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Grosvenor Neighborhood House records 2157842

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English

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Summary Information

Repository:	Rare Book and Manuscript Library
Creator:	Grosvenor Neighborhood House
Creator:	Moske, James
Creator:	LaGuardia Community College. LaGuardia and Wagner Archives
Title:	Grosvenor Neighborhood House records
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Abstract:	The Grosvenor Neighborhood House Records document the settlement from its incorporation in 1916 when it sponsored day care and hot lunch programs for East Side children, to its activities over seventy-five years later when it provided social services to youth and families on the Upper West Side.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Grosvenor House Records; Box and Folder; Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library.

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Biographical sketch

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries the East Side Manhattan area of Kip's Bay, extending from 34th to 59th Streets between Third Avenue and the East River, was a densely populated working class neighborhood. Immigrants from Poland, Germany, Italy and eastern Europe lived in the area's crowded tenements and brownstones, and worked for such east side businesses as slaughterhouses, breweries and warehouses. In their leisure hours they established benevolent societies and fraternal organizations, and attended local churches and

synagogues. But even as working class culture flourished, the dense population exacerbated a host of problems. Poverty, hunger, disease, crime, decrepit housing and unsanitary streets were pervasive here as elsewhere in New York and in rapidly growing cities across the country. Such conditions dimmed the hopes of many immigrants. They also alarmed many wealthy and middle-class Americans who perceived them as threats to moral order, political stability and cultural progress. Early attempts to ameliorate conditions in a changing urban society included the creation of charity organizations, industrial training schools, and church missions.

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Biographical sketch

In London, a similar increase in social problems led reformers in 1884 to establish the first settlement house, Toynbee Hall. The settlement model, originally distinguished by a commitment on the part of its college-educated volunteers to "settle" in working class communities in order to confront their problems first-hand and to contribute to the moral uplift of their neighbors, was quickly imported to the United States. In 1886 Stanton Coit, a devotee of Felix Adler's Ethical Culture movement and early observer of the experiment at Toynbee Hall, founded The Neighborhood Guild (later renamed University Settlement) on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Over the next several decades settlement houses were established in cities across the country, staffed largely by recent college graduates, many of them young women eager to take an active role in public life. American settlements sponsored such programs as kindergartens, day care, social clubs, health clinics, visiting nurses, summer camps, arts education and vocational training. They served as observation posts for sociologists, journalists, and other researchers of urban conditions. Many settlements provided forums for public debate of political issues, and galvanized popular opinion in support of progressive social legislation.

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Biographical sketch

In March of 1915 twenty women inspired by the settlement model, including Madelaine T. Astor and Charlotte Grosvenor Wyeth, rented a basement at 405 East 50th Street where they operated a day care and lunch program for neighborhood children. A year later Grosvenor Neighborhood House was legally incorporated, and the activities of the institution quickly grew to include the traditional range of settlement house programs such as clubs and classes, adult social and educational groups, a circulating library, athletics, and country camping trips. These activities were led by a staff of volunteers, residents and "Head Workers" that included during the early years Mrs. Chalmers Charles, Mrs. Emma A. Stafford, and Maude I. Purnell.

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Biographical sketch

To enlarge the work of the settlement, the Grosvenor Board of Directors in 1922 purchased two brownstones at 321 East 49th Street. The new Grosvenor Neighborhood House included space for art classes, vocational training, a summer play school sponsored by the Child Study Association, and medical examinations. In addition, for several years during the 1920s Grosvenor hosted the Turtle Bay Music School, which offered instrumental and vocal lessons to community residents for a low fee. During the 1930s depression, a strong emphasis was placed on "relief work" or the distribution of food, clothing and coal to impoverished families. This was continued into the war years, when Grosvenor also sponsored Red Cross and Civilian Defense activities, and a nursery school. After the war Grosvenor further expanded through the establishment of a senior citizen program. By 1951 annual attendance for all settlement programs was over 80,000.

