

Boys & Girls Clubs of Providence

A Historical Sketch

1868 – 1990 (Original document by Richard E. White, Executive Director, 1963-1990)

THE EARLY YEARS

About three years following the U.S. Civil War, a number of individuals were drawn together by a mutual interest. It was March 3, 1868. They met to establish the Union for Christian Work and recorded the following aims, “To furnish such occupation, amusement and surroundings as will weaken the power of temptation, and arouse the higher nature of all who come within its influence.”

They began programs for the public on October 2, 1868. The Union for Christian Work was the parent from whom, thirty-one years later, today’s Boys & Girls Clubs of Providence first breathed independent life.

From the beginning, the U.C.W. provided service for children. The first Annual Meeting, October 7, 1869, reports that, “Large numbers of youth, of both sexes, have from week to week been brought into contact with mature and wise men and women, whom they could not have met socially by any means heretofore existing. We dwell upon this because such social freedom has been considered impossible, and because the goal of such an influence in a city where so many, though well-housed and sheltered, are without real homes, cannot be over-estimated.”

This program continued every year, but with change. The 1869 report refers to boys and girls. By 1883, the youth program was reported as the “Street Boys Committee”. The direction of service to boys may have begun earlier. That same Annual Report details the following services in addition to Street Boys programs: a Free Library and Reading Room, Flower Mission, Seaman’s Reading Program, and Rides & Excursions for Invalids. Annual income and expense totaled \$1,606. William T. Crandall was President of the U.C.W. at that time and a member of the Street Boys Committee. The U.C. W. Free Library published a catalogue of the volumes it had; the 1876 edition lists approximately 2, 000 books.

In the decade of the 1890’s, the program was identified as “Boys Room”. In 1899, the parent let loose its offspring. The Union’s work for boys for the 1899/00 season closed as usual in March 1899. At that time, U.C.W. volunteers met with William Dudley of the National Work for Street Boys. Its National Headquarters was in Springfield, MA. These meetings resulted in the Union decision to transfer its Street Boys work to what would be a new organization to be named Providence Boys Club. A Board of Governors was established, a Superintendent hired, funds raised and separate quarters obtained. The new organization opened its doors in October 1899. William T. Crandall was elected President. Percy L. Smith was hired as Superintendent. The Providence Boys Club incorporated in February 1905.

In 1906, the U.C.W. Annual Report states, “the Providence Boys Club, now a flourishing institution occupying large rooms in the Grosvenor building, corner of Weybosset and Eddy Streets, is the offspring of the Union for Christian Work.”

Locations as can be identified:

Union for Christian Work

October	1868	Broad & Eddy Streets “Suite of Rooms”
	1900.	151 Weybosset Street
	1906.	31 Chestnut Street

Boys Club

September 1899 -	Spring 1990	Chestnut & Clifford Streets (Vestry of Vacant church)
December 1990 -	February 1905	152 Weybosset Street – corner of Eddy Street
1906 -	1909	129 Eddy Street – Amasa Mason Building
1910 -	1917	33 Canal Street
1918 -	1975	226 South Main Street (built as a church in 1833)

Other Boys Club Branches came into existence in 1925, 1929, 1960, and 1968.

Name Evolution:

(circa) 1868	Boys Room
1899.	Providence Boys’ Club
1956.	Providence Boys’ Clubs
1981.– present	Boys & Girls Clubs of Providence (inclusion of “Girls”, and apostrophe dropped)

Board President Chronology:

Aug. 1899 – May 1913	William T. Crandall
July. 1913 – Feb. 1923	William L. Hodgman
1923 – 1955	Philip B. Simonds, Sr.
1956 – 1960	Philip B. Simonds, Jr.
1960 – 1963	Robinson C. Trowbridge
1966 – 1969	George T. Giraud
1969 – 1971	Leonard A. Yerkes, III
1971 – 1975	Hilary G. Woodhouse
1975 – 1979	Gordon L. Parker, Jr.
1979 – 1982	Ronald B. Andsager
1982 – 1985	W. Lincoln Mossop, Jr.
1985 – 1990	Raymond A. DeCesare
1990 – 1994	Robert Schacht
1995 - 2000	Anthony R. Leone, Ph.D.
2000 – 2002	Linda H. Newton

Personnel Chronology:

From 1868 until 1899, the Boys’ Club functioned as one of the services of the Union for Christian Work. In April 1899, with the blessing of the U.C.W., the Boys’ Club became a separate entity.

Some notes on Personnel:

1. Throughout the administration of Percy L. Smith, titled Superintendent, (August 1899 – March 10, 1922) he functioned with the job responsibilities comparable to the job title of Executive Director in today’s (1990) context. In 1923, Philip B. Simons was elected President of the Board of Governors. From that date until 1955, 32 years, he not only gave effective and continuous volunteer leadership, he also assumed a large portion of the administrative duties of the overall operation. Throughout this period, the position of Superintendent was comparable to that of Branch Director in today’s context. In 1955, Hugh J. Smith was appointed Executive Director, a newly established position.
2. Upon employment in June 1960, Richard E. White had the dual responsibilities of Branch Director for the South Side Clubhouse and also Assistant Executive Director, until his appointment to Executive Director in 1963.
3. There are no family relationships among any of the personnel listed. The charts that follow identify the professional leaders of the Organization.

