

## A Summary of the Sale of the Young Woman's Club

164 W. Adams, Detroit, Michigan

The Young Woman's Home Association was formally incorporated on April 24, 1877. Three weeks later it opened the Working Women's Home in a building at 270 Jefferson in Detroit for young women newly arrived in Detroit who needed a safe place to live while they worked to get established. Ten years after that the Association built a new building at 164 W. Adams, right down town, and paid off the mortgage in 1902. It was called the Young Woman's Club, and they were off to a flying start.

By 1906, however, the Finance Committee put out a "Statement and Appeal" to its supporters which pointed out that the home was only self-supporting as far as day-to-day operations, and the building was in need of a modernized heating system, among other things. The Committee suggested an Endowment Fund, "the interest on which could be used for providing the repairs and enlargements which will always be necessary".

In 1932 70 additional rooms were added to help meet demand. Information from 1956 gives one an idea of the business operation this was. That year they hired National Bank of Detroit to physically hold its important papers and stocks and bonds (This was the era of paper certificates of ownership, and safe keeping of these was paramount.) NBD also acted as a financial advisor, analyzing the portfolio and making recommendations for changes. Among the contents of the safety deposit box were insurance policies for the building and its contents, surety bonds for two employees, Workman's Compensation Insurance, Owners', Landlord's and Tenant's Liability Insurance and Messenger and Interior Robbery Insurance. Annual detailed inventories of the building listed everything from the end tables to the electric potato peeler. By now YWHA also benefitted financially from an endowment through the bequest of former associate member Jessie Castle Roberts.

Detroit was changing in the 1950's however. Families were moving to the suburbs after the war to get away from the overcrowded city, and young working women were beginning to prefer sharing an apartment with a girl friend to living with the rules and regulations of the Young Woman's Home. By the early 1960's YWHA was losing money, and the race riots in 1967 accelerated change. After what must have been heart-wrenching discussion, an amended Articles of Incorporation was sent to the Michigan Department of Treasury for approval. The primary purpose, to provide shelter for young women was changed. The new purpose was to disburse principal and income for charitable purposes. With approval from the State in hand, the Association voted at their January 6, 1969, meeting to adopt the new purpose and to sell the building. At that time there were only 44 girls in residence, and YWHA was losing over \$2,000 monthly.

At that meeting they formed one committee to formulate plans for selling and disposing of the land and building, and another committee to dispose of its contents. Bids for appraisal were sought and the process was underway. Gerald Lawson, the appraiser, described the building as in good condition and recommended a best use as a retirement home. Property values in the area had been declining rapidly

and the other three corners were already parking lots. The building was sold for its appraised value, \$80,000, to Bagley Associates. Terms were \$20,000 and at least \$500/month on a 5 year land contract at 7%. The closing was July 9, 1969, and the building was immediately demolished to create another parking lot.

Agnes Crow, YWHA president at this time, was a math teacher at Southeastern. The business of selling the building, reorganizing YWHA into a charitable trust, dealing with the state the IRS, accountants and attorneys, all fell to her. Some employees needed paperwork to qualify for Social Security. A year after the sale a lawsuit was filed on behalf of four employees to collect certain unemployment benefits they claimed were unjustly denied.

Early in the process, in January, 1969, Jeanette Thorne, who did not appear to have any relationship with the Young Woman's Club, filed a civil rights complaint against YWHA. She accused the Young Women's Club of discriminating against some tenant applications. The Club had a policy of considering and accepting any qualified applicant, but employees may not have always followed it. Since the building was about to close, the terms of compliance were lenient and Ralph Houghton, Jr., the attorney for YWHA, recommended agreeing to the terms outlined by the Civil Rights Commission.

Finally, in July of 1974, the last payment came in. The first attempt to execute the warranty deed was done incorrectly, but at last, on August 6, 1974, the deed was transferred and all obligations of the Young Woman's Home Association under the contract of June 9, 1969, were satisfied.

This information was summarized from miscellaneous papers, letters and documents by Ann Nicholson, Historian.

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