

HEATING UP THE MELTING POT

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THE END of the nineteenth century brought a basic conflict to American society between the old frontier spirit and the values of a new urban order. The social history of the twentieth century is the story of an urban philosophy attempting to overcome frontier "individualism," and the social settlement movement, beginning in the 1880s and 1890s, was one aspect of the early shift toward collective responsibility. The philosophy of the settlement was a response to industrialism which created a large working class and brought about an influx of immigrants with numerous problems of assimilation. Most of the early social reformers were young, middle class, and college educated. Their objective was to live among the working and immigrant classes as

YOUNGSTERS enjoy a slide and other playground equipment in this photograph taken years ago at the North East Neighborhood House. A day nursery was established at the house to help working mothers.



"neighbors," so that they could gain in understanding as they gave their services to social need.¹

The program of the settlement house served many specific needs, but since much of the clientele was foreign, the emphasis was upon "Americanization" of the immigrants. This policy included education, sometimes financial aid, and often merely a sympathetic understanding of the difficulties presented to the immigrant family in a new environment. The Americanization movement, spearheaded by the settlement workers, spanned the years from the 1890s to the early 1920s, but during these decades the movement shifted its emphasis in response to the changing mood of the country. What had originated as a humanitarian impulse, developed under the pressures and fears of wartime into a crusade for "100 per cent Americanism" — and 100 per cent conformity.²

At the turn of the century, northeast Minneapolis, like many urban communities, was undergoing a social and ethnic change due to the "new immigration" from southern and eastern Europe. The early settlers of the area had been primarily of French, German, and Scandinavian descent. As early as the mid-1880s, however, a small community of immigrants from the Carpathian Mountain region of what is now eastern Czechoslovakia had taken up residence on the east side of the Mississippi north of Hennepin Avenue and was steadily growing. Originally Eastern Rite Roman Catholics, a number of them eventually switched their allegiance to the Russian Orthodox church and were henceforth generally identified as Russian. By the early 1900s this group had been

¹ The best general account of the settlement movement, its history and philosophy, is Robert A. Woods, *The Settlement Horizon: A National Estimate* (New York, 1922).

² See John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New York, 1965).

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Settlement Work and Americanization in Northeast Minneapolis

joined by a variety of other immigrants from eastern Europe, including Poles, Bohemians, Hungarians, and Austrians. Nearly all were either Roman or Eastern Catholics.³

For many years the Congregational churches of Minneapolis had maintained Sunday schools and missions in an effort to attract the largely Protestant but often "un-churched" members of the earlier waves of immigration. Plymouth Church, especially, had enthusiastically recognized its role as an urban congregation, reaching out to minister to the problems and needs of the growing city. Early in the 1880s it had opened a Sunday school on the northeast side, which eventually became known as the Immanuel Mission. In the late 1890s this was replaced with a new building, known as Drummond Hall, which had facilities not only for religious classes, but for an industrial school, mothers' clubs, boys' clubs, and gymnastics.⁴

Already, however, a conflict was becoming apparent. Use of the social services offered at Drummond Hall continued to increase, but as the younger, upwardly mobile children of the older residents began to leave the neighborhood, attendance at religious services fell off. By 1910 there was a lack of interest and even open resistance to the Sunday school and other activities at the mission on the part of the Catholic elements that by then made up a majority of the community. Yet the need of the area for agencies, institutions, and neighborhood services was becoming ever more acute. A social problem existed that was not being met by Drummond Hall.⁵

³Alex Simirenko, *Pilgrims, Colonists, and Frontiersmen: An Ethnic Community in Transition*, 37-45 (New York and London, 1964).

⁴Paul R. Lucas, "The Church and the City: Congregationalism in Minneapolis, 1850-1890," in *Minnesota History*, 44:55-69 (Summer, 1974); Plymouth Congregational Church, *The Centennial Record*, 51 (Minneapolis, 1957).

⁵Catheryne Cooke Gilman, "Neighbors United Through Social Settlement Services at the North East Neighborhood House, Minneapolis, 1914-1948," 17-25. This unpublished book-length manuscript, completed in 1952, is among the extensive collection of Gilman family papers in the Minnesota Historical Society.

To their credit, the directors of Plymouth Church were among the first to recognize this problem. In 1913 they sponsored a survey of northeast Minneapolis which was conducted by the Associated Charities to determine the need for a social agency in the area. This study, known as the "Northeast Side Survey," revealed that some 80 per cent of the district's population was either of foreign birth or foreign parentage. Although Scandinavian immigrants still held a slight edge (13 per cent) among the 38 per cent of the population that was foreign born, they were closely followed by Slavic immigrants (10 per cent), and they were far outnumbered among the second generation. The Slavic population, which included Russians, Austrians, Poles, and Bohemians, had been growing steadily. The survey estimated that, in 1913, 26 per cent of the population of northeast Minneapolis was of Slavic descent. The problem confronting

A WORKER at the house gets rapt attention from young boys and girls as she reads them a story. A kindergarten was organized at the request of mothers in the area.





***HEADWORKER** Robbins Gilman and his wife, Catheryne Cooke Gilman, of the North East Neighborhood House labored for thirty-four years building a Minneapolis neighborhood from diverse nationalities and religions.*

the area, according to the survey report, was that of adapting the Slavic races to the "American ideals of government and right living."⁶

The survey concluded that a settlement house was needed and based its argument almost exclusively upon the requirements of the immigrant population. Great need was found for educational facilities, recreational facilities, and health services. Nearly half of the illiterates in the city lived on the northeast side. The Minneapolis school system had not adapted itself to either Slavic children or adults, and changes were needed in the curriculum. Commercial recreation, or as the survey termed it, "undesirable recreation," was abundant, but there were only two supervised and equipped playgrounds in the area. Neither of these was sufficient to meet the demand. More health clinics were needed — dental, maternal, and tuberculosis. The death rate of infants was very high, and the people were careless about reporting births and causes of death.⁷

In all of these areas, a settlement house could be of service to the community. But the overriding issue was neighborhood unity. Ethnic loyalties and social antipathies had retarded the development of the district; no member of any one national group could get other groups to co-operate in a united social, civic, or political effort.