Executive Director / Asst. Executive Director (Dir. of Operations)

Chronology 1899 – 2002:

<u>Years Employed</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Executive Director</u>	<u>Asst. Exec. Director</u>	<u>Also See:</u>
38	Hugh J. Smith	1955 – May 1963		Fox Pt. & Wanskuck
30.5	Richard E. White	1963 – Dec. 1990	June 1960 - May 1963	South Side
3.5	William Edmonson		Dec. 1965 – Nov. 1966	South Side
4.75	Robert Kiernan		Mar. 1967 – Dec. 1971	
12.5	John Treiber		Sep. 1971 – Apr. 1984	
12.25	Robert A. Clark		Sep. 1984 – Jan. 1990	Olneyville
			<i>Director of Operations (title change)</i>	
	George C. Neubauer	1989 – _____		
	Elizabeth White		May 1990 – Aug. 1997	
	Gregory J. Reinholt		Sep. 1997 - 2001	Fox Point
	Anne Stern	<i>interim</i>		
	Gregory J. Reinholt	<i>interim</i>		
	Antonio Piotti	2000 - 2001		

Justin Waranis	2001
<i>Gregory J. Reinholt interim</i>	
William Beatini	2002
Gregory J. Reinholt	Feb. 2001 – present

FOX POINT CLUBHOUSE

The Providence Boys' Club incorporated in February 1905. Percy L. Smith was the Superintendent (see Personnel Chronology).

In October 1909, P.L. Smith reports, "the Club is compelled to leave its old quarters on Eddy Street." Five months later, February 1910, the Annual Meeting is held in new quarters at 33 Canal Street. For whatever reason(s), the Board and Superintendent were apparently less than satisfied with Canal Street. There were several attempts to relocate. In early 1913, a Committee was appointed to consider the feasibility of a new building campaign. Three months later, in May, it was reported that an option was secured "on certain property on Chestnut Street." In July, the Committee was authorized to solicit funds for a lot. In January 1914, the Board determined that business conditions made it a "poor time to solicit, therefore laying in abeyance until improvement". However, fifteen months later, in April 1915, a Committee reported that the Emanuel Church was not for sale and a house on Chestnut Street was being looked at.

A special meeting of the Corporation was held on October 21, 1915, at the Turks Head Club; fifteen members were present. "The President presented the facts relating to the present condition of the Club and advised that Corporation that in view of the fire it would be necessary either to abandon this work, or seek a new home." It was voted: a. to continue the work of the Providence Boys' Club; b. to buy property up to \$25,000; and c. to raise \$40,000.

First-owned Building

Ten minutes later (1:15pm) a special meeting of the Board of Governors, eight present, voted that the Building Committee be authorized to secure an option on the Talma Theater, 226 South Main Street. (This is the northeast corner of South Main and Power Streets.) A little over a month later, the Committee reported the purchase of the Talma Theater for \$18,000 (December 1, 1915). An agreement in the sale was that "The Players" would have continued use of the Talma Theater for the balance of the season.

The Board met for the first time in the Talma Theater at 2:00 PM on June 8, 1916. In August, at a special Board meeting, they voted to "make whatever expenditures necessary to get the building in condition for the use of the Club this winter." Sometime between August and December 1916, the Providence Boys Club began operations in the first facility owned by them. Community use of facilities, which continues in 1990, began almost immediately. At the December 21, 1916, meeting, it was voted to permit the 5th Troop of RI Boys Scouts to use the Club on Monday nights.

"Through a Tunnel"

In 1925, a community-wide campaign was conducted to build a Boys Club in the Olneyville section. The campaign included funds for an addition to the South Main Street Club, which called for a swimming pool (25' x 60'), women's locker room, and a boiler / pool filtration room; cost: \$45,000.

This was a separate building, constructed on the easterly side of Wells Street and Power Street, uphill and across Wells Street from 226 South Main Street building. As part of the project, a tunnel under Wells Street was constructed to connect the two buildings.

With the construction and opening of the Olneyville and Wanskuck Clubhouses (1925 & 1929) plus the fact that the Board President, Philip B. Simonds, Sr., maintained an office at the 226 South Main Street Club, that facility was identified as the Central Clubhouse. This appeared on stationary, published Annual Reports, in Board meeting Minutes, etc. until sometime between 1956-59 when the name Fox Point Clubhouse became the designation.

No recorded decision has surfaced regarding the name change after so many years. It is believed that three other major occurrences in the late 1950's were the likely reasons for the change. Board President, P. B. Simonds, Sr., gave up the post in 1955/56 (see Board Presidents). His successor did not continue an office at South Main Street. The position of Executive Director was created in 1956 (see Personnel Chronology). The South Side Clubhouse was under construction and included space in which the administrative offices would be located. Since neither the President nor the Executive Director would be located at South Main Street, it was likely decided that the work "Central" was no longer appropriate.