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Biographical sketch

But during the next several years shifting demographic and real estate patterns severely reduced Grosvenor's membership rolls. The construction of the United Nations complex, the expansion of medical and educational institutions, and the construction of luxury housing displaced many low-income residents who were the settlement's traditional constituency. In 1957 the Grosvenor Board of Directors decided to move the settlement to a community where felt its services would be more essential. The New York City Planning Commission had recently announced plans for a "West Side Urban Renewal Project" (WSURP) entailing the demolition and rehabilitation of tenement buildings and the construction of public housing projects in an area bounded by 87th and 97th Streets between Amsterdam Avenue and Central Park West. With the support of city and housing officials and the encouragement of other settlement house leaders Grosvenor Neighborhood House moved to the WSURP area. Under the leadership of Executive Director Jerome Janowitz social service and recreational programs were provided from a storefront on West 87th Street and in the gymnasium of a local private school. In an effort to check juvenile delinquency and gang violence, special emphasis was placed on group work with teenagers. The settlement also encouraged community involvement in WSURP through participation in such community organizations as the Park West Neighborhood Association.

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Scope and Content

The Grosvenor Neighborhood House Records document the settlement from its incorporation in 1916 when it sponsored day care and hot lunch programs for East Side children, to its activities over seventy-five years later when it provided social services to youth and families on the Upper West Side. They offer a unique view of the American settlement house movement, and document social conditions, demographic change, political activity, and philanthropy in New York City; The origins and early history of Grosvenor Neighborhood House are best documented in Series 2, which contains annual reports from 1916 through the 1980s. These reports contain membership . statistics, program overviews, budget and financial information, as well as lists of board members, staff, residents and financial contributors. Head Worker reports included in the Annual . Reports from 1916 through the 1920s describe social conditions on Manhattan's East Side, as well as providing evidence of the motivations and experiences of settlement residents. Board of Directors minutes commence in 1930, and provide the most detailed account of Grosvenor activities from the depression years through 1981. In addition to board meeting minutes this series contains committee files, member information, program and financial reports.

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Scope and Content

Series II and III demonstrate the impact on Manhattan's East Side of the construction of the United Nations complex, and document the Grosvenor Neighborhood House response to changing demographic conditions. Program reports in Subseries III.4 provide insight on the development of settlement policies and programs in response to these changes, and minutes in Subseries III.3 record discussions among members about declining settlement membership, possible relocation of the settlement into a public housing project, and the eventual decision to participate in the West Side Urban Renewal Project. The same subseries provide the best view of Grosvenor's activities at its new location, including outreach to the new community, program development, and the construction of the new settlement building. News clippings and promotional material in Series I provide additional insight into the establishment of the settlement's presence on the west side.

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Scope and Content

The community control struggle of the early 1970s is documented by legal records, correspondence, flyers and news clippings contained in Series I, as well as by minutes and reports in Series III. Annual reports are the best source of information of settlement programs during the 1980s and 1990s. Fundraising activities during this same period are documented in benefit and Christmas Dinner Dance files in Series I. Photographs contained in Series IV are mostly from the 1960s-80s, and show Grosvenor program participants, staff, board members and facilities.

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Arrangement

This collection is arranged in four series, and includes a small name and subject index.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Processing Information

Finding aid prepared by James Moske of LaGuardia and Wagner Archives of LaGuardia Community College, the City University of New York for Special Collections, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College, Columbia University.

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

Source of acquisition--Teachers College. Method of acquisition--Transfer; Date of acquisition--June 2007.

Processing Information

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Accruals

Materials may have been added to the collection since this finding aid was prepared. Contact rbml@columbia.edu for more information.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Child welfare workers
- Community-based social services
- Community centers -- New York (State) -- New York
- Human services -- New York (State) -- New York

- Social advocacy
- Social settlements -- New York (State) -- New York
- Social service -- New York (State) -- New York
- Social workers
- Vocational education
- Public welfare -- New York (State) -- New York
- New York (N.Y.) -- History
- New York (N.Y.) -- Social conditions
- Administrative records
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- Annual reports
- Articles of incorporation
- Brochures
- Budgets
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- Financial records
- Fliers (printed matter)
- Legal documents
- Lists (document genres)
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- minutes (administrative records)
- Photographs
- Reports
- City Club of New York
- Grosvenor Neighborhood House

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