"The situation demanded neutral leadership by a group entirely disassociated with any nationality dominant in the area. The finger of destiny

pointed to the North East Neighborhood House which functioned on a non-partisan basis, with but one purpose, that of helping all of the people to help themselves to the social, civic and economic opportunities available to them on an equal basis."⁸

This was how Catheryne Cooke Gilman, wife of the new settlement's head resident, Robbins Gilman, summed up the problem. For thirty-four years, the Gilmans were to concern themselves with uniting and building a neighborhood out of a jumble of nationalities and religions. The immigrants had to cease bickering among themselves in order to achieve their social and economic goals. The Gilmans and other social workers of their day called the whole process "Americanization."

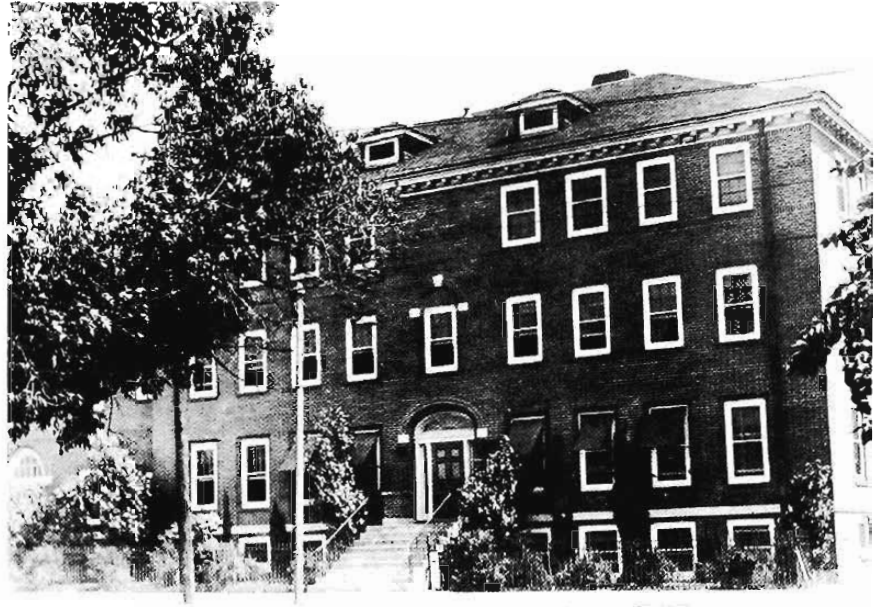
World War I was raging in Europe when the North East Neighborhood House opened its doors in January, 1915. The problems facing the new headworker concerned representatives of nearly every nationality involved in the fighting across the sea. Although these immigrants were beset by problems of "adjustment" that were readily apparent, the war did not particularly aggravate them. It did, however, emphasize the lag in assimilation that had been increasing along with the size of

⁶The survey report and recommendations are in Gilman, "Neighbors United," 38-71. The quotation is on p. 42.

⁷Gilman, "Neighbors United," 43-46.

⁸Gilman, "Neighbors United," 855.

IN THE 1920s the North East Neighborhood House looked like this. It was opened on its present location, 1929 Northeast Second Street, in 1918. Later, an addition was put up on the right.



the immigrant population for twenty years, and it accelerated attempts at solution.

ROBBINS GILMAN went to Minneapolis in the fall of 1914 from the University Settlement of New York City. His family background was typical of many Progressive social reformers of the early twentieth century. He came from a colonial New England family that could trace its American roots back to 1638. His mother's heritage was Pennsylvania Quaker. During his early adulthood, Gilman, whose father was an investment banker, had an opportunity to enter the world of finance, but instead he chose social work as his profession. Catheryne Cooke, who became his wife in December, 1914, was also from a middle-class family, although of less distinguished background. She was college-educated and experienced in social work, particularly settlement work. Indeed, it was through her position as supervisor of the girls' and women's club at the University Settlement that she met Robbins Gilman. Together the Gilmans made an interesting team of Progressive reformers. Like others of their kind, they were optimistic about the future of the country and its people, and they believed in the democratic process of gradual reform. In this way they were

basically conservatives who were trying to save the "American way of life" by adapting it to the new conditions of the twentieth century.⁹

Gilman spent his first few months in Minneapolis supervising the remodeling of Drummond Hall and establishing an acquaintance with the people in the neighborhood. North East Neighborhood House was formally opened as a social settlement on January 20, 1915. By 5:30 that evening 246 children had been registered and the line was still forming. The house was off to an enthusiastic and promising start.¹⁰

Community attitude toward the new settlement house was not entirely positive, however. Former hostilities which had been directed at the Drummond Hall Mission still existed. And an article which appeared in a Minneapolis paper generated more antagonism. The article announced the opening of the Neighborhood House with the observation that "Mr. Gilman, the new head worker, has arrived from New York City to civilize the people on the northeast side."¹¹ This insulting and erroneous statement quite naturally aroused the ill will of many who read it. The Gilmans could hardly refute it publicly, and the fact that those who were most offended were not likely to be members of the settlement added to the problem. The Gilmans were to discover in common with other settlement residents that it would take years of persistent work to win over the neighbors.