Shortly after the name Fox Point Clubhouse came into use, the long process of relocation from South Main Street to Ives Street began (1962-1975). The September 1962, Board Minutes indicate discussion of possible condemnation of the South Main Street property as part of the Providence Redevelopment Plan. Condemnation did take place. South Main Street was ultimately sold to the Providence Redevelopment Agency (PRA). A new site was purchased from the PRA (Ives & Wickenden Street). A special federal grant of \$845,000 was successfully sought.

The Clubhouse at South Main Street continued service into 1974. For a short period awaiting completion of the new building, the Fox Point Club provided limited services from a storefront on Ives Street, one block north of the present building. Then on January 27, 1975, the newly constructed Fox Point Clubhouse opened. A detailed chronology of this project follows:

September 1962 – Board discusses possible condemnation of Fox Point Clubhouse as part of Providence Redevelopment Plan.

March 27, 1963 – Met PRA officials; discussed possible sites for relocation of the Fox Point Club.

August 1964 – Received a letter from the PRA offering a block bound by Wickenden, Ives, and Trenton Streets.

April 1966 – Received several appraisals of South Main Street property to determine sales price.

May 1967 – Notice of additional appraisals of South Main Street property.

February 1969 – South Main Street property sold to PRA under condemnation sale. Final agreement on sales price not reached.

October 1969 – Following report by Executive Director, Board of Governors directs him to explore possibility of federal grant for new building.

April 1971 – 171-page application for neighborhood facilities grant submitted to H.U.D.

July 1971 – Notification that \$845,000 grant approved.

December 1971 – Boys Club receives \$338,000 court award + interest for South Main Street property.

August 1972 – Boys Club purchases Wickenden Street site.

October 1972 – Architect completes drawings and specifications.

January 1973 – H.U.D. approval of drawings and specifications received.

February 1973 – Project goes to bid.

March 27, 1973 – Bids publicly opened; O. Alhborg & Sons wins award.

10 years to the day of the first meeting on the project.

May 3, 1973 – Construction contract signed.

May 21, 1973 – Groundbreaking.

January 26, 1975 – Open House and dedication

January 27, 1975 – New Clubhouse opens.

The Federal Grant (H.U.D.) and Fox Point Clubhouse

The federal grant via the Neighborhood Facilities Grant Program of 1965, Housing and Urban Development Department of the United States, of \$845,000 carried with it numerous requirements. These are detailed in the contract between the then Providence Boys' Clubs and H.U.D. The most significant stipulation was that the facility had to be multi-service for a period of at least twenty years (1975-1995). To meet this requirement, non-for-profit human service organizations had to document intent to provide services at the facility. They were called "Permitted Uses". A number of qualified organizations made commitments, and they are delineated in the Federal Application. In 1990, the multiple services included Fox Point Boys & Girls Club, Providence Public Library, Neighborhood Health Center Branch and Fox Point Senior Citizens Center.

THE OLNEYVILLE CLUBHOUSE

Though he did not live to see it become reality, Percy L. Smith, Superintendent 1899-1922, aggressively and tenaciously pursued expansion of Boys' Club work. Immediately after the organization began service in the first owned building on South Main Street in 1916, he stressed expansion with emphasis on the western section of the city.

In early 1919, Smith recommends "the same as I did last year, that a Committee look into the matter of providing a large building on the west side of the city in which there could be maintained a restaurant, reading room, classrooms, sleeping rooms, and an employment office."

In late 1919, there is discussion on raising funds for enlarged work. Early 1920, Smith recommends "the organization of community Clubs". In April, he recommends establishing Clubs in other sections of the city. Board member Arthur A. Thomas states he will contact some Olneyville businessmen about a Club for Olneyville. At the December 1920 meeting, a letter from a George Rowell of Olneyville is read to the Board; it asks for help to start a Club in the area. P.L. Smith, at the same meeting, reports no success in looking for quarters in the Olneyville section. Decision made to continue to search. Two months later, February 1921, P.L. Smith's report includes "recommend Branch Clubs in Olneyville, Federal Hill, South Providence, and North End."

Nine months later, November 1921, the following is reported from P.L. Smith to the Chairman of the House Committee: "the Superintendent has visited South Providence, Olneyville, North End districts several times in search of quarters for Clubs." A month later, P.L. Smith brought up the matter of Branch Clubs and after a general discussion it was suggested that he confer with Mr. John P. Farnsworth, Jr., about a Branch in Olneyville.

Mid-January 1922, P.L. Smith submits a report that concludes “it has been impossible for me to do much about Branch Clubs because I have been ill more or less since Christmas.” (P.L. Smith dies two months later, March 10, 1922.)

For three years, following Smith’s death, there was a succession of Superintendents (see Personnel chronology), but in early 1923, a dedicated and effective new Board President was elected. He was Philip B. Simonds, Sr., and he would serve in the office for over thirty years. (see President’s chronology).

Simonds, in Florida, sent a letter to the outgoing Board President setting forth the conditions upon which he would stand for election to the Office. The letter is incorporated into the February 1923 Board Minutes. In part, it states, “I feel we here have not fully realized our responsibilities and how much a good active Club or Clubs would mean to the under-privileged boys of our City. I believe in Branch Clubs, which are successful elsewhere, and that our present building will eventually be a Branch.”

