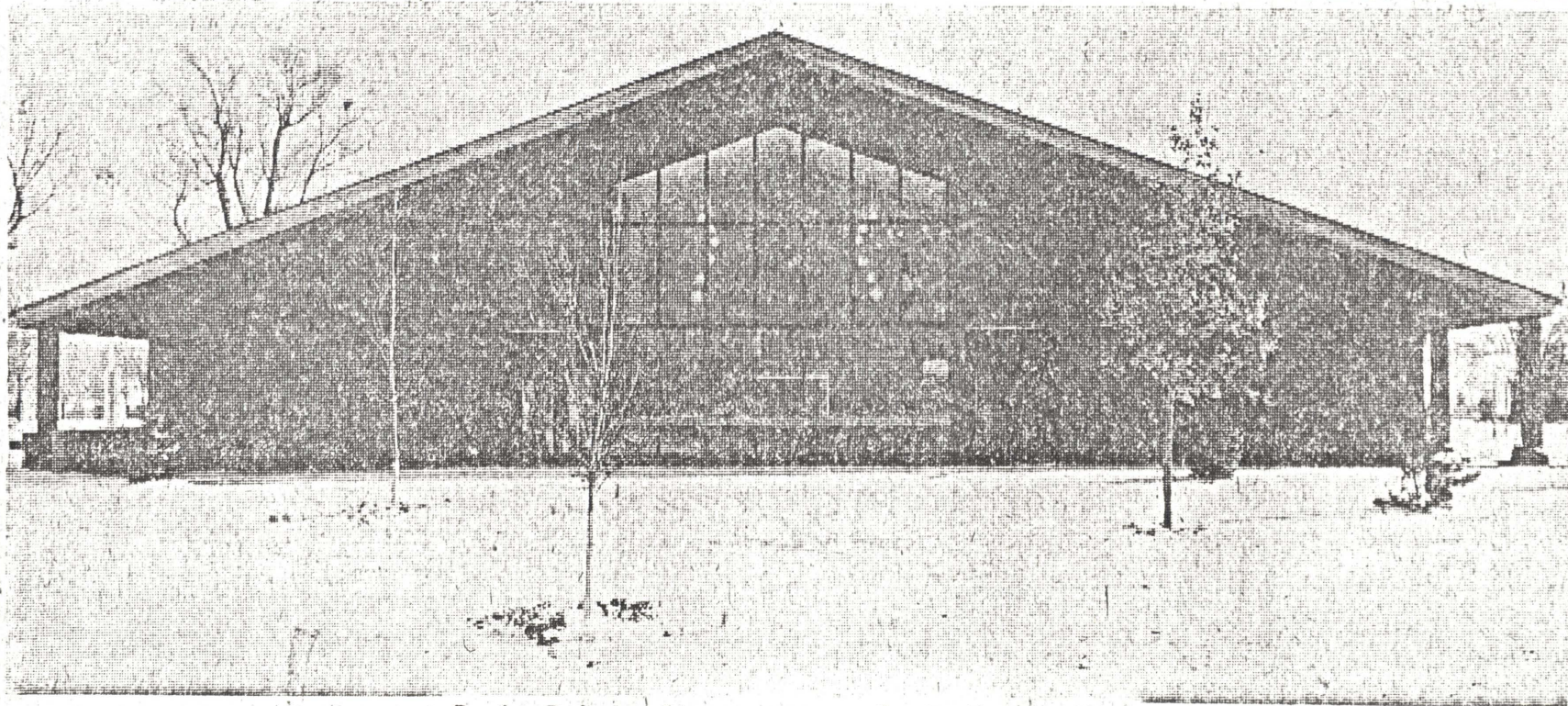
during demolition work.

A building permit for the 14,000-square-foot was issued by city officials Oct. 8, 1975.

Meanwhile, plans for the senior citizens' wing were amended to apply the extra \$100,000 toward remodeling the Douglass Annex, a nearby building that formerly housed a grocery store.

Plans for continued operation of a library branch in the building also created some controversy.

However, the Champaign Public Library board decided last November to move the branch, at least temporarily, into a donated building north of the park that previously served as the office of the Champaign Asphalt Co.



Douglass Park recreation center set to open Dec. 11 with an open house

Dec 8, 1976

Douglass Center



Months to build, years to serve northeast Champaign—Douglass Center comes down in minutes this morning

(Photo by Phil Greer)

Old center razed for new one

Shortly after 9:30 a.m. Thursday a bulldozer rammed into the cracked walls of Douglass Center.

About an hour later, the center, once the hub of recreational activities in north Champaign, was a pile of rubble.

Five workmen demolished the north Champaign park center.

Champaign park commissioner Richard Davis Jr. was on the scene as the first bricks fell. He said he was glad to see the old structure torn down, adding it should have been done a long time ago.

Hester Suggs, principal of Washington School near the old center, also was watching the demolition. "This was the center of activities, the only center for a long time for Champaign kids," she said.

There was no sign of disruption in the project. Police squad cars were patrolling the area and a squad car was sitting watch at Grove and 4th streets.

The demolition was being done by the Eddie Pelmore Excavating and Hauling Co. of Champaign.

1975/09-26/CO

LHC WF PARKS (CH)