The Gilmans began their work without a preconceived program, so that the rapid expansion of the departments and personnel for the next several years was entirely responsive to the needs of the neighbors. Most of the important programs at the Neighborhood House were started in 1915 and carried on throughout the war

⁹For biographical sketches of the Gilmans, see Winifred D. Bolin, "North East Neighborhood House. The Process of Americanization in a Midwestern Urban Community," 19-35, an unpublished dissertation on file in the University of Minnesota library. The basic source for biographical data is the Gilman Papers.

¹⁰Gilman, "Neighbors United," 116, 121-123.

¹¹Gilman, "Neighbors United," 125.

years with little change. New activities directly related to the war effort were added, but the major problems that the Gilmans faced in northeast Minneapolis were already present in 1915.

One urgent problem was a scarcity of work, particularly for the unskilled. Irregular employment for the men forced women onto the labor market, which accentuated the labor problem by increasing the competition for jobs and reducing wages and working conditions. North East Neighborhood House accepted the task of finding jobs for both men and women, although the primary effort was directed toward placing women in "day work" (cleaning in homes and offices). The employment bureau, which began operation a few days after the Neighborhood House opened, sought to maintain some standard on wages and working conditions, as well as to encourage a high level of service from its workers. The placement program continued through the war years, but the problem changed somewhat. As more men were drafted, women were needed to fill their jobs. During 1917, many women were doing the same work that men had formerly done — and often for lower wages. Also, the employment service sent out three times as many women for "day work" as during the previous year.¹²

Through the employment service the Gilmans became aware of the fact that the immigrant workers were at a disadvantage on the job market. Their ignorance of job skills and inefficiency in work habits made it difficult for them to hold a job. Also, their eagerness to work and ignorance of work and wage standards made them fair game for an exploiting employer. Another difficulty, basic to the whole immigrant labor problem, was the language barrier which created misunderstandings and made it hard either to secure or retain a job. In light of these difficulties, it was apparent to the Gilmans that their neighbors needed a practical education as much as they needed an employment bureau. Training classes were established at the Neighborhood House to teach job skills and English. According to Mrs. Gilman, within a few years this resulted in fundamental changes in the capabilities and the efficiency of the neighbors. It also led to a more sympathetic and fair attitude on the part of employers toward the improved workers.¹³ The employment bureau was obviously a direct response to economic and social conditions which were present in the neighborhood, but it was also an important aspect of Americanization, in the sense of adjustment to society.

A day nursery, established almost in conjunction with the employment bureau, also revealed the need for practical education and presented an opportunity to remedy this need. As part of the general entrance requirements, mothers were expected to maintain certain standards of child care, homemaking, and personal sanitation. To assist the women in their personal habits, classes were offered in child behavior, mental and physi-

cal health, food preparation, homemaking, family sewing, and cooking. Language and job training were also offered.¹⁴

Closely related to the day nursery and the training it offered was the annual baby improvement contest which the Gilmans initiated during the summer of 1915. No doubt because of the very high infant mortality rates in northeast Minneapolis, the project met with great response. It benefited more than just the babies entered in the contest, since other mothers were also influenced to meet the standards of the program. The baby contest also led to more family involvement in the care of infants. Indeed, it was not always the mother who carried the most responsibility toward the child. Sometimes an older sister or brother had to shoulder this heavy burden. In response to this situation, a "Little Mothers League" was formed to help these children to learn proper techniques in caring for infants.¹⁵

The immigrants who utilized the services of the employment bureau and the day nursery, as well as those involved in the baby care program, were among the neediest of the neighborhood. Although the job situation improved between 1915 and 1917, the wartime economy of the United States resulted in an increase in the cost of living which bore heavily upon the poorer elements of society. To the immigrant working class, the elementary problem was the same in 1917 as it had been in 1915. Ignorance of job skills, the English language, and the ways of an urban, industrial society put the immigrant at a disadvantage which could only be corrected through Americanization. The wartime crisis led to a greater awareness of the immigrant's need to adapt, and it also offered new means of adaptation.

WHEN THE United States entered the war in April, 1917, there was some question as to whether settlement work, nationally, should be continued. But both residents and the public saw the settlements as a means of maintaining national vitality and spirit. Robbins Gilman, in a "Statement on War," defined the most crucial problems facing the Neighborhood House as the need to unify and Americanize the many different ethnic groups in the area. "There should be a doubling of effort along these lines thruout the duration of the war," he declared. Americanization was not only a social need for the neighborhood and its individuals; Gilman argued that it also was a means of stabilization during a time of political stress and social disorder — an antidote to dissatisfac-

¹²Gilman, "Neighbors United," 441; Headworker's Report, July, 1917, in the North East Neighborhood House Papers, held by the Minnesota Historical Society.

¹³Gilman, "Neighbors United," 449.

¹⁴Gilman, "Neighbors United," 475-477.

¹⁵"A Method of Keeping Well Babies Well," in Clinics, undated, 1915-1917, North East Neighborhood House Papers.

tion, confusion of loyalties, and "the ordinary flow and ebb of racial and individual passion . . . in our polyglot neighborhood."¹⁶

Gilman's statement reflected the changing attitude toward the immigrant problem which prevailed during the European war. Americanization was becoming a crusade. The emphasis was still on social welfare, but the impulse behind the movement was fear of divided loyalties. This fear intensified to the point of hysteria after America's entry into the war.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the headworker's overwhelming concern was still with the neighborhood situation rather than the question of national loyalty. North East Neighborhood House had been established primarily to work toward neighborhood unity, so the war effort did not reflect as much a change in attitude as a continuation of the original purpose. And the practical effect of the settlement program was still to stress "adjustment" for the immediate gain of the immigrants.