P.B. Simonds did not procrastinate! In April 1923, he reported “I have given a great deal of time to the Olneyville situation. We are meeting with the Olneyville Businessmen’s Association this evening (April 18) and have an upcoming meeting with the Assistant Treasurer of Atlantic Mills about the donation of land.” (Superintendent Parkhouse reports school census of 6,125 children within a mile radius of Olneyville Square. Atlantic Mills states there are 1,200-1,500 boys between 15-17 employed in different mills in that section.)

By September 1923, Harold A. Braman, Assistant Treasurer of Atlantic Mills, had agreed to donate some lots of land totaling 12,300 square feet on Delaine Street. A 2,000 square foot adjacent lot on Appleton Street was purchased for \$800 from an individual owner. Total land is 14,300 square feet. Total PBC cost about \$1,000. The small purchased lot is the second lot from the Layna Brown Nickerson House (Providence Day Nursery). The Olneyville Businessmen’s Association, having visited the site, approved.

By year-end 1923, a problem surfaces. Part of the land donated to the Providence Boys’ Club had been previously donated to the Providence Day Nursery. The Day Nursery had never recorded the deed. It was also learned, while welcoming Providence Boys’ Club, that they (the Day Nursery) would rather not have the Clubhouse adjacent to them.

P.B. Simonds reports multiple meetings from which emerges an agreement that PBC will transfer the land to Providence Day Nursery if the Day Nursery Board, individuals of apparent influence, could find another suitable site for PBC. There was no success in the effort. However, it is evident that P.B. Simonds communicated the need in more than one quarter. By February 1924, he reported a telephone call from “Mr. Jordan of the C.F. Hunger office,” stating that Brown University just received a bequest of land on Plainfield and Atwood Streets from the estate of Walter Kimball. Simonds informed Mrs. Carl B. Marshall of the Day Nursery Board, who in turn, talked with Mr. Sharpe on the Finance Committee at Brown University.

The culmination!! Brown University agreed to sell 21,000 square feet on Atwood Street for \$4,000. Providence Day Nursery agreed to provide \$2,000. Mrs. Marshall guaranteed \$500 and “a friend of Edward Kirby” donated \$500. PBC added \$1,000. PBC deeded the Delaine Street property back to Atlantic Mills, who in turn, deeded it to the Day Nursery. At that point, PBC land had increased from

12,300 to 21,000 feet for a total out-of-pocket cost of \$2,000. But there was only 40 feet of frontage in the purchase from Brown University and the bequest included an abutting lot also with 40 feet of frontage; 25,000 square feet all together. Agreement was reached. PBC took ownership on March 10, 1924.

Within a month, the PBC Board began plans for a fundraising drive to construct an Olneyville building. By July, a campaign was scheduled to take place in late October, but “surely not during the final week of election.” It was decided that “the intensive campaign should begin October 20, and end the following Monday, with preliminary work to begin September 1.

In early September, two central Committees were formed. One consisted of fifty men from the downtown section. The other was composed of twenty-five women and twenty-five men from Olneyville. It was called the Committee of One Hundred.

Seven weeks later...”voted, that a letter be written to Mr. Frederick S. Sibley thanking him for his services in the drive.” He was the campaign chairman. A total of \$159,657.74 was raised in pledges and cash donations from an estimated 5,000 donors.

About twenty months after obtaining title to the land, the new Olneyville Boys’ Club opened (November 1, 1925) at a cost of \$100,000. (Notation: the campaign also funded an addition to the South Main Street Clubhouse. See Fox Point Clubhouse.)

Fifty-five years later, August 1979, the Board voted to build a new gymnasium addition and make renovations to the 55 year old Olneyville Clubhouse. The action was prompted by the Organizations recent aggressive steps in providing full-time services for girls as well as boys, in a building not designed for this purpose. Funds received from a Camp Davis land sale (see Camp Davis), \$365,000 was allocated to this project. Construction began in June 1981. The new addition went into service in April 1982. The cost: \$646,000. In addition to the \$365,000 funds are received from charitable foundations, individuals and interest earnings. A community wide fund raising campaign was not conducted. As part of the project, the organization was able to purchase a strip of land with 40’ frontage on Plainfield Street, whose rear line abutted the Boys & Girls Clubs of Providence property. In 1990, it is the parking lot access. Purchased from the City of Providence for approximately \$3,000.

WANSKUCK CLUBHOUSE

As reported earlier, Percy L. Smith, first Superintendent, hired in 1899, did not live to see his untiring efforts to expand the work of the Boys’ Club in Providence become a reality. In November 1921, he said, “The Superintendent has visited South Providence, Olneyville, North End districts, several times in search for quarters for Clubs. He has also spoken before the Sisterhood of Temple Bethel on Broad Street and Grove Street Parent Teacher Association of East Providence.” What is called the Wanskuck Clubhouse, at 550 Branch Avenue, serves the “North End district”, identified in the Smith report.

P.L. Smith died in early 1922. A year later, Philip B. Simonds, Sr., was elected as President of the Board of Governors. At the time, and referring to Club expansion, he said, “I realize the death of Mr. Smith last year upset our plans in this respect”. As the volunteer leader, Simonds went to work to “enlarge Boys’ Club work.” It started with a project in the western end of the City. By the beginning of 1926, a

newly constructed Olneyville Club was in service. Attention was then directed to the North End. In May 1927, Alexander Campbell, from the national Boys' Club Federation, completed a survey of the "northern part of the city to determine the best location for the new boys Clubhouse." Unlike prior or later experiences, what was to become known as the Wanskuck Clubhouse came into being with lightening speed.

About six months after the survey, President Simonds reported the Messrs. Stephen O. and his brother, U.S. Senator Jesse H. Metcalf, had donated the money to construct the Clubhouse along with the land upon which to build it. It was January 1928. On July 10, 1928, the Board accepted the C.B. Maguire Co. proposal for a total cost of \$107,777. On December 29, 1928, the building was dedicated and opened to boys. Construction of the four-story building took less than six months.

Clark Simonds, son of Philip B. Simonds, Sr., relates his father's story to him about the visit to see Mr. Metcalf to ask for a lead gift to help build a Clubhouse in the North End. Simonds said "Jesse's here from Washington. If you will wait a bit, I'll speak to him!" He returned in a few minutes saying, "They'll do it." "Then father," Clarke asked, "how much will they help us?" They answer was that they will *build* it – and they did.

Fifty-nine years later (1987), the Board of Governors approved a recommendation to raise funds for a new gymnasium addition to the Wanskuck building. A community-wide campaign was conducted to raise \$1.6 million for the 9,000 square foot addition and renovations to the ground floor and first floor of the original building. Modernization itself was needed; however, the inclusion of girls as well as boys increased the need for new construction. The addition opened in the fall of 1990.

SOUTH SIDE CLUBHOUSE

From the time it was first recommended, forty years would go by before a South Providence Club opened its doors. In early 1921, Superintendent Percy L. Smith's Annual Report includes, "recommend Branch Clubs in Olneyville, Federal Hill, South Providence and North End." In November of that year, Smith states, "Have visited South Providence, Olneyville, North End districts several times in search for quarters for Clubs."

Because of community interest and financial support, Clubhouse development in the 1920's is concentrated in the Olneyville (1925) and North End (Wanskuck 1928 / 29) neighborhoods. The Board did begin to actively pursue a South Providence Branch near the end of that decade. In 1929, the National Boys' Club organization was called upon to survey the South Providence district and the Federal Hill district. Each was scheduled for development.

Two major events in the history of the United States, the Great Depression of the 1930's, followed by World War II, 1941-1945, meant no "enhancement of the work" during those years.

The 1944 Annual Report states, "from various people in South Providence, we have been urged to establish a Boys' Club in that district." The following years' report is far more forceful in stating the need. Published in early 1946, the Board President writes, "The most important and gratifying happening of 1945 was the end of World War II...there is a great need for a Boys' Club in South Providence." This Annual Report cover boldly depicts a map of Providence with the Central, Wanskuck and Olneyville Clubhouses in circles and a blank circle with the words "South Providence - Thousands

of boys need a Club.” It was not until 12 years later, November 1958, that a building fund drive for a South Side Boys Clubhouse was launched. By March 1960, \$572,022 from 2,396 contributions had been raised. Bayard Ewing, attorney and community leader, served as campaign chairman. A Clubhouse was constructed in the geographic center of South Providence (census tracts 4, 5, 6, 7) on land purchased for that purpose. It encompasses the block bounded by Louisa, Oxford, French and Sayles Streets. The building faces onto Louisa Street. The new South Side Boys’ Club opened in May 1961, forty years after its initial recommendation.

The South Side Club housed the first full time Girls Club within the then Providence Boys’ Clubs organization. It was 1969. The South Providence area had been designated a Model Cities neighborhood. Model Cities was a federally funded human service project. The second floor of the Clubhouse was rearranged to accommodate the then “South Providence Model Cities Girls Club.” It was separately staffed and managed by the Providence Boys’ Clubs. Over the next several years, federal money diminished, then discontinued. At the same time, general community support grew through the United Way. The original name was dropped when the South Side Branch was named the South Side Boys & Girls Club in the mid 1970’s. (note: By 1984, each of the five Branches of the organization, as funds and facility adaptations permitted, became full service Boys & Girls Clubs. Also, a corporate name change took place in 1981; the name became the Boys & Girls Clubs of Providence.)

In 1990, the South Side Boys & Girls Club continues as a viable effective youth service for the South Providence neighborhood.

NORTH PROVIDENCE CLUBHOUSE

Twelve North Providence residents met in January 1965 to discuss services to boys in their town. By spring, twenty-one men established the North Providence Boys’ Club Association. In September, a weekly bus service to the Wanskuck Boys’ Club (Wednesdays) for swimming, gym, vocational activities, etc. was underway. Participation grew and two buses were needed. The Association financed the activity through personal donations, carnivals, spaghetti suppers, etc.; 459 boys registered.