Many of the activities that developed as a result of the war had an important integrating effect on the neighborhood. During 1917 Red Cross classes were organized in first aid, knitting, sewing, surgical dressing, home nursing, nutrition, and food conservation. Catheryne Gilman observed that those who attended the classes had relatives in the United States army, as well as friends and relatives in their native countries in both allied and enemy camps. The participants seemed to understand the universality of the Red Cross, and through their contributions to the organization, old animosities were allayed and new sympathies were created. The united effort to alleviate suffering did much to bridge the gulf between the various nationalities.¹⁸

With the beginning of the draft, the settlement house was able to offer practical assistance to young men in filling out their questionnaires. Although this was a seemingly minor matter to most Americans, to the immigrant or illiterate person it presented great difficulties. Gilman was an associate member of the legal advisory board of the first ward, and in that capacity he was able to help the men and avoid the fee that a notary public would have charged. On January 6, 1918, an announcement was made in every church in the ward that

draft papers would be filled out free at the house.¹⁹

The drafting of young men also created social and moral problems. Gilman saw it as the patriotic duty of the settlement house to make available for young servicemen proper facilities for the wholesome use of their leisure time. Aware that war often led to a breaking down of prewar standards of conduct, he also introduced educational measures to provide for the moral safety of both young men and young women. One such measure was the formation of a Girls' Liberty League, a neighborhood chapter of a city-wide organization in which 250 girls over the age of twelve were organized into fourteen groups that met weekly. Gilman defended it as an important factor in solving possible moral problems by creating a mutual respect between servicemen and the girls. A long-range effect of the organization was that it contacted young girls who had not been previously connected with the Neighborhood House, thus extending the influence of the settlement further into the community.²⁰

The Neighborhood House was also headquarters for the sale of thrift stamps in northeast Minneapolis. The drive had a social effect similar to that of the Red Cross, the Girls' Liberty League, and the draft registration. The organizational meetings brought many people to the Neighborhood House who had never been in it before. The liberty bond drive was another project that drew a great response from the families of northeast Minneapolis. Subscriptions from the first ward exceeded \$450,000. Solicitors found that the Polish people in particular rarely refused to buy a bond. This same generosity had been demonstrated during the Red Cross drive of December, 1917. The Catholic priests of the neighborhood were active in urging the people to express their patriotism through these drives.²¹

Often the immigrant's surge of loyalty to his chosen country extended beyond a feeling for the abstract concept of nation to a more direct personal tie with the community and to the Neighborhood House. At St. Mary's Orthodox Church, a group of Russians gathered to learn the purpose and nature of the War Chest drive in the fall of 1918. The Reverend John Dzubyay, their interpreter, feared that many of the people thought such giving was compulsory. He had spoken for only a moment, however, when one of the mothers jumped to her feet with a rapid volley of questions in Russian. She had heard that the quota for the War Chest was 2 per cent of the family's salary, but she and her husband wanted to give 3 per cent. Father Dzubyay assured her that the contribution was not compulsory, and then asked her why she and her husband wanted to give more than the suggested quota. "North East Neighborhood House, that's one of them, isn't it?" she asked. "That's why."²²

Loyalty such as this, seldom expressed but probably often experienced, certainly played a large part in the process of adjustment and Americanization. In this

¹⁶ Statement proposed for the Minneapolis Federation of Settlements, attached to Headworker's Report, April, 1917 (quote p. 1), in North East Neighborhood House Papers.

¹⁷ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 242-245.

¹⁸ Gilman, "Neighbors United," 426-428.

¹⁹ Headworker's Report, January, 1918, North East Neighborhood House Papers.

²⁰ Headworker's Third Annual Report, January, 1918; Headworker's Report, July, 1918, North East Neighborhood House Papers.

²¹ Headworker's Report, April, June, 1918, North East Neighborhood House Papers.

²² Headworker's Report, November, 1918 (quote p. 2).

sense, North East Neighborhood House was a binding force, engendering loyalty and patriotism as much through its original program as through activities which were centered directly on the war effort.

One of the most significant war-related events was the registration of aliens in February, 1918. Indeed, when the city clerk designated the house as the first ward headquarters for registration, Robbins Gilman called it, "the most important single incident in our career as a Settlement. . . ." Within five days, more than 3,500 persons were registered. Nineteen nationalities were represented in one day's work, and as many as twenty-three clerks were writing personal histories at one time. A better opportunity to become acquainted with those they wished to serve could not have befallen the Gilmans. Furthermore, it presented the reciprocal opportunity of acquainting the neighbors with the North East Neighborhood House, its purpose, and program.²³

The registration of aliens in Minnesota was a symptom of the wartime shift in emphasis regarding Americanization. It was intended to stimulate naturalization, and it increased the pressure toward conformity. Attendance soared at the English and civics classes that were offered by the Neighborhood House during the spring of 1918 to prepare immigrants for their final examinations before receiving citizenship. The Gilmans encouraged naturalization, partly for reasons of social

unity as expressed by spokesmen for patriotism, but primarily still as a direct benefit to the immigrant. Citizenship, they felt, would place him in a better social and economic position, and the process of attaining it would also help him to understand better the nature of American society and his own role in it.²⁴

By itself the war could have acted as a divisive and negative force in northeast Minneapolis. But largely through the influence of the Neighborhood House, which was already working upon concrete problems within the community as well as upon the long-range goal of Americanization, the war became a catalyst that hastened positive change. It provided solutions to problems already apparent and revealed problems that were present but not apparent. It also led to the creation of new community programs that extended the influence of the settlement house.

The effects of that influence upon the entire community comprised by the first ward became apparent on May 10, 1918. That day saw an "All First Ward Get-Together," which was sponsored by the North East Neighborhood House after careful preliminary preparation. The festival, which was held on Bottineau Field just across the street from the settlement, brought together

²³ Headworker's Report, February, 1918 (quote p. 1).