A year or so later, the Association asked the Board of Governors of the then Providence Boys’ Club to consider a Boys’ Club Branch in North Providence. In May 1967, the Board approved the establishment of a pilot Branch Club. By year’s end, assistance was received from the United Way for operating costs of the project. An unoccupied store, formerly Gilsons Pharmacy at 2030 Smith Street, in the Centredale section, was made available by the owners at a very modest rental.

March 11, 1968, the North Providence Boys’ Club opened. The first year found 723 boys joining. The following year, membership grew to 756. A six-day week operation with diversified programs including sidewalk art festivals, intramural athletics, bicycle safety meets, cooperative programs with the library, police, civic groups, and local merchants were developed. The people demonstrated their support by donating funds, equipment and volunteer services. The North Providence Boys’ Club was accepted by the United Way for annual operating support.

Daily participation jammed the small Smith Street quarters. Within three years, volunteers organized a building fund campaign and donations were sought. During this time, a 1 ¼ acre site was donated by Raymond A. Gregson of Worcester Textile. \$321,000 in cash and pledges were received. Several contractors pledged labor and materials. By January 1974, an architect was authorized to proceed with

working drawings and specifications. He was instructed to design for partial construction because of limited funds. During this period, the Club moved to rent-free quarters on Woonasquatucket Avenue, leaving 2030 Smith Street (owned by Raymond Gregson).

In the early spring of 1975, construction began. It was a period of rapidly rising construction costs. Between the time the funds were raised (1971-73) and when construction was started (1975), costs had risen appreciably. Bids came in well above estimates. Only partial completion of the planned facility was possible. On December 15, 1976, the building opened. Over the next several years, the second floor was completed adjacent to the gymnasium. A suspended ceiling system was installed throughout the first floor. Each of these improvements occurred as funds were acquired to make them possible.

CAMP DAVIS HISTORICAL SKETCH (11-07-84)

LAND ORIGINALLY INHABITED BY

In pre-colonial times, this land area was occupied by an Indian Tribe known as the Narragansetts. There were sub-groupings of Niantics, Pontiacs, etc. In colonial times, as settlers moved in, land came into the “private owner” concept and after much machination, and the Narragansetts were given a parcel of land known as the Narragansett Indian Reservation. It was an area encompassing some 2,000 acres in southwestern Rhode Island. Though the Tribe functioned with a relatively loose governmental structure, it did have “Sachems” (chiefs or kings), and they did have authority. In the passage of time and with the desire to live comfortably, Sachems began to sell land that was part of the Reservation. By the early part of the 19th century, virtually all of the Reservation land was in private ownership in various parcel sizes of 5-200 acres.

CAMP DAVIS DEVELOPMENT

In 1960 and 1961, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Providence was seeking a site to develop a summer camp for city children. Board President at the time, George Davis, knew of land owned by Harold Tanner, a partner in his law firm, who was considering donation of the land to a charitable organization. Following several visits with Mr. Tanner, a donation of 170 acres was made to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Providence. This occurred in December 1962. In the spring of 1963, a bulldozer cut a road across this donated land from the access road (where the Camp Davis entrance sign is located) to the waterfront (where the Redgate Lodge is located). During that summer, the Redgate Lodge, craft shelter, washhouse and infirmary were constructed. In the first four years, Camp Davis operated as a day camp. 1967 was its first year as a resident camp. The same year, the dining hall was constructed; other buildings had been constructed in the meantime: Villages 1 and 1, camp office, specialist cottage, and maintenance buildings. Kimball Lodge and Village 3 were constructed in the early 1970's.

In the early 1970's, 87 acres of land south of the original parcel were donated by A.C. Beals, a retired contractor. In 1975, an additional 170 acres was donated by the group known as Quakcompaug Lodge.

This parcel ran south of the A.C. Beals property across the southern end of Schoolhouse Pond and included most of the shoreline on the western side of Schoolhouse Pond. In the late 1970's, work commenced on the development of a full-size soccer/athletic field. This project required two years for completion because of extraordinary problems with boulders and contour problems.

In 1975, the Boys & Girls Clubs was one of several land-owners in the area named in litigation brought by the Narragansett Indians. This is an involved story that had a 12th hour settlement before going into Federal Court. The settlement included the deeding of all the land described above, with the exception of 106 acres, to the Narragansett Tribe of Indians in exchange for financial compensation. In effect, the Boys & Girls Clubs sold the land to the Tribe at fair market value, and the United States Government paid their bill. The proceeds from this settlement have helped to maintain Camp Davis since that time and will function as a permanent fund for the future.

CAMPING SERVICES

“Fresh Air Work” - Existed at least from 1900 when it was reported for the summer of 1900, “the kindness of the Fresh Air Committee of the Union for Christian Work for the fifty tickets for a day outing were distributed among mothers of our boys.” P.L. Smith. This activity continued at least through the summer of 1916, when P.L. Smith reports “1,377 people taken on Fresh Air Outings during the summer.” It was reported annually in the PBC Minutes from 1905 onward (example: The Annual Report dated March 31, 1909, states “More than 2,000 women and children were benefited by having Fresh Air outings. Invalids were taken to and from the boats in automobiles, some of them going to a shore resort for the first time.”)

In 1915, Board members discussed whether it would be desirable to obtain a farm for the Fresh Air work. A year later, action to appoint a Committee to investigate obtaining a farm was deferred.

1924 – KIWANIS BOYS’ CLUB FARM, CHEPACHET, RI - Summer 1924

Identified as the Spring Grove property, the first summer of Farm Camp was held in Chepachet, fifteen miles from Providence. 65 boys, 6 weeks, 241 attendees; average 40 people per week. A Work, Pay, and Play Program. Vegetables grown were potatoes, tomatoes, cabbage, beans, peppers, peas, lettuce, corn. Painted and remodeled houses; cleaned fields and grounds. Each boy paid \$3.50 per week to attend. Studied nature, swimming, all kinds of sports. Weight gain: average 3.5 pounds.

1925 – SUMMER

Board President reports “Our boys had the privilege of enjoying the Kiwanis Boys’ Club Farm.”

1926 – APRIL – DISTURBING DEVELOPMENT....

Kiwanis offers PBC to send 100 boys, 50 at a time, for 2 weeks, each boy at \$3.50 weekly. Then Kiwanis announced in the newspaper: a **free** two-week stay at Camp for other boys. The PBC Board of Governors point of view: the operating principle – “We think it a great mistake to send any boys to the Camp free....from the beginning, we (PBC) have stood for the Work, Pay, and Play Program”; and the inequity – “Further, we consider it unfair to have our boys pay and other boys go without paying.”

1929 – JANUARY

Nothing further on camping until January 1929, when the President reports that the Kiwanis Club contacted him in regard to PBC operating their summer camp near Chepachet. Reported again in March 1929 with nothing definite. Then, two years later, January 31, 1931, the deed for the Spring Grove

property is transferred by Kiwanis Club of Providence to Providence Boys' Club (Book 46, Page 118, Town Hall, Gloucester).

MAY 28, 1931

Providence Boys' Club Board votes to accept Kiwanis Club gift of the Kiwanis Reservation near Chepachet RI, on basis Providence Boys' Club assume a \$3,800 debt on the property. Property includes 40 acres of land, a 40 acre pond, a brook, and a number of buildings in fair to poor condition.

FEBRUARY 1932

On account of the depression, plans have been postponed for developing the Camp "until funds are in hand to carry on this work." Also this month, \$3,333.33 received from the estate of Abby PC Davis utilized to reduce loan of \$3,800 with Rhode Island Hospital Trust bank.

OCTOBER 1933

Balance of bequest from Abby PC Davis received. \$300 of this is voted to pay off balance of loan (must assume some payment(s) had been made otherwise).

MAY 1936

Next reference to Chepachet land is in May 1936. The National Youth Administration (NYA), a federal depression-era program, was expected to seek use of the Chepachet property during the summer months. Would include "putting houses in excellent shape as compensation for use of the property." In September 1936, agreement with the NYA to use property in Chepachet during winter months at \$25 per month and any improvements that may be needed. NYA also used property during summer of 1937. (Note: at the same time, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), also a depression-era program, leased a portion of the Olneyville Boys' Club building, along with the right to use certain equipment.

DECEMBER 1937

YMCA of Providence submits a proposal to lease Chepachet property for year of 1938. YMCA conducts camp program during Summer 1938.

NOVEMBER 1938

Report of Hurricane damage on the property; trees down. Department of Agriculture agreed to send men to "clean up the woods."

DECEMBER 1939

Plan for use of Chepachet property submitted to Board by Olneyville Superintendent Tisdell. However, 1939 and 1940 – rented to YMCA for these years.

JUNE 1942

Chepachet property sold (Quit claim deed, book 51, page 94, Town Hall, Gloucester) to Salvatore Lanzi and wife Maddalena, both of Providence. Revenue Stamps \$5.50.

1947

James W. Redgate, Physical Director at the Hope Club Providence and Beach Manager at the Dunes Club, Narragansett, began seeking funds to underwrite costs of boys from the Boys' Club to attend summer camps. Several camps in the Rhode Island area are utilized and J.W. Redgate continued the activity annually. With the founding of Camp Davis in 1963 (see below), Jim Redgate's campership

energies were directed to sending boys and girls to Camp Davis. In 1990, at age eighty-two, he continues the effort. The Redgace Lodge at Camp Davis was named in his honor.

1961 – 1962

Assistant Executive Director, R. E. White recommends the development of a Providence Boys' Clubs summer camp. Board searches for possible site.

SEPTEMBER 1962

Board President, George C. Davis, announced that a law partner of his, Harold Tanner, offered to donate 167 acres of land on the eastern shore of School House Pond, Charlestown, RI, with one condition: "the moral obligation to make use of it." Board voted acceptance.

NOVEMBER 1962

In meeting with Harold Tanner to arrange details on deed transfer, he asked that the proposed camp be named Camp Davis in honor of his partner, George C. Davis.

JANUARY 1963

By January 10, 1963, twenty-three cash donations totaling \$13,322.73 received toward initial development of the property.

SUMMER 1963

First camping season as a Day Camp. Total income \$6,341. Expense \$5,458. Continued as a Day Camp summers of 1964-66.