²⁴ Headworker's Report, February, 1918.

THEATRICALS at the house have called for old-fashioned costuming (below). In center, a youngster plays with blocks. At right, a worker is chummy with two boys who appear coy about the attention they are getting.



the national groups represented by the churches of the area. It featured folk dancing and songs, and although many community leaders had been skeptical, it proved to be a highly successful affair.²⁵ Three years earlier such a gathering would probably have foundered on the rocks of intergroup jealousy and national and religious rivalries — the divisive factors that Catheryne Gilman had seen as responsible for the ward's failure to attract business and to exert civic influence. Many problems, of course, remained. Northeast Minneapolis was still a polyglot neighborhood with many resulting social and political frictions. But the year 1918 marked a major step in the direction of community integration and co-operation.

THE MOMENTUM of the war-time crusade for Americanization continued into the immediate postwar years. The Red Scare and the depression of 1920 both contributed to the growing nativism which helped to make "100 per cent Americanism" a code word for repression and even outright racism. To some extent the Gilmans conformed to the new attitudes, but the Americanization program of North East Neighborhood House never lost its humanitarian outlook.

In January, 1919, Gilman observed that some

²⁵ Gilman, "Neighbors United," 833.

²⁶ Headworker's Report, January, 1919 (quote p. 4).

²⁷ Headworker's Report, April, May, 1919 (quote p. 1).

employers were demanding that their workers be citizens of the United States. He disapproved of this criterion, feeling that this "false sense of loyalty" presented a greater threat than the aliens themselves, because it "may possibly add tinder to the fire of discontent, and be the cause of a serious disturbance to our social order."²⁶

In April, 1919, the North East Americanization Committee was organized. It was composed of social workers, public school principals, and other leaders of the first ward. It was the first such neighborhood committee to be formed in Minneapolis, and it set the pace for similar ones in other parts of town. Gilman served as its chairman and also sat on the executive committee of the Minneapolis Council of Americanization, which was created to co-ordinate all Americanization work in the city. Late in May he attended a biennial convention of settlement workers held in Philadelphia, where he was asked to explain the North East Americanization plan. Its underlying principle, he stated, was: "What has the foreign-born got to give us" and not the usual slogan of "we'll show the foreign[er] how to be an American."²⁷

As Gilman pointed out, there was a world of difference between these two approaches, and he felt that the last one was being discredited as an effective means to Americanization. It is likely that Gilman's attitude was shaped not only by his experiences in northeast Minneapolis and on New York's lower east side, but by the influence of Jane Addams, who was the foremost advo-



SPORTS have long been an important part of the house's activities. At left, Robbins Gilman chats with four lads in old-time football gear. At right, members of a girls' softball team sit for a picture on the house steps. In center, youngsters look at a picture book held by a woman worker.



cate of the "contributions" theory of assimilation. Miss Addams saw the immigrants as people who were making positive contributions to American society. They were more than the recipients of welfare; they were people to live with, to understand, and to learn from. America had much to gain from the cultures of immigrant groups, and furthermore, the immigrants could contribute the basis for an understanding between nationalities.²⁸ Gilman accepted these ideas to the extent that he even suggested that the English language was not indispensable to the Americanizing process:

"If the spirit or soul of America can be better interpreted in any given case thru the language of the foreign country, that language, . . . is by far the best vehicle."²⁹

A second approach to Americanization had developed out of the nationalist anxieties of the preceding years. Several patriotic societies embarked on programs of education designed to indoctrinate the foreigner with loyalty to America. Whereas the settlements were responding to a human need, the patriotic societies were responding to what they saw as a political or economic threat. The two approaches clashed in principle, but in practice they were often strangely blended.³⁰

Nowhere was this more true than at the North East Neighborhood House. During the 1920s the settlement continued its close relationship with the Minneapolis Council of Americanization, which sponsored weekly illustrated lectures for boys and girls. A "Naturalization Reception" for new citizens was held at the house each month. Even at Christmas parties the Americanization theme was very much in evidence. At one such event in December, 1923, the Monument Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution presented an American flag, staff, and pedestal for the auditorium of the Neighborhood House. At another party during the same season the Shriners decorated a room with hundreds of flags, distributed crackerjack, and led 575 children in singing "America" and in the pledge of allegiance.³¹

These formalized activities reflected the nation-wide, highly organized drive for conformity, but the humanitarian aspect of Americanization was obvious in the continued attempts of the Gilmans to "bind together and complete a neighborhood, not to make a nation." Gilman's own philosophy in this respect was set forth in a report to the board of directors:

"There is nothing that appeals with more force to a Settlement worker than to be confronted with a problem of welding many disjointed ethnic or social groups into a functioning unit. The instinctive ideal of a perfect City to most Settlement workers, is one composed of self-functioning neighborhoods."³²

His reasoning was based upon the ideal of participatory democracy which had been so vital an element in Progressive thinking: The city is best governed which has the largest number of citizens intelligently concerned with civic affairs. The best way to invoke interest, according to Gilman, was to arouse the neighborhoods within a city to their own needs. For people to become aware of their own needs, they first had to become acquainted with one another, and ". . . the Neighborhood House has aimed to get our neighbors acquainted, with the hope of awakening a slumbering interest or creating a hitherto non-existent interest in neighborhood affairs be they social or civic. . . ."³³

As a step toward neighborhood unity, Gilman named June 14 as "Neighbor Day." To help plan the event a committee was formed that included people of all the nationalities and religions represented in the area. What started out as "Neighbor Day" soon became "Flag and Neighbor Day," since June 14 was officially "Flag Day" also. The variety of nationalities that participated at this annual event during the 1920s gives some indication of the continuing diversity of the neighborhood. There were people of French, German, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, Czechoslovakian, Ruthenian, Irish, and Syrian extraction. There were even native-born Americans in attendance.³⁴

Neighborhood unity was exemplified on a city-wide scale in the summer of 1923 when the *Minneapolis Tribune* held a "Community Sing Contest" at Loring Park. All the parks in the city participated, Bottineau Field representing northeast Minneapolis. Thousands of people were present when the announcement was made that Bottineau Field was the winner. Harry Anderson, Minneapolis Park Board community sing leader, paid a glowing compliment to the foreign-born population of northeast Minneapolis, as he presented the trophy cup at a mass meeting held in the Neighborhood House auditorium.