SUMMER 1967

First camp season as a Resident Camp. Dining Hall construction this spring and summer. Two Villages were constructed. Four camper cabins and a washhouse in each Village. 64 boys weekly - 8 week season.

1973

A.C. Beals, owner of land abutting Camp property on the southern east/west line, donates his 187 acres, including a summer cottage on shoreline to Camp Davis. Appraisal sets value at \$325,000 (donation is actually to Providence Boys' Clubs.)

1975

Quacompaug Association, owners of approximately 80 acres on the southern, southeasterly and south-westerly shoreline of School House Pond, donates their land to Camp Davis. Appraisal set value at \$220,000. (donation is actually to Providence Boys' Clubs.)

JANUARY 1975

Narragansett Indians, Inc., bring a land claim suit against the Providence Boys' Clubs, 17 other private land owners, and the State of Rhode Island. This group claimed ownership of what had been established as the Narragansett Indian Reservation long ago. Camp Davis land is in the midst of this area. In the suit, they state that 100 acres +/- can be retained by Providence Boys' Clubs to continue its camping services. After nearly three years, in late 1978, a settlement was reached without trial. The Providence Boys' Clubs received \$1,500,000 for the sale of land to a Trusteeship established to hold title of the "Indian Reservation". This payment was made by the United States government. Camp Davis retained

106 acres of land which included all the buildings and improvements completed since the original development in 1963. There is approximately 3,000 feet of waterfront.

1985

Camp Davis established as a separate not-for-profit charitable corporation in the State of Rhode Island and is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501-C-3 organization. A Board of Directors is chosen, and Richard E. White is named Executive Director. Land and buildings remain as the property of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Providence (formerly Providence Boys' Clubs). Buildings include: dining hall, 2 maintenance buildings, 12 camper cabins, 3 washhouses, camp office, overflow cabin and laundry, crafts shelter, day camp shelter, boat house, Director's cottage, Staff cottage, Weekend camping lodge, Camp Ranger house, summer guest cottage and 3 pump houses.

1989

First season for a Day Camp program at Camp Davis in addition to the Resident Camp services that have continued annually since 1967. Day Camp clientele are children from the South County area. Transportation is provided.

1990

At the time this history is being reported, Camp Davis continues to provide both a Resident and a Day Camp service. The annual operating budget is approximately \$110,000. An endowment fund was instituted at the time of incorporation in 1985. Market value in 1990 is approximately \$400,000. The endowment has received several \$1,500 memorial donations, and a \$50,000 bequest from the estate of W. Russell Boss. James W. Redgate has established a charitable remainder trust for Camp Davis with the Rhode Island Foundation, valued at \$45,000 in 1989.

Name Evolution:

(circa) 1868	Boys Room
1899	Providence Boys' Club
1956	Providence Boys' Clubs
1981	Boys & Girls Clubs of Providence

Early Locations:

As Union for Christian Work:

1868	Broad & Eddy Streets
1989	151 Weybosset Street

As Providence Boys' Club:

1899	Clifford & Chestnut Streets
1900	152 Weybosset Street
1906	129 Eddy Street
1910	33 Canal Street (into 1916)

**US Historical events:
(approx. time frame)**

BGCP Historical events:

US Civil War ends

1868 UNION FOR CHRISTIAN WORK FOUNDED / DAILY PROGRAMS FOR BOYS & GIRLS

Spanish American War

1899 "PROVIDENCE BOYS' CLUB" CREATED AS A SEPARATE SERVICE

20th Century begins

1905 PROVIDENCE BOYS' CLUB INCORPORATES, FEBRUARY 14

World War I

1915 FIRST OWNED BUILDING / 226 S. MAIN ST. / FIRST BUILT AS A CHURCH IN 1833

1916 BEGIN OPERATIONS AT S. MAIN STREET (LATER CALLED CENTRAL, THEN FOX POINT)

1925 NEWLY CONSTRUCTED OLNEYVILLE CLUB OPENS, NOVEMBER 1

1925 SWIMMING POOL ADDITION TO S. MAIN STREET

1929 NEWLY CONSTRUCTED WANSKUCK CLUB OPENS, DECEMBER

Depression Era

1931 PURCHASE CAMP PROPERTY IN CHEPACHET - SELL IT IN 1942

World War II

1956 CHANGE NAME TO "PROVIDENCE BOYS' CLUBS" - S. MAIN STREET CALLED "FOX POINT"

1961 NEWLY CONSTRUCTED SOUTH PROVIDENCE CLUB OPENS, MAY 11

1963 CAMP DAVIS OPENS

Vietnam War

1968 NORTH PROVIDENCE CLUB BEGINS AT CENTERDALE STORE FRONT ON SMITH STREET

1975 NEWLY CONSTRUCTED FOX POINT CLUB OPENS, IVES STREET. REPLACE S. MAIN ST.

1976 NEW CONSTRUCTED NORTH PROVIDENCE CLUB OPENS

1981 NAME CHANGE TO "BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF PROVIDENCE"

1981 NEW GYMNASIUM ADDITION TO OLNEYVILLE OPENS

1985 CAMP DAVIS BECOMES SEPARATE CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION

1990 NEW GYMNASIUM ADDITION TO WANSKUCK OPENS