" 'Others,' he said, 'could sing "Barney Google" as well as you but when it came to the "Star Spangle [sic] Banner" "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" "Dixie Land" and "America" no other section of

²⁸ Jane Addams, *Newer Ideals of Peace*, especially 39-41, 64-66 (New York, 1911). Catherine Gilman had worked briefly at Hull House while studying social work in Chicago, and both she and Robbins were personally as well as professionally acquainted with Jane Addams.

²⁹ Headworker's Report, May, 1919 (quote p. 2).

³⁰ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 236-237.

³¹ Headworker's Report, October, December, 1923, March, 1924.

³² Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 236 (first quote); Headworker's Report, May, 1920 (quote p. 1).

³³ Headworker's Report, May, 1920 (quote p. 1).

³⁴ Headworker's Report, May, June, 1920; Gilman, "Neighbors United," 833-838.

the city could come anywhere near the interpretation and feeling you put into those patriotic airs."³⁵

The trophy was accepted by the Reverend Joseph F. Cieminski, pastor of the Polish Church of the Holy Cross, in a speech which was a eulogy of the Neighborhood House and the part it had played in bringing about the result. He then turned the cup over to the settlement as its custodian until the next contest, which was to be held the following summer. Gilman proudly referred to the event in his annual report for 1923. Interpreting it in the light of his Americanization efforts, he wrote: ". . . there must be some force or forces at work in our district toward a love of country to explain satisfactorily the almost 100% rendering of our country's dearest songs."³⁶

Gilman was undoubtedly reacting to the chauvinism and superpatriotism prevalent in the early 1920s when he occasionally overemphasized the homogeneity and unity of his neighborhood. It was natural that he should defend the people he worked with and had come to identify with as they faced the nativism and latent hostility of American society. It was also a natural inclination to note the success of the settlement house in Americanizing the immigrants and, thereby, to note the success of his own work. Moreover, despite his unfailing humanitarian principles, Gilman himself placed a great deal of importance upon such values as homogeneity, unity, patriotism, and the melting pot.

THE PERSISTENCE of values associated with the Anglo-American Protestant tradition brought another aspect of settlement work into prominence during the 1920s, and this in turn affected attitudes toward other ethnic groups and toward the goals of Americanization. Like most Progressive reformers of their generation, the Gilmans had a deep preoccupation with the moral problems that affected society. This was evident during the war years in such efforts as the organization of the Girls' Liberty League, and it was even more apparent in the 1920s when prohibition, bootlegging, crime, and

juvenile delinquency became matters of national concern.

Many citizens of the 1920s saw a direct relationship between Americanization and moral problems, for as nativism became tinged with racism, there was a strong tendency to equate Americanism with virtue. Alarmed by the argument that assimilation, far from strengthening America, was actually weakening it by diluting the strong "Nordic" strain with inferior racial elements from southern and eastern Europe, many Americans tended to equate any signs of social weakness, such as crime or immorality, with "un-American" forces.³⁷ Accordingly, it became important to the Gilmans to protect the immigrant not only from economic exploitation and social injustice, but also from moral temptation. This "moral protection" sometimes led to the adoption of a condescending attitude and a desire to supervise activities to a great degree, but it was usually done in the name of good citizenship and Americanism.

Northeast Minneapolis had within it one square mile that stood second in the city in its rate of juvenile delinquency, with 130 cases per 10,000 population, as revealed by a survey in 1925. In Gilman's view this "juvenile crime wave" was largely due to the destructive influence of commercialized recreation — establishments such as motion picture theaters, bowling alleys, pool halls, soft drink parlors, and dance halls. The major complaint against all of these was that they violated the prohibition laws. The gambling, profane language, and general rowdiness often found in these places were seen primarily as side effects to the greatest evil of all — illicit liquor.³⁸

Like most social workers of his day, Gilman strongly favored prohibition. He described the saloon as ". . . that institution which has done more to retard our national progress, debauch our citizenship and pitiously outrage the innocent and unprotected mother and child than anything the modern world has known." Along with many of his contemporaries, he tended to see liquor and the saloon as direct causes of evil rather than as symptoms of underlying problems. Therefore, he was able to state with fervor: "Thank God, for the awakened conscience which has doomed the liquor traffic."³⁹

At this early stage, of course, Gilman did not recognize that the liquor traffic was not "doomed" and that, on the contrary, prohibition was to lead to more complicated social problems as the decade wore on. For the moment he was optimistic enough to feel that the settlement house could provide the social substitute for the saloon. Convinced "that the average person, if he were given the choice between bad and good, recognizing both choices as such, would accept the good," he adopted a strategy of attracting young people away from the dubious environment of commercial amusement establishments by offering them a wholesome program of

³⁵ Headworker's Report, August and September, 1923 (quote p. 3).

³⁶ Headworker's Annual Report, 1923.

³⁷ The best known statement of the racial theory was Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race* (New York, 1916). Public fear resulted in the passage of the racially restrictive immigration law of 1924.

³⁸ "Survey of the East District of Minneapolis Prepared to Show the Sources of Constructive and Destructive Influences Affecting Youth," 39-47, 50 [1925], in North East Neighborhood House Studies, the Gilman Papers, Box 50; Headworker's Report, November, 1920.

³⁹ Headworker's Fourth Annual Report, January 22, 1922 (first quote p. 5); Headworker's Report, January, 1919 (second quote p. 2).

recreation at the North East Neighborhood House. As a result, the 1920s saw a great expansion in the recreation facilities and in the club work of the settlement, especially among boys and young men.⁴⁰

The shift in emphasis from Americanization to moralism should not be exaggerated. Both programs continued throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, and it is doubtful that the Gilmans made much distinction between them. Good Americans were moral and upright, and division and conflict within the neighborhood were equally damaging, whether caused by national rivalries or by juvenile gangs. The Gilmans tended to see the process of Americanization at work in every good or successful activity of the settlement.

In the meantime, despite its extreme diversity, northeast Minneapolis was developing into a fairly stable community. Unlike the children of earlier residents, descendants of the Slavic immigrants who had been moving into the area since the 1880s and 1890s tended to buy their own homes and remain in the neighborhood. There was a great deal of home renovation during the 1920s, as well as a large number of new homes. The public schools were enlarged, Edison High School and two new parochial schools were built, and two new churches, one Polish and one Slavonian, were established. Business and industry also made gains after the war. A number of small neighborhood grocery stores sprang up, a commercial bank was opened, and industry was represented by a Northern States Power Company plant, the Sinclair Oil Company, a flour mill, and an ice plant.⁴¹

Along with the rest of the country, northeast Minneapolis suffered under the effects of the Great Depression, and once more the Neighborhood House activities were geared into city-wide and nation-wide social and economic programs. Again, meeting the immediate needs of emergency situations became an important part of its day-to-day functions.

When the settlement observed its twenty-fifth anniversary in January, 1940, there still seemed much to be done in the field of community integration. In a statement prepared for the occasion, Robbins Gilman observed that:

"Co-operative civic spirit is still unsatisfactory. The rivalries between the ethnic groups which are characterized chiefly by a desire of one group to win an election at the expense of another, has retarded the civic development of the district. The spirit of unity of action for the good of all is noticeably lacking but it is not as pronounced as it was 25 years ago."⁴²

Even the impact of World War II did not dissolve the ethnic identities and loyalties of those who increasingly called themselves "Nordeasters." In 1948 the Gilmans retired and handed over to others the long task of stirring the melting pot. As late as 1955, however, an anonymous

report claimed that ethnic differences constituted one of the serious problems in the area. The report stated that improvements had been made, with a resulting growth in cohesiveness and co-operative civic spirit. But there still existed intense feelings between various national groups. Many of the older people still had trouble speaking English; many members of the first and second generations could still speak Polish or Russian; and there was still animosity between these two groups and other ethnic groups. A large number of the children in the neighborhood attended parochial schools, many marriages were within ethnic groups, and many of the young couples settled in the neighborhood rather than moving to the suburbs. The nationalities tended to form separate, tightly knit communities, with their lives centered to a large degree around their families, churches, and national or religious organizations. "In other words," the report concluded, "they brought their culture with them and it still has a good deal of meaning to them."⁴³

It is apparent that the author of this report still held a negative view of national diversity, as had the Gilmans, who saw cohesive ethnic groups as a divisive force undermining the strength of the community. But in recent years, a renewed interest in ethnicity has resulted in a change of attitude among Neighborhood House workers. It was the Gilmans' objective to smooth over ethnic hostilities, to understate the differences, and to stress neighborhood unity. North East Neighborhood House workers today still stress neighborhood unity, but they tend to feel that the strength of "Northeast" lies in its cultural diversity. And there is general agreement that the residents of the community have responded to the ethnic consciousness of recent years with renewed interest.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Robbins Gilman, "Preventive Work with Minors," a paper read before the Section on Delinquency and Correction at the National Conference of Social Work, June 16, 1925 (quote p. 6), in North East Neighborhood House, *Speeches*, in Gilman Papers.

⁴¹ Report of the Headworker for the year 1922, p. 1-2.

⁴² "Brief Statement of the Setting of the North East Neighborhood House at the time of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of Its Founding, January, 1940" (quote p. 10) in North East Neighborhood House, 25th Anniversary Celebration, Gilman Papers. See also "Northeast Neighborhood House Reviews 25-Year Service: To Hold Four-Day Jubilee," in *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, January 14, 1940, classified want ad section, p. 8.

⁴³ "The Community and Setting of the North East Neighborhood House," [September 15, 1955], in North East Neighborhood House Papers. Historical Data, 1937-1949.

⁴⁴ Remarks on the current situation at North East Neighborhood House are based upon a personal interview with Margaret Youngdale, program co-ordinator for East Side Neighborhood Service, Joe Holewa, executive director of East Side Neighborhood Service, and John Vandermyde, chairman of the board of directors of East Side Neighborhood Service, at North East Neighborhood House, April 19, 1976.

Several developments of recent decades have regenerated the ethnic pride that has always been an underlying part of northeast Minneapolis. The Black movement of the 1960s, with its emphasis upon the Black cultural tradition, made it acceptable to be different and stimulated a nation-wide ethnic consciousness. In northeast Minneapolis, this was intensified by a resurgence of community pride when the neighborhood became the focus of city-wide attention in the fall of 1969, as a result of an article in the *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune* which characterized "Nordeast" as a unique community in terms of its ethnic diversity and its quality of life.⁴⁵

Thus, in the last five or six years there has been a conscious effort to emphasize the positive aspects of ethnicity in northeast Minneapolis. Ethnicity has even taken on a commercial dimension, as can be seen in the names of bars, restaurants, and other business establishments. The Polish language is taught in the evening Community School held at Sheridan Elementary School. North East Neighborhood House, now an affiliate of East

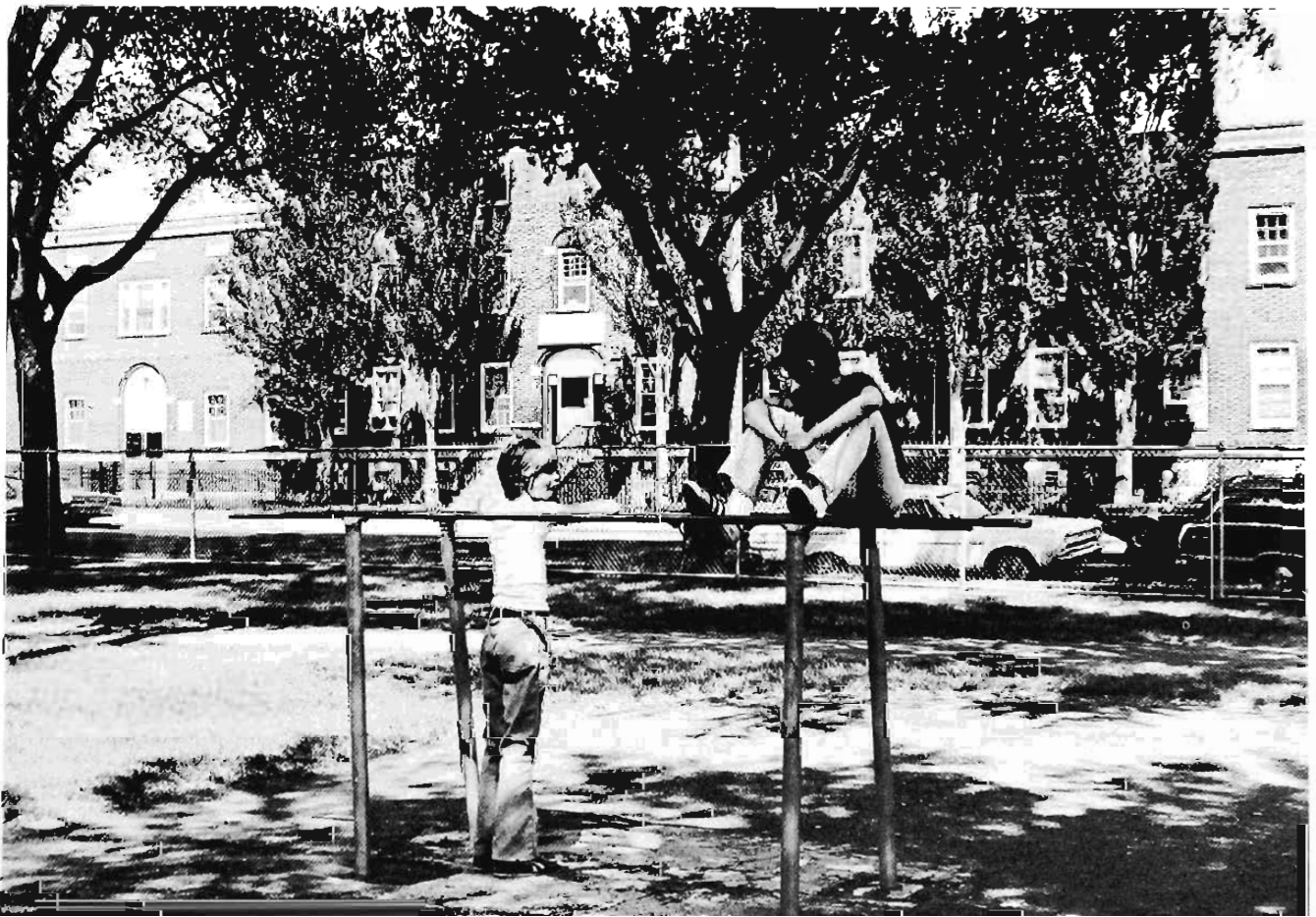
⁴⁵ Marilyn Becerra, "Nordeast," *Picture Magazine*, *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, September, 7, 1969.

THE PHOTOGRAPHS published with this article are all from the audio-visual library of the Minnesota Historical Society except for the one on page 69. It was taken by Alan Ominsky.

Side Neighborhood Service, has responded with programs directed at emphasizing the cultural traditions of the community. A few years ago, a Cultural-Ethnic Arts Workshop was proposed as a way of developing the folk art of various representative groups. The agency was unable to receive funding for the project, but these early aspirations have been realized in this year's bicentennial project — Minneapolis Eastside Ethnic Tribute, (MEET) '76. The director of MEET '76, Betty Ann Burch, has been involved in the co-ordination of bicentennial and ethnic heritage events in east-side Minneapolis. A lecture series, held during the winter and spring of 1976 was entitled "Nation of Nations," underlining the recognition of ethnicity as a positive value in the community.

Today, sixty years after North East Neighborhood House opened its doors, ethnicity remains a vital issue to both the residents of the area and the workers in the agency. But it has taken on an ironic twist. Whereas the Gilmans tried to de-emphasize the differences between nationalities because they feared the effects upon neighborhood unity, the settlement house workers today see ethnic loyalty as the most hopeful sign of neighborhood strength. The question that faces them in the 1970s is: How can ethnicity be related to Neighborhood House programs in order to help their neighbors to retain their ethnic identity?

THE NORTH EAST Neighborhood House is shown in 1976 as it observes its sixtieth anniversary. This view is from Bottineau Field, its across-the-street neighbor